

Friuli-Venezia Giulia



From the glories of Rome and the Church in Aquileia to the Habsburg atmosphere of Trieste's famous cafés, this frontier region offers a disconcerting but delightful gamut of conflicting sensations. This *is* Italy, isn't it? Sometimes one wonders.

Friuli and Venezia Giulia, two vaguely delimited regions forced together by circumstance, have multiple identities. Beneath the Italian overlay bubble other cultural currents. In Friuli, much influenced by Venice and later Austria, locals speak their own language (Friulian, or *furlan*). Further east, the influence of the Slavic world (Slovenia is next door) and the results of centuries of Germanic (that is, Austrian) rule are still palpable today.

The region is a feast of surprises. You might know that some of Italy's finest white wines are produced here. But did you know that San Daniele ham, one of the country's most sublime porcine delights, is a prized Friuli feed, or that the world-renowned Illy coffee empire is a Trieste institution?

Surprising towns and villages are cast like so many dice across the region's surface. There is a sprinkling of everything: hiking and skiing in the northern Alpine areas of Carnia and around Tarvisio; beach time on the Adriatic; Lombard art in Cividale del Friuli; the chance to be in two countries (Italy and Slovenia) at once in the border town of Gorizia; bird-watching in lagoons; Udine's Palladian gems.

HIGHLIGHTS

- Admire the fabulous Roman mosaic floors in **Aquileia** (p401)
- Discover Archduke Maximilian's fanciful castle caprice at **Miramare** (p396)
- Sample the beery buffets and Viennese-style cafés of **Trieste** (p394)
- Go hiking in the Friulian Dolomites from **Claut** and **Cimolais** (p403)
- Discover the beguiling art of the Lombards in **Cividale del Friuli** (p407)
- Spot birds in the **Laguna di Marano** (p402)
- Explore charming **Carnia** (p409) villages, like Pesariis and Sauris di Sopra
- Tour the green hills and dales of the **Collio wine area** (p400), known for its fine whites
- Soak up the Venetian airs and sample the student bars in **Udine** (p407)



■ POPULATION: 1.2 million

■ AREA: 7845 sq km

TRIESTE

pop 207,100

Rarely will you sense the cross-cultural edge present in the air in this sometimes melancholy but immediately engaging Adriatic city. Held on a spit of Italian territory (added in 1918) that lunges along the sea into the Slav world (of Slovenia), Trieste (Trst to the Slovenes) oozes the atmosphere of Mitteleuropa (Central Europe), of an empire (the Austro-Hungarian) long gone, for which it was the only port.

The Habsburg spirit lingers in the neoclassical architecture and 18th-century town planning of the Borgo Teresiano. It wafts over you in the Viennese-style cafés and in the pungent central-European buffets. Vessels still churn the

harbour waters, albeit not with the same bustle as when it was the Empire's principal outlet to the high seas. But the city's movers and shakers are expanding the port quickly. As borders fall and trade with Eastern Europe flourishes, Trieste hopes again to become a key regional port and relive its commercial glory days. It is already a strategic point in world petrol politics. Oil tankers unload crude here to a continental pipeline that supplies Germany.

Trieste is a vibrant city with a lively cultural scene. Roman ruins, castles, a handful of churches and some worthwhile museums offer distraction. It makes a good base for exploring coastal treasures such as Castello Miramare (p396) and can serve as a springboard for travels in Slovenia and Croatia.



History

According to one misty legend, Trieste was founded by Japhet, son of the biblical Noah, while another legend grants founding-father status to Tergeste, a companion of Jason (of Argonaut fame). More prosaically, the Roman colony of Tergeste was established in 178 BC and rapidly became a wealthy port. The Goths, Byzantines and the Lombards followed and, in 1202, the city fell to the Venetians. Trieste battled for, and won, its independence, but in 1382 voluntarily accepted the overlordship of Austria.

Trieste (along with Gorizia) and extensive territory in what is now Slovenia and Croatia were assigned to Italy after WWI and the region of Venezia Giulia was created alongside the region of Friuli (whose main cities are Udine, Pordenone and Cividale). Defeat in WWII saw most of Venezia Giulia pass to the then communist Yugoslavia, and Trieste (under Allied control until 1954) was made capital of the single mixed region of Friuli-Venezia Giulia, much to the irritation (to this day) of the Udine and Friulian populace.

The 18th and 19th centuries were a prosperous era for the cosmopolitan Habsburg port. Sigmund Freud, James Joyce and Italo Svevo came here to think and write, while two of Verdi's operas (*Il Corsaro* and *Stifelio*) premiered here. The city is also a candidate to star as the site of Expo 2012, an international summer exposition.

Orientation

The bus and train stations are at the northern edge of town. To the west lies the port and the Adriatic Sea and to the east rises the Carso plateau. The Borgo Teresiano centres on the photogenic Canal Grande. The vast Piazza dell'Unità d'Italia is the heart of the city, watched over from the southeast by the Colle di San Giusto and its 15th-century castle.

Information

Hospital (☎ 040 399 25 27; Piazza dell'Ospedale 1)

Mail Boxes Etc (☎ 040 76 40 55; Via San Francesco d'Assisi 15a; per 20 mins €2.50; ☎ 9am-1pm & 3-7pm Mon-Fri, 9am-noon Sat) Internet café.

Police station (☎ 040 379 01 11; Via Tor Bandena 6)

Post office (Piazza Vittorio Veneto 1; ☎ 8.30am-7pm Mon-Sat)

Regional tourist office (☎ 040 36 52 48, 800 016 044; www.turismo.fvg.it in Italian; Via Rossini 6; ☎ 9am-1pm Mon-Fri)

Trieste tourist office (☎ 040 347 83 12; www.trieste-tourism.it; Piazza dell'Unità d'Italia 4b; ☎ 9.30am-7pm). See also www.triestecultura.it.

Sights

COLLE DI SAN GIUSTO

With commanding views across city and sea, this hill is topped by a sturdy 15th-century **castello** (due to reopen in 2008), largely built over earlier fortifications by the city's Venetian rulers. Wander around the walls and pop into the **Lapidario Tergestino** (☎ 040 30 93 62; Piazza della Cattedrale 3; admission free; ☎ 9am-1pm Mon-Sat) with its modest jumble of statuary and architectural fragments.

The **Basilica di San Giusto** (☎ 8am-5pm), completed in 1400, is the synthesis of two earlier Christian basilicas in a blend of the Ravenna and Byzantine styles. The interior contains 13th-century frescoes and a mosaic from the same period depicting St Justus, the town's patron saint. The Virgin and Child and the Apostles appear on another wonderfully preserved 12th-century mosaic.

One intriguing feature of the basilica is the chapel, known as the Escorial Carlista, containing the tombs of nine members of the Spanish royal family; after a dynastic struggle in Spain in the 1830s, Carlos V fled and set up the 'Carlism' court in Trieste, which survived until 1874. The last Spanish royal interred here was Francisco José de Habsburg, as recently as 1975.

The **Civico Museo di Storia ed Arte ed Orto Lapidario** (History & Art Museum & Stone Garden; ☎ 040 31 05 00; Piazza delle Cattedrale 1; adult/child €3/2; ☎ 9am-1pm Tue & Thu-Sun, 9am-7pm Wed) unites a host of mostly Roman antiquities unearthed in and around Trieste and Aquileia. The more delicate items of Roman, Greek, Egyptian and prehistoric art and artefacts are spread over two floors, while the Orto Lapidario (Stone Garden) is a pot-luck assembly of more weather-resistant stone finds. Take bus 24 from the train station.

BORGO TERESIANO

Austrian town planners, at the behest of Empress Maria Theresa, designed much of the elegant city centre area north of Corso Italia in the 18th century. The pretty **Canal Grande** marks the northern end of the harbour. The striking Serbian Orthodox **Chiesa di Santo Spiridione** was completed in 1868 and sports glittering mosaics. The east end of Piazza San Antonio Nuovo is dominated by

the enormous neoclassical Catholic **Chiesa di Sant'Antonio Taumaturgo** (1842).

At the south edge of the *borgo*, take time for the **Civico Museo Teatrale Carlo Schmidl** (☎ 040 36 60 30; Via Rossini 4; adult/child €2/1; 🕒 9am-1pm Tue-Sun), housed in the grand Palazzo Gopcevich. It retraces the history of theatre and music in Trieste to the 18th century, with an engaging collection of historical instruments on the first and second floors and a collection of signatures of such greats as Gioacchino Rossini, Giuseppe Verdi and Giacomo Puccini.

AROUND PIAZZA DELL'UNITÀ D'ITALIA

Corso Italia runs into the vast **Piazza dell'Unità d'Italia**, an elegant triumph of Austro-Hungarian town planning, said to be the biggest square opening on to a waterfront in Italy.

The **Museo d'Arte Orientale** (☎ 040 322 07 36; Via San Sebastiano 1; adult/child €3/2; 🕒 9am-1pm Tue & Thu-Sun, 9am-7pm Wed), in an 18th-century town house, contains an eclectic collection of Chinese porcelain and Japanese prints, drawings, musical instruments and weaponry.

Behind Piazza dell'Unità d'Italia rise remains of the **Roman theatre** (Via del Teatro Romano), built between the 1st and 2nd centuries AD. Concerts are held here occasionally during summer. The **Arco di Riccardo** (Via del Trionfo) is an earlier Roman remnant, one of the old town gateways, dating from 33 BC. Nearby, the baroque **Chiesa di Santa Maria Maggiore**, next door to the minute Romanesque **Basilica di San Silvestro**, is a cavernous church whose main point of interest is the tiny painting by Sassoferrato of the *Madonna della salute*.

Memories of Trieste's Jewish heritage are preserved at the **Museo della Comunità Ebraica Carlo e Vera Wagner** (☎ 040 63 38 19; Via del Monte 5; adult/child €5.21/3.10; 🕒 4-7pm Tue, 10am-1pm Thu, 5-8pm Sun), which has a small exhibition of liturgical items, textiles, documents and photographs. To the northeast lies the city's huge **synagogue** (☎ 040 67 27 26; Via Zanetti 5; admission €3.50; 🕒 10am-noon Sun, Mon & Wed by guided tour), one of the biggest in Italy (and heavily damaged during WWII).

AROUND PIAZZA VENEZIA

Baron Pasquale Revoltella (1795-1869) would be pleased. He not only left his three-storey neo-Renaissance mansion to the city, but also his private collection of then-contemporary art. With this and a hefty financial bequest from Revoltella, the **Museo Revoltella** (☎ 040 675 43 50; www.museorevoltella.it; Via Diaz 27; adult/child

T FOR YOU

The **T For You** card (€8/10 for 24/48 hours) gives free admission to all civic museums, free bus travel and a free seat on the Trieste by Bus tour (see opposite). Discounts at hotels, restaurants and other establishments are listed in the *Trieste Ti Aspetta* booklet. The cards can be bought at the tourist office, museums and at Castello Miramare.

€5/3; 🕒 9am-1.30pm & 4-7pm Wed-Mon) was born in 1872. The city expanded the collection into two neighbouring buildings. Revoltella's house retains the atmosphere and furnishings of the baron's time. The baron's flamboyant taste fills the gaudy rooms, with their chandeliers, gilded plaster, silk wallpaper and gold curtains. His collection of 19th-century Italian paintings and marble sculptures of nudes is on show here. The modern section, Palazzo Brunner, holds a more extensive assemblage of late 19th- and 20th-century works by Triestine, Italian and international artists. Highlights include Urbano Nono's arresting statue group, *Belisario*, and the huge canvas *Beethoven* by Balestrieri Lionello.

The **Civico Museo Sartorio** (☎ 040 30 14 79; Largo Papa Giovanni XXIII 1; adult/child €3/2; 🕒 9am-1pm Tue-Sun), in another villa, offers a varied collection of art, applied arts and jewellery. During restoration work, beautiful ceiling frescoes, some dating to the late 18th century, were uncovered, along with remains of the mosaic floor of a Roman house (*domus*).

Three small museums call the **Biblioteca Civica** (Public Library; Piazza Hortis 4) home. The **Museo Civico di Storia Naturale** (☎ 040 675 86 58; 3rd fl; adult/child €3/2; 🕒 8.30am-1.30pm Tue-Sun) displays a musty array of stuffed animals and bones. Literature fans can poke about documents and other memorabilia linked to two great 20th-century novelists in the **Museo Joyce** (☎ 040 675 81 83; 2nd fl; admission free; 🕒 10am-noon Mon-Fri) and the adjacent **Museo Svevo** (☎ 040 675 81 82; 2nd fl; admission free; 🕒 10am-1pm Mon-Sat, 10am-noon Sun). James Joyce wrote some of his masterpieces in Trieste, and lugubrious local boy Italo Svevo wrote all of his in the city.

THE WATERFRONT

Barely 100m from Piazza Venezia stands the waterfront **Acquario Marino** (☎ 040 30 62 01; Riva Nazario Sauro 1; adult/child €3/2; 🕒 8.30am-7pm Tue-Sun

Apr-Sep, 8.30am-1.30pm Tue-Sun Nov-Mar), where you can view some of the denizens of the Adriatic deep, as well as tropical fish. The former **fish market** (1913), which fills the southern half of the building, is being developed as a future exhibition space. The waterfront ends at the **Lanterna**, a disused 19th-century lighthouse.

RISIERA DI SAN SABBA

The San Sabba rice-husking plant sounds a harmless enough location but in 1944 the Germans, with local Fascist help, built a crematorium here and turned it into Italy's only extermination camp. It is believed 20,000 people perished here, including 5000 of Trieste's 6000 Jews. Yugoslav partisans closed it when they liberated the city in 1945, and 20 years later it became a national monument and **museum** (☎ 040 82 62 02; Via Ratto della Pileria 43; admission free; ☎ 9am-7pm). Take bus 8 from the train station.

Activities

For a dip, head for the modern **Aquamarina** (☎ 040 30 11 00; www.2001team.com in Italian; Molo Fratelli Bandiera 1; adult/child pool admission €6/4.70; ☎ 7.40am-10.20pm Mon, Wed & Fri, 10.20am-6.20pm Tue & Thu, 7.40am-7.40pm Sat, 7.40am-1pm Sun), near the Lanterna. Activities and treatments include aquaerobics classes, a gym, saunas and Turkish baths.

Tours

Trieste by Bus (☎ 040 4 41 44; adult/child under 10 yr €5.20/free) city tours depart from in front of the train station and take 2½ hours. They operate in summer and other peak periods like Easter and around Christmas–New Year.

Literary travellers can follow in the footsteps of James Joyce (1882-1941) with the *Triestine Itineraries Joyce* brochure, available at the tourist office. The Dublin-born writer lived in Trieste from 1904 to 1915, completing *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* and *Dubliners* and beginning *Ulysses* here.

Festivals & Events

The first Sunday of May sees the running of one of Italy's biggest running events, the **Maratona d'Europa** (www.bavisela.it), while the **Barcolana** (www.barcolana.it) is a major sailing spectacle (with thousands of sailing boats filling the gulf around Trieste) on the second Sunday in October.

Sleeping

Many mid range and top-end places slash their rates on weekends.

BUDGET

Ostello Tergeste (☎ 040 22 41 02; www.ostellotergeste.it; Viale Miramare 331; dm/d incl breakfast €14/20; ☎ reception 7am-11.30pm) This HI hostel by the sea, 7km northwest of town, is a stone's throw from Castello Miramare (see p396). Dorms house between four and 20 beds and there is a terrace bar/restaurant with sea views. Take bus 36.

Hotel Alabarda (☎ 040 63 02 69; www.hotelalabarda.it; Via Valdirivo 22; s/d €55/72, s without bathroom €35-42, d without bathroom €50-56) This acceptable two-star hotel has a variety of bright, clean rooms on the 3rd floor of an old town house.

Nuovo Albergo Centro (☎ 040 347 87 90; www.hotelcentrotrieste.it; Via Roma 13; s/d €52/72, s/d without bathroom €37/54; ☎) Right in the heart of Trieste, this small family-run hotel is great value for money, and offers fresh, spick-and-span, if smallish, rooms.

MIDRANGE

Hotel James Joyce (☎ 040 31 10 23; www.hoteljamesjoyce.com; Via dei Cavazzeni 7; s/d €80/110; ☎ ☎) Tucked away down a lane in the centre of town, this small hotel (12 rooms) occupies a renovated 18th-century building. The stark white rooms with tiled floors are a touch Spartan, but it's bright and clean and in a great location.

Hotel Milano (☎ 040 36 96 80; www.hotel-milano.com; Via Carlo Ghega 17; s €95-118, d €130; ☎ ☎ ☎) The Milano is a spotlessly modern and standardised place, with all-tile bathrooms, neutral décor and, in some cases smallish, but comfortable rooms.

Albergo Alla Posta (☎ 040 36 52 08; www.albergo.postatrieste.it; Piazza Oberdan 1; s €98-110, d €130-155, tr €155-175; ☎ ☎) This stylish place combines a pleasant old-world feel with state-of-the-art amenities. The rooms are restfully decorated in neutral tones. First-floor rooms have a timeless, classic feel, while those on the upper floors are more determinedly modern, with designer touches (such as Philippe Starck beds).

L'Albergo Nascosto (☎ 040 30 01 88; www.albergo.nascosto.it; Via Felice Venezian 18; s/d €85/135; ☎ ☎) An exquisite hideaway in a restored *palazzo* offers rooms (and longer-term apartments) in the resuscitated old town of Trieste. The whitewashed rooms have parquet floors and wi-fi. Breakfast is in the 'taverna' downstairs, a comfy zone that makes you feel you are staying over with friends.

TOP END

Grand Hotel Duchi d'Aosta (☎ 040 760 00 11; www.grandhotelduchidaosta.com; Piazza dell'Unità d'Italia 2; s/d Mon-Thu from €224/300, s/d Fri-Sun from €130/190, ste €460-660; P ☒ ☒) For style and tradition, look no further than the four-star Duchi d'Aosta, Trieste's grandest hotel. The commanding location on the city's main square is unbeatable and you can pamper yourself in the Thermarum Magnum (a luxurious wellness centre).

Eating**RESTAURANTS**

Circus (☎ 040 63 34 99; Via San Lazzaro 9b; meal €10-15; ☒ 8am-10.30pm Mon-Sat) The slogan of this fun-oriented café/restaurant is 'Drinkjokecommunitytypepeoplefoodmusicjoyfriendlysnack'. Its décor is a cross between circus big top and old-time cinema and it flaunts a jazzy buzz. Eat out back or outside, or chat at the bar. It has lots of different *panini* (€4 to €5), huge bowls of salad (€5) and a selection of nicely priced *primi* (first course) and mains.

Trattoria al Nuovo Antico Pavone (☎ 040 30 38 99; Riva Grumala 2; meals €25-30; ☒ Mon-Sat) Fresh fish in many forms, along with regulation pasta, adorn the menu at this cosy harbour-front trattoria.

ourpick Le Baretine (☎ 040 30 17 76; Via del Bastione 3; meals €40-50; ☒ lunch & dinner Tue-Sat, dinner Mon) Just sitting at one of the deep timber tables awakens an appetite. The feel is that of a big rustic kitchen, in which you might be served *spaghetti con la bottarga* (a fish-egg sauce), followed by fresh fish fillet with asparagus.

Da Suban (☎ 040 5 43 68; www.suban.it; Via Comici 2, San Giovanni; meals €50; ☒ lunch & dinner Wed-Sun, dinner Mon, closed Aug) Splendidly located out of the centre, this is the classic restaurant for Triestine specialities. In summer, enjoy the breezes in the garden. Generations of locals have been served by generations of the Suban family (since 1865) in a grand old restaurant creaking with dark timber. The house speciality is *schinco*, great chunks of butter-soft, deep-roasted meat off the shank of pig or veal. For dessert, you can't go past the Hungarian *rigoanici*, a kind of chocolate mousse served with a caramel and cream sauce.

BUFFETS

Buffets are a Triestine institution, serving up cheap and authentic local food. Expect lots of boiled bacon, sausages and beer. A classic is *cotto caldo con kren* (a boiled slab of ham served with horseradish).

Buffet Al Spaceto (☎ 338 339 44 47; Via Belpoggio 3a; snacks €1.80-3; ☒ 8.30am-7.30pm Mon-Fri, 8.30am-3pm Sat) Locals gather here for a few glasses of local wine and delicious little snacks, including tiny *panini* with various fillings.

Buffet Da Pepi (☎ 040 36 68 58; Via Cassa di Risparmio 3; meals €15-18; ☒ Mon-Sat) Come to Da Pepi for a traditional meal of mixed boiled meats, cold cuts and beer. All kinds of porky joints and offal have been cooked up in this knockabout, wood-panelled locale since 1897.

Buffet Rudy (☎ 040 63 94 28; Via Valdirivo 32; meals €18-20; ☒ 10am-midnight Mon-Sat) Bratwurst and

COFFEE CULTURE

The inveterate newspaper-rustling coffee-sippers of Mitteleuropa (and that includes Trieste) owe their habit to scimitar-brandishing Turkish infidels. When the Turkish hordes appeared at the gates of Vienna in July 1683, they weren't just hauling gunpowder. In between bombarding the Austrian capital, the troopers would brew themselves a hot cuppa. When they hurriedly broke off the siege under Polish cavalry assault in September, they left sacks of the stuff behind. Not bad at all, the Viennese thought, and so began the habit of a lifetime. As Austrian-controlled Trieste became a free port in 1719, it was only natural that it should also become the main gateway for the empire's coffee imports.

Coffee was thus a big part of Trieste's commercial life by the time the city was absorbed by Italy after WWI. In 1933, Francesco Illy (a former Hungarian officer in the Austro-Hungarian army) set up his own coffee business. He had arrived in Trieste during WWI. In 1935, he invented the prototype for modern espresso-making machines and a vacuum-sealed packing system that allowed his burgeoning company to export all over Italy.

Francesco's scientist son, Ernesto, today the company's president, set up research deals with several universities and over a few years has turned a national brand into an international hit. One of his two sons, Riccardo (born 1955), has been Trieste's mayor and, since 2003, the president of the region.

beer are the order of the day at Buffet Rudy, where you can tuck into a plate of sausages and sauerkraut, and wash it down with a Bavarian brew. Or try a huge plate of *gnocchi* (made of potato or bread) in a goulash sauce! You'll have trouble considering a second course.

Buffet Da Mario (☎ 040 63 93 24; Via Torrebianca 41; meals €18-22; 🕒 Mon-Sat) Fried squid, sardines, and a host of the usual meaty snacks can be yours at this typical buffet.

ourpick Buffet Da Siora Rosa (☎ 040 30 14 60; Piazza Hortis 3; meals €20-25; 🕒 7am-9.30pm Mon-Fri) Opened before WWII by Mrs Rosa Caltaruzza – a portrait of whom still graces the wall – the family-run Siora Rosa is still one of the best and most traditional of Trieste's buffets. Sit at the bar to sample sausages, sauerkraut and other Germanic offerings, or pasta.

QUICK EATS

ourpick Caffè San Marco (☎ 040 36 35 38; Via Cesare Battisti 18; 🕒 8.30am-11pm Tue-Sun) This café, rebuilt after WWI, is by far the most atmospheric and a favourite with students, chess players and newspaper rustlers.

Caffè Tommaseo (☎ 040 36 26 66; www.caffetomaseo.com; Riva III Novembre; meals €22; 🕒 8am-12.30am) One of Trieste's most historic cafés, dating from 1830, Tommaseo is a smart place for lunch, with a menu dominated by beef and fish dishes. The *belle époque* interior has been carefully renovated, while sculpted cherubs in the moulded ceiling and lots of mirrors add a Viennese feel.

Caffè degli Specchi (☎ 040 36 57 77; Piazza dell'Unità d'Italia 7; 🕒 7am-9.30pm) Caffè degli Specchi first opened its doors back in 1839, and has been a fashionable spot for coffee-sipping Triestines ever since, both inside and out. Curious to know just how many variants of coffee can be prepared here? Check out the poster inside.

James Joyce sought inspiration at **Pasticceria Pirona** (☎ 040 63 60 46; Largo della Barriera Vecchia 12; 🕒 7am-7.30pm Tue-Sun), a classic cake shop. Another historic pastry shop is **La Bomboniera** (☎ 040 63 27 52; Via XXX Ottobre 3a; 🕒 9am-1pm & 5-8pm Tue-Sat, 9am-2pm Sun). For the city's best gelato, hit **Gelateria Zampolli** (☎ 040 36 48 68; Via Ghega 10; 🕒 9.30am-midnight Thu-Tue). There is another branch at Viale XX Settembre 25a.

Drinking

Trieste does not promise the most fun night out. In summer, the action concentrates in

come-and-go bars along the waterfront from behind the train station up to Miramare. Otherwise, a handful of pubs, bars and clubs are scattered about town.

La Caffetteria del Borgo (☎ 040 77 45 12; Via Malcan-ton 6; 🕒 7am-2am Tue-Sat, 9am-8pm Sun, 7am-2pm Mon) A hip place to start the night (or drop by for coffee during the day), the atmosphere here is made all the homier by the timber furnishings and stone floor.

Viale 39 (☎ 040 36 72 72; www.viale39.com; Viale XX Settembre 39a; 🕒 10pm-3am Wed-Sat) Theme nights are the thing here, from Latin American Noche Caliente (Hot Night) on Thursday to the hip-hop and R&B sessions on Friday. Lounge around on leather seats with a long drink or get up and dance with the fashion-victim crowd.

Mandracchio (☎ 393 970 60 05; Passo di Piazza 1; 🕒 11pm-5am Mon, Wed, Fri & Sat) If Viale 39 doesn't close late enough for you, finish the night here and dance until dawn, with Italian hits on Friday and the latest in international DJ dance numbers on Saturday.

Entertainment

The **Teatro Verdi** (☎ 040 672 21 11, 800 054 525; www.teatroverdi-trieste.com; Riva III Novembre 1) opera house was designed by Matteo Perlich, architect of Milan's La Scala. The Slovene side of Trieste's life finds expression at the **Teatro Sloveno** (☎ 040 63 26 64, 800 214 302; www.teatersg.it; Via Petronio 4), southeast of the centre, while the **Teatro Miela** (☎ 040 36 51 19; www.miela.it in Italian; Piazza Duca

THROATY REDS IN OSMIZZE

Back in the 18th century, the Habsburg authorities declared that wine makers and other producers in Trieste and the Carso area could sell direct from their homes or very basic restaurants to customers eight days of the year (*osmizza*, in Slovene, means eight). The eight-day rule is long gone, but you can still stumble across *osmizze*, simple shacks or hosteleries where you'll be treated to local red wine (say, Terrano) and perhaps some cuts of sausage or even cheese. They tend to open from about Easter to October and finding them can involve a bit of driving and asking around Il Carso. Some *osmizza* owners lay out strands of ivy on the roads nearby to alert drivers they are approaching one.

degli Abruzzi 3) stages an eclectic mix of events including plays, concerts, cabaret and film screenings. **Casa della Musica** (☎ 040 30 73 09; www.casadellamusica.trieste.it; Via Capitelli 3) puts on various performances, from jazz quartets to solo acts of all types.

Getting There & Away

AIR

Friuli-Venezia Giulia airport (TRS; ☎ 0481 77 32 24; www.aeroporto.fvg.it; Via Aquileia 46), aka Ronchi dei Legionari or Trieste Airport, is 33km northwest of Trieste, near Monfalcone. Direct daily flights to/from Munich, Frankfurt and London Stansted, and less-frequent services to/from Belgrade and Tirana arrive here.

BOAT

Ferries use the **Stazione Marittima** (ferry terminal; Molo dei Bersaglieri 3) in town. **Agemar** (☎ 040 36 37 37; Piazza Duca degli Abruzzi 1a) sells tickets for the twice-weekly car ferry to/from Durres in Albania (deck seat one way low/high season €60/80).

From mid-June to late September, **Samer & Co Shipping** (☎ 040 670 27 11; www.samer.com) has motorboats to/from Grado, Lignano and points along the Istrian coast in Slovenia and Croatia.

BUS

National and international services operate from the **bus station** (☎ 040 42 50 20; Via Fabio Severo 24). Runs include Udine (€5.10, 1¼ hours, at least hourly) and destinations in Slovenia and Croatia such as Ljubljana (€11.60, 2¾ hours, once daily Monday to Saturday), Zagreb (€14, five hours, once daily Monday to Saturday) and Dubrovnik (€57.65, 15 hours, once daily). Bus services to Belgrade in Serbia (€50, 10 hours, two days a week) and Sofia in Bulgaria (€59, 16.5 hours, daily) are operated by **Florentia Bus** (☎ 040 42 50 20; www.florentiabus.it). Both services originate in Florence.

TRAIN

The **train station** (Piazza della Libertà 8) serves Gorizia (€3.55, 50 minutes, hourly), Udine (€6.60, one to 1½ hours, at least hourly), Venice (€8.20 to 13.50, two hours, at least hourly) and Rome (€58.10, 6½ to 7½ hours; most require a change at Mestre).

Getting Around

Bus 30 connects the train station with Via Roma and the waterfront, bus 24 goes to/from

Castello di San Giusto, bus 36 links Trieste bus station with Miramare, and Villa Opicina is served by tram 2 or bus 4. A single ticket (valid for one hour's travel) costs €1 (all-day ticket €3.30).

Bus 51 runs to the airport approximately every 30 minutes between 4.30am and 10.35pm from Trieste bus station (€2.85, one hour). Buses are operated by the Gorizia-based **APT** (Azienda Provinciale Trasporti Gorizia; ☎ 800 955 957; www.aptgorizia.it in Italian).

Shuttle boats link the Stazione Marittima with Muggia year-round (one way/return €3.20/5.95, 30 minutes, six to 10 boats sail daily), Barcola (€1.90, 20 minutes, five or six daily) and Grignano (€3.20, 55 minutes, five or six daily) from mid-April to mid-October. Contact **Trieste Trasporti** (☎ 800 016 675; www.triestetrasporti.it in Italian).

AROUND TRIESTE

A short coastal trip northwest takes you to the **Riviera di Barcola**, a busy stretch of coast guarded by the 70m-high **Faro della Vittoria** (☎ 040 41 04 61; ☎ 10am-3pm Sun & holidays), a lighthouse built in 1927 as a memorial to local sailors who perished in WWI. You can climb the monument for panoramic views of the bay if it has reopened after its recent renovations.

Miramare & Duino

It was supposed to be the stuff of dreams. Rising romantically above the waves at the riviera's northern end, 7km northwest of Trieste, **Castello Miramare** (☎ 040 22 41 43; www.castello-miramare.it; adult/EU citizens 18-25/child €4/2/free, audioguide €3.50; ☎ 9am-7pm) is the fanciful neo-Gothic product of the overworked imagination of Archduke Maximilian of Austria.

He oversaw its construction from 1855 to 1860 but got little use out of it. Attracted by the still more whimsical idea of being crowned Emperor of Mexico, he and his flowing beard darted off there in 1864. He soon found himself without friends and US-backed Mexican republicans dethroned him in 1866. The following year, Maximilian fell before a firing squad. His widow, Carlotta, went mad and moved to Belgium, where she died in 1927.

In the castle, downstairs, several rooms have been preserved much as they were during Maximilian's day, including his cabin-like ground-floor bedroom and peaceful library with its full complement of tomes, marble busts and wonderful sea views.

Upstairs, the magnificent Throne Room (never used as such) is plastered with portraits of Habsburg royalty. Also on this floor is a suite of rooms used by the ill-fated Duke Amadeo of Aosta and his family in the 1930s, and furnished in Art Deco style. Amadeo was appointed Viceroy of Ethiopia by Mussolini in 1937, and five years later died in a British POW camp in Kenya. New Zealand troops were the first to reach the castle in 1945. British units then set up HQ here, replaced by American forces from 1951 to 1954.

The castle, set in 22 hectares of **gardens** (admission free; ☎ 8am-7pm Apr-Sep, 8am-6pm Mar & Oct, 9am-5pm Nov-Feb), bursts with colours and scents of rare and exotic trees. A keen botanist, Maximilian had heated greenhouses built. Today they house **Parco Tropicale** (☎ 040 22 44 06; www.parcotropicale.it in Italian; adult/student/child incl guide €6.50/5/3.50; ☎ 10am-6pm Mar-Oct, to 4pm Nov-Feb) where tropical butterflies, hummingbirds, parrots and other bright birds disport themselves.

The waters here constitute the Riserva Naturale Marina di Miramare (a nature reserve) and swimming is forbidden. The **visitors centre** (☎ 040 22 41 47; www.riservamarinamiramare.it in Italian; ☎ 9am-12.30pm & 2.30-6.30pm Apr-Sep, 9am-12.30pm & 2-5pm Tue-Wed & Fri-Sun Oct-Mar), in the Castelletto ('little castle'), opposite the Parco Tropicale, has tanks containing live fish, sponges and other local marine residents. The Castelletto, a mini version of the main digs, was where Maximilian lived while waiting for his dream home to be completed.

Fourteen km northwest along the coast from Miramare stands the proud **Castello di Duino** (☎ 040 20 81 20; www.castellodiduino.it; adult/student/child 6-16/child under 6yr €7/4.50/3/free; ☎ 9.30am-5.30pm daily Mar-Sep, 9.30am-5.30pm Wed-Mon Oct, 9.30am-4pm Sat & Sun Nov-Feb), a privately owned 14th- and 15th-century bastion filled with all sorts of artworks and curios and surrounded by a verdant garden. The Prague poet Rainer Maria Rilke was a guest here in 1911 and 1912. Take bus 41 from Piazza Oberdan.

Muggia

pop 13,300

A 5km trip south past Trieste's industrial outskirts (including the Illy coffee-roasting plant) and around the Baia di Muggia brings you to this fortified fishing village with a 14th-century castle. Boats sail between Muggia and Trieste (see opposite) and Slovenia is just 4km south from here.

FRIULI-VENEZIA GIULIA B&BS

Friuli-Venezia Giulia has an uneven offering of hotels, especially away from the coast and cities. For country and small-town get-aways, or just a more homey feel away from home in Trieste and Udine, check out the growing network of B&Bs. These offer affordable accommodation in private homes around the region. Check out www.bedandbreakfastvfg.com and www.bbfruli.it.

Muggia has eight hotels and some B&Bs should you wish to stay, including the simple but sparkling, portside **La Bussola** (☎ 040 27 12 66; www.labussoladimuggia.it; Via Manzoni 5; s/d €50/70; ☎). Rooms are spacious but Spartan, with parquet floors. Some look straight over the port.

Il Carso

Inland, the leggy strip of land between the coast and the Slovenian border is known as **Il Carso** or **Altopiano** (Carso Heights), a name pertaining to the geological make-up of this white calcareous tableland, potholed with caves and riddled with doline (sinkholes created when caves collapse), also known as *foibe*.

Local flora (best seen in spring) buds and flowers at the **Carsiana Giardino Botanico** (☎ 040 22 95 73; adult/child €3/2; ☎ 10am-1pm Tue-Fri, 10am-1pm & 3-7pm Sat & Sun late Apr-mid-Oct) in Sgònico. You will see everything from local oaks to various types of rhododendron.

Near Villa Opicina, 5km northeast of Trieste, yawns the gaping chasm of the **Grotta Gigante** (☎ 040 32 73 12; www.grotttagigante.it in Italian; adult/child 6-16/child under 6 €8.50/6.50/free; ☎ 50-min guided tours half-hourly 10am-6pm daily Jul-Aug, half-hourly 10am-6pm Tue-Sun Apr-Jun & Sep, hourly 10am-4pm Tue-Sun Mar & Oct, hourly 10am-noon & 2-4pm Tue-Sun Nov-Feb). At 107m high, 280m long and 65m wide, the 'giant grotto' is the world's largest accessible cave (according to the *Guinness Book of Records*) – St Peter's Basilica in Rome could fit inside. The cave appears to have been inhabited from ancient times to the Roman era. Take bus 42 from Piazza Oberdan, or tram 2 – the scenic choice that has covered the 5.2km journey since 1902 – to Villa Opicina, then bus 42 to the cave.

Local ethnographic tradition comes to life at the **Casa Carsico** (☎ 040 32 71 24; Rupingrande 31; admission free; ☎ 11am-12.30pm & 3.30-6pm Sun & holidays Apr-Nov) in Rupingrande, north of Villa Opicina. The plateau's most important folk

THE HORROR OF THE FOIBE

After years of repression under the Italian Fascists and Nazi Germans, the communist Yugoslav partisans of Josep Broz Tito were in no mood for handing out chocolate bars when they occupied Trieste in May 1945. During May and June of the Yugoslav occupation, thousands of people (there appears to be no reliable figures) in and around the city, Italians and Slavs alike, were rounded up, tortured and cast, often alive, into *foibe* (sinkholes) in the Carso area (especially around Basovizza, where there is a national monument). Between 1945 and 1948 hundreds of thousands of Italians were forced to flee the areas of Istria, Fiume and Dalmatia, Italian territory since 1919 and previously with a long history under Venice (until the Austrians took over in 1797). In the interests of keeping the peace between Italy and Yugoslavia, the tragedy of the *infoibati* (those cast into the *foibe*) and the refugees was long ignored. More particularly, the Italian Communist Party denied their ideological comrades in Yugoslavia had ever committed these crimes. But in Trieste people have never forgotten. Books abound on the lost territories and the city plans to establish a museum dedicated to their culture.

In 2004, a national law was passed instituting a day of remembrance. When Italian president, former Communist Giorgio Napolitano, delivered a speech (and personal apology) in memory of the *infoibati* in February 2007, the (also ex-Communist) Croatian president Stipe Mesic attacked Italy, claiming Rome was calling into question post-WWII peace treaties that defined today's frontiers. He added: 'I would like to remind people that Italy never paid due war reparations after the conflict, while we are prepared to pay compensation' to the descendants of exiles for property left behind after WWII. The Italians reacted indignantly to Mesic's accusations, and he wound up apologising.

festival, **Nozze Carsiche** (Karstic Wedding), is held every two years for four days at the end of August, 2km southeast of Rupingrande in a 16th-century fortress in **Monrupino**.

With the exception of Villa Opicina, you will need your own transport to explore Il Carso.

GORIZIA

pop 36,700 / elev 86m

Welcome to an ex-frontier town. The Iron Curtain sliced right through this Italo-Slovene twin settlement during the Communism era in the former Yugoslavia. In 2004, an independent Slovenia joined the EU, three years later adopted the euro and in 2008 joined the Schengen area, dropping all border controls with Italy.

Gorizia, an easy day trip from Udine or Trieste, was ceded to Italy by Austria after WWI and encompasses the historic old town. Nova Gorica (New Gorizia) is a largely soulless creation of the Tito years, erected largely as a counter town. Even on the Italian side, however, the historical Slovene influence is evident in street signs.

Information

Post office (Corso Verdi 33; ☎ 8.30am-7pm Mon-Sat)

Tourist office (☎ 0481 53 57 64; www.gorizia-turismo.it; Corso Italia 9; ☎ 9.30am-6.30pm)

Sights

BORGO CASTELLO

Gorizia's main sight is its **castello** (☎ 0481 53 51 46; Borgo Castello 36; adult/child €3/free, exhibitions €4-9/free; ☎ 9.30am-1pm & 3-7.30pm Tue-Sun Apr-Oct, 9.30am-6pm Tue-Sun Nov-Mar), the original nucleus of the town. It was restored in the 1920s after suffering serious damage in WWI.

Beneath the main fortress and within the castle walls huddle two museums that couldn't have less to do with one another. The **Museo della Grande Guerra** (☎ 0481 53 39 26; Borgo Castello 13-15; adult/child €3.50/free; ☎ 9am-7pm Tue-Sun) tells the gory and tragic tale of WWI trench warfare on the Italian/Austrian front, with a life-size stretch of trench, and photos of Gorizia at war.

The **Museo della Moda e delle Arti Applicate** (Museum of Fashion & Applied Arts; ☎ 0481 53 39 26; Borgo Castello 13-15; admission incl with Museo della Grande Guerra; ☎ 9am-7pm Tue-Sun) presents a far prettier picture, with a collection of the finery of the well-to-do of the 19th and early 20th centuries.

Take a peak at the coquettish, brick-and-whitewash 14th-century Romanesque **Chiesa di Santo Spirito**, near the castle.

PIAZZA TRANSALPINA

The wire fence between Italy and the former Yugoslavia (now Slovenia) once ran through the middle of this piazza, but in 2004 the dispiriting

Cold War relic was finally pulled down. Where the border ran is traced across the square and the former border crossing point is marked.

OLD TOWN

The grand **Chiesa di Sant'Ignazio** (Piazza della Vittoria; ☎ 8am-noon & 3-7pm), which was built from 1654 to 1724, lords it over the town centre with a broad brush stroke of Eastern mystery, topped as it is by onion-shaped domes.

Inside Gorizia's 18th-century **synagogue** (☎ 0481 53 21 15; Via Ascoli 19; ☎ 6-8pm Tue & Thu, 4-7pm Mon & Fri & Sat, 10am-1pm Sun Apr-Sep, 5-7pm Tue & Thu, 4-7pm Mon & Fri & Sat, 10am-1pm 2nd Sun of month Oct-Mar) is a modest exhibition dedicated to the history of the Jewish presence in Gorizia.

Palazzo Coronini Cronberg (☎ 0481 53 34 85; www.coronini.it; Viale XX Settembre 14; admission €4; ☎ Tue-Sun) is not only a sprawling 16th-century residence jammed with antiquities and art, it is also set in lush gardens that are free to visit. **Palazzo Attens** (☎ 0481 54 75 41; Piazza De Amicis 2; ☎ 9am-7pm Tue-Sun) is worth a visit for the mansion and the regional 20th-century art.

Sleeping & Eating

Albergo Alla Transalpina (☎ 0481 53 02 91; www.hotel-transalpina.com; Via Caprin 30; s/d from €50/70; P) This

three-star hotel stands in a unique position, overlooking the Italy-Slovenia border on Piazza Transalpina. The 30 rooms are light and airy, with parquet floors, and there's a good restaurant attached. In summer you can take breakfast in the garden instead of the breakfast room.

Al Falegname (☎ 0481 54 73 90; www.alfalegname.it; Via Maniaco 2; meals €25; ☎ closed Sun) Dedicated carnivores in particular will appreciate this place, which specialises in beef, along with local sausages and big fat *canerdeli*, or bread gnocchi.

our pick Trattoria Bianchi (☎ 0481 8 00 20; Via Bianchi 35; meals €25-30; ☎ lunch & dinner Thu-Mon, lunch Tue, closed late Aug-late Sep) Set among fields, this wonderful country-house trattoria with a leafy garden is located 1km north of the centre of Mossa (a village 5km west of Gorizia and known as a centre of asparagus production). It has been in the same family since 1904, and specialises (in season) in game and mushrooms.

Cafés are plentiful on Corso Italia, the main street in the new part of town, while the old-town streets below the castle and around the covered **food market** (Via Verdi 30) are the best places to find trattorias.

WHERE TO FEAST ON FRIULIAN FODDER

Friulian cuisine has been influenced by many cultures but poverty has contributed the most. One typical dish, *brovada*, sees you eating turnips fermented with the dregs of pressed grapes (most often served with *muset*, a slightly spicy sausage), while *brodetto* (or *boreto*) is a mixed-fish soup. Otherwise, *gnocchi* (potato, pumpkin or bread dumplings) are popular, as are *cialzons* (variously spelled, a ravioli-gnocchi hybrid stuffed with everything from cheese to chocolate) or sausages and *bolliti* (boiled meats) dished up with polenta and *cren* (horseradish). *Jota* (of Jewish origin) is a thick soup of beans and sauerkraut.

Buffets are a Trieste phenomenon. The atmosphere in these eateries is more Hungarian than Italian, and you might well find yourself scoffing a goulash. In parts of the Carnia, villages populated in the Middle Ages by German migrants still offer items straight out of Austrian mountain menus, like *klotznudl* (dumplings stuffed with ricotta and pears).

For dessert, try a *gubana*, a pastry stuffed with nuts, almonds, raisins, pine nuts, candied orange, butter and sweet liqueur. Cividale and the villages of the Natisone river are the original home to this calorie cannonball.

White wines from the eastern hills of Friuli are considered among the country's tastiest and are best sampled in a *frasca* or *locanda* (rustic, family-run wine bars). Look for such whites as the Pinot Grigio or Tocai Friulano (which is nothing like the sweet Tokaji from Hungary but in 2007 lost the right to use Tocai in its name) from the Colli Orientali and Collio wine-making areas. Reds include Merlot and Pinot Nero and are good without having the excellence of the whites. A rarer red using strictly local grapes is the Refosco.

Coffee, the *coda* to any Friulian feast, can be drunk *à la resentin* (coffee in a cup rinsed with grappa). In Trieste they have their own names for the many Italian variants on coffee. A *capo in b*, for example, is the local version of the *macchiato*, in a glass.

Getting There & Away

The **train station** (Piazzale Martiri Libertà d'Italia), 1km southwest of the centre, has regular connections to/from Udine (€3, 30 minutes, at least hourly) and Trieste (€3.55, 50 minutes, hourly). **APT** (☎ 800 955 957; www.apgorizia.it in Italian) runs buses from the train station to Nova Gorica bus station (€1, 25 minutes).

AROUND GORIZIA

The **Collio hills** spread from the east bank of the Judrio river north of Cormòns and east to Gorizia in a strip closed off by the Slovenian frontier to the north. Some of Italy's finest white wines are made here – among the first in Italy to be awarded a *denominazione di origine controllata* (DOC; controlled origin denomination; see 'DIY Wine Tasting', p76) in 1968. The tourist office in Gorizia has a list of cellars where you can taste, buy and drink the local vintage. Otherwise, contact the **Movimento Turismo del Vino Friuli-Venezia Giulia** (☎ 0432 2895 40; www.mtvfriulivg.it), which has comprehensive information on all of the region's wineries and organises an annual open day at the region's wineries in late May.

At the heart of wine territory is **Cormòns**, 13km west of Gorizia on the train line to Udine. The town centre is pretty and the tourist office, the **Enoteca di Cormòns** (☎ 0481 63 03 71; Piazza XXIV Maggio 21; ☎ 11am-9pm Wed-Mon), doubles as a wine-tasting spot. In the country, 2km west of town, is the **Trattoria al Cacciatore** (☎ 0481 6 05 31; La Subida; meals €55; ☎ Thu-Mon), a wonderful setting for enjoying fine traditional food and the best in local wines. There are rooms too. Trains from Udine (€2.50, 20 to 25 minutes) run three or four times daily to Cormòns en route to Gorizia.

Travel the country-lane route between Gorizia and Cormòns, via **San Floriano** (visit Castello Formentini, Piazza della Libertà). The narrow road hugs the Slovene border and meanders through vineyards, rolling hills and woodland.

More sobering are the monuments to WWI soldiers, built outside Gorizia during the 1930s. The remains of 57,200 soldiers who died during WWI rest inside the **Sacrario di Oslavia** (☎ 9am-12.30pm & 2.30-5.45pm Apr-Sep, 9am-12.30pm & 2-4.45pm Oct-Mar), 5km north of Gorizia.

The **Redipuglia Memorial**, beside the SS305 near Redipuglia, 15km south of Gorizia, shelters the remains of over 100,000 soldiers from the Italian Third Army. An on-site **museum**

(☎ 0481 48 90 24; admission free; ☎ 8.30am-12.30pm & 1.30-5pm Tue-Sun Apr-Sep, 8.30am-12.30pm & 1.30-5pm Tue-Sat Oct-Mar) relates the history of the Great War, and there are fortified trenches and other warfare remnants to be seen at the foot of the enormous 22-tier hillside memorial. The monument was originally smaller, but Mussolini had it rebuilt in grander style (and 100,000 soldiers' remains shifted across the street) in 1937.

The area is sprinkled with other monuments, including one atop **Monte di San Michele**, 10km south of Gorizia near San Martino del Carso, the scene of particularly bloody encounters (you can still wander through the battlefield today).

APT buses link Gorizia and Oslavia (€0.96, 10 minutes), and Redipuglia can be reached by train from Gorizia (€2.10, 15 minutes, at least hourly).

PALMANOVA

pop 5500 / elev 26m

If you flew over it, you'd see what makes this town so special. Built 10km north of Aquileia in 1593 by the Venetians, Palmanova is a fortress in the form of a nine-pointed star (one of a dozen such cities across Europe). Napoleon and the Austrians used it, the town was on the front line in WWI and to this day the Italian army maintains a garrison here.

From hexagonal Piazza Grande, at the star's centre, six roads radiate through the old town to the defensive walls, the city's real attraction. Head along Borgo Udine, one of the spokes, to uncover local history in the **Civico Museo Storico** (☎ 0432 92 91 06; Borgo Udine 4; adult/child €2/1.50; ☎ 9.30am-12.30pm Thu-Tue), inside Palazzo Trevisan. The museum also acts as a tourist office and has information on secret-tunnel tours that wind beneath the city walls.

The **Museo Storico Militare** (☎ 0432 92 35 35; Borgo Cividale Dongione di Porta Cividale; admission free; ☎ 9am-noon & 2-6pm Tue-Sat, 9am-noon Sun Apr-Sep, 9am-noon & 2-4pm Tue-Sat, 9am-noon Sun Oct-Mar) is inside Porta Cividale, one of three monumental town gates. The military museum traces the history of troops stationed in Palmanova from 1593 to WWII.

The family-owned **Albergo Ristorante Roma** (☎ 0432 92 84 72; www.hotelromapalmanova.it; Via Borgo Cividale 27; s/d/tr from €38/56/70; ☎) is a simple but perfectly comfortable place, and the only hotel within the city walls. Décor is a trifle stuffy but the reception is warm and everything spotless.

Cafés stud central Piazza Grande and several good eateries can be tried on or near Borgo Udine. You can inspect the original certificate for the opening in 1864 of **La Campana d'Oro** (☎ 0432 92 87 19; Borgo Udine 25b; meals €35; ☞ lunch & dinner Wed-Sat, lunch Mon) on the wall. It is still known for delicate cooking, with fish and meat options such as goulash and smoked goose breast.

Regular buses link Palmanova with Udine (€2.10, 25 to 30 minutes) and Aquileia (€2.10, 30 to 40 minutes). They leave from Via Rota, just inside the walls.

AQUILEIA

pop 3500

Founded in 181 BC, Aquileia, a Unesco World Heritage Site, was one of the largest and richest cities of the Roman Empire, with a population as high as 100,000 at its peak. Aquileia was also an important centre for early Christianity and a patriarchate was founded here in the 4th century. Destroyed by Attila's Huns in AD 452, the town never regained its former status, although the construction of the basilica in the 11th century ensured its religious importance for centuries. Aquileia was under Austrian rule from 1509 until 1918.

A relatively tiny town (with the largest Palaeo-Christian mosaic floor in Europe), Aquileia lies at the eastern end of the Venetian plains. Guided tours of its extraordinary Roman sights are organised by the **tourist office** (☎ 0431 91 94 91; www.aquileiaturismo.info in Italian; ☞ 9am-5pm) at the bus station and more information can be found at www.aquileia.it.

Sights

The entire floor of the Latin cross-shaped **basilica** (Piazza Capitolò; admission free; ☞ 9am-1pm & 2-5pm Mon-Fri, 9am-5pm Sat & Sun), rebuilt after an earthquake in 1348, is covered with one of the largest and most spectacular Roman-era mosaics in the world. The 760-sq-m floor of the basilica's 4th-century predecessor is protected by transparent glass walkways, allowing visitors to wander above the long-hidden images, which include episodes from the story of Jonah and the whale, the Good Shepherd, images of various sea creatures and birds and portraits of, presumably, the wealthy Roman patrons of this early Christian church.

Equally remarkable treasures fill the basilica's two crypts. The 9th-century **Cripta degli**

Affreschi (Crypt of Frescoes) is adorned with faded 12th-century frescoes depicting the trials and tribulations of saints, while the **Cripta degli Scavi** (Excavations Crypt) reveals more mosaic floors in varying states of preservation. Images include birds, goats and foliage, as well as more peculiar subjects such as a lobster in a tree and a fight between a tortoise and a chicken. Images here were destroyed or badly damaged by the erection of the basilica's 73m-high **bell tower**, built in 1030 with stones from the Roman amphitheatre. Entrance to the crypts for adults/children is €3/free.

Scattered remnants of the Roman town include extensive ruins of the **Porto Fluviale** (River Port; Via Sacra; admission free; ☞ 8.30am-1hr before sunset), the old port, which once linked the settlement to the sea. Also free to visit are the partially restored remains of houses, markets, sections of road and the **Forum** on Via Giulia Augusta.

Locally excavated statues, pottery, glassware and jewellery are displayed in the **Museo Archeologico Nazionale** (☎ 0431 9 10 16; Via Roma 1; adult/EU citizens 18-25/child €4/2/free; ☞ 8.30am-2pm Mon, 8.30am-7.30pm Tue-Sun), one of northern Italy's most important collections. One intriguing artefact is the gilded bronze head of an emperor dating from the 3rd century AD.

Aquileia's **Museo Paleocristiano** (☎ 0431 911131; Piazza Pirano; admission free; ☞ 8.30am-1.45pm) exhibits early Christian mosaic floors and tombstones from the surrounds.

Sleeping & Eating

Ostello Domus Augusta (☎ 0431 9 10 24; www.ostelloaquileia.it; Via Roma 25; dm/s/d incl breakfast €17/23/37; ☞) This gleaming hostel has 92 beds shared between rooms sleeping from two to six people. Relax in the small garden or rent a bike.

Hotel Restaurant Patriarchi (☎ 0431 91 95 95; www.hotelpatriarchi.it; Via Giulia Augusta 12; s €48-52, d €79-88; ☞) This sizable three-storey choice is a stone's throw from the basilica and is the best place in town. Rooms are mostly spacious and some have views of the basilica. The restaurant wine cellar is well stocked and the chef is a dab hand at fish dishes.

Getting There & Away

Regular SAF buses link Aquileia with Grado (€1.60, 15 minutes), Palmanova (€2.10, 30 minutes, up to eight daily) and Udine (€3, 1¼ hours).

GRADO

pop 8900

The beach resort of Grado, 14km south of Aquileia, spreads along a narrow island backed by lagoons. Its charming medieval centre, criss-crossed by narrow *calli* (lanes), is dominated by the Romanesque **Basilica di Sant'Eufemia** (Campo dei Parriarchi) and the nearby remains of a 4th- to 5th-century church **mosaic** (Piazza Biagio Marin). *Belle époque* mansions, beach huts and thermal baths line the cheerful beachfront. From October to April, the place is dead.

Small *casoni* (reed huts), built for fishermen during winter, dot the tiny islands surrounding Grado. In summer some can be visited by boat (2½ hours, adult/child €15/8); the **tourist office** (☎ 0431 87 71 11; www.gradoturismo.info in Italian; Viale Dante Alighieri 72; ☹ 9am-1pm & 3-6pm) has details. Many of the islands are protected nature reserves and off limits.

On the first Sunday in July, a votive procession, with a statue of the Virgin Mary on board, sails from Grado to the **Santuario di Barbana** (☎ 0431 804 53), an 8th-century church on a lagoon island. Grado fishermen have done this since 1237 when the Madonna of Barbana saved their town from the plague. Boats link the sanctuary with Grado (adult/child return €4/2.50, three to eight times daily from April to October, and twice daily on Sunday from November to March).

Sleeping & Eating

Grado Promhotels (☎ 0431 8 29 29; Riva Zaccaria Gregori 9; ☹ 9am-12.30pm & 3-6.30pm) can book you into hotels and apartments. Hotel prices rocket in August especially.

Albergo Alla Spiaggia (☎ 0431 8 48 41; www.albergoallaspiaggia.it; Via Mazzini 2; s/d from €54/108, half/full board per person from €63/68; ☹ Apr-Oct; P ☹) This late-1920s, whitewashed hotel sports a quintessential seaside façade, with a sparkling white bar and blue tables and chairs adorning each balcony. It sits bang on the seafloor.

Agli Artisti (☎ 0431 8 30 81; Campiello Porta Grande 2; meals €35; ☹ Wed-Sun, closed Nov & Feb) In the old town (filled with eateries), this pretty spot serves good-quality regional cuisine, with such specials as *boreto* (a fish stew). In the days of the Venetian republic, the town crier worked in this building, keeping locals abreast of the news.

Getting There & Away

Buses run between Grado and Udine (€3.55, 1¼ hours, 12 daily) via Aquileia.

AROUND GRADO

Riserva Naturale Regionale della Valle Cavanata

(☎ 0431 8 83 86; www.parks.it/riserva.valle.cavanata; ☹ 9am-12.30pm Mon, Wed & Fri, 2-6pm Sat, 10am-6pm Sun & holidays Apr-Sep, 9am-1pm Tue & Thu, 10am-4pm Sun & holidays Oct-Mar) protects a 1920s fish-farming area and extraordinary bird life in the east of the lagoon; more than 230 species have been observed, including the greylag goose and many wading birds.

Further east, the final 15km stretch of the river Isonzo's journey into the Adriatic flows through the **Riserva Naturale Regionale Foce dell'Isonzo**, a 2350-hectare nature reserve where visitors can bird-watch or horse ride, cycle and walk around salt marshes and mud flats. Reserve passes are sold at the **visitors centre** (☎ 0432 99 81 33; www.riservanaturalefoceisonzo.it; adult/child €2/1; ☹ 9am-5pm Fri-Wed) in Isola della Cona in the reserve.

LAGUNA DI MARANO

The Laguna di Marano sprawls immediately west of the Laguna di Grado. Frequented more by bird life than human life, it is accessible by a couple of gravel roads.

Pretty **Marano Lagunare**, a Roman fishing port that was later fortified, is the only settlement on the lagoon shore. Peace and quiet is ensured by two nature reserves – the 1377-hectare **Riserva Naturale della Foci dello Stella**, protecting the marshy mouth of the Stella river and reached by boat, and the **Riserva Naturale della Valle Canal Nuovo**, a 121-hectare reserve in a former fishing valley. The **visitors centre** (☎ 0431 6 75 51; Via delle Valli 2; ☹ 9am-5pm Tue-Sun), in a fisherman's reed hut, is shared by the two reserves.

LIGNANO

Hordes of Italian and foreign sun-seekers pour into the sandy beach peninsula of Lignano every summer. Occupying the tip of a peninsula facing Laguna di Marano to the north and the Adriatic to the south, **Lignano Sabbiadoro** (population 6800) sits at the eastern end of three adjoining resorts. **Lignano Pineta**, 1km south, went up in the 1950s, while **Lignano Riviera**, the newest of the three at the mouth of the river Tagliamento, is marketed as the most nature-friendly.

There are tourist offices in **Sabbiadoro** (☎ 0431 7 18 21; www.aplignano.it; Via Latisana 42) and **Pineta** (☎ 0431 42 21 69; Via dei Pini 53; ☹ Jun-Sep). Hotels (around 135) and holiday flats abound.

There are also three camping grounds. Check the www.lignano.it website, on which you can do everything from booking a hotel or an umbrella on the beach to buying a boat.

In Saggiadoro, portside **Hotel La Goletta** (☎ 0431 7 12 74; www.hotelgoletta.it; Viale Italia 44; s €33-43, d €66-86; P) is a reasonable choice. Some of the neutrally decorated, tile-floored rooms look virtually right over the marina.

The young and restless of Udine descend on Lignano on summer nights.

Lignano Saggiadoro is linked by bus to Udine (€5.10, 1½ hours, several daily).

PORDENONE & AROUND

Pordenone

pop 51,100

Pordenone barely blips on most travellers' radar screens, yet this place on the Noncello river has been inhabited at least since Roman times and makes for a pleasant wander.

The **tourist office** (☎ 0434 52 03 81; Via Damiani 2c; ☎ 9am-1pm & 2-6pm Mon-Fri, 9am-1pm Sat) can help with information on the surrounding province.

Pedestrianised, café-lined Corso Vittorio Emanuele II, the central artery of the old town and lined with arcades and fresco-laden mansions, describes an elegant curve between Piazza Cavour and the *duomo* (cathedral).

The bare Romanesque-Gothic façade of the **Duomo di San Marco** (Piazza San Marco; ☎ 7.30am-noon & 3-7pm) betrays signs of frequent changes down the centuries. Inside, among the many frescoes and other artworks, is the *Madonna della misericordia*, by the Renaissance master Il Pordenone (1484–1539). In defiance of the other-worldly, the **Palazzo del Comune** (Town Hall) stands facing away from the *duomo*. The 13th-century brick structure has three Gothic arches and some Renaissance additions, like the loggia and clock tower (what an enormous timepiece!).

Opposite the Palazzo del Comune is the medieval **Palazzo Ricchieri**, in whose richly decorated upper rooms is located the city's modest **Museo d'Arte** (☎ 0434 39 23 11; Corso Vittorio Emanuele II 51; adult/child €3/2; ☎ 3-7pm Tue-Sat, 10am-1pm & 3-7pm Sun), whose collections of Friulian and Veneto artists range from the 15th to the 18th centuries. The main interest lies in the building itself (timber ceilings and remains of 14th-century frescoes).

There are a dozen sleeping options, none all that exciting. **La Vecia Osteria del Moro** (☎ 0431

286 58; Via Castello 2; meals €35-40; ☎ Mon-Sat), just off the Corso near the Comune, is a vaulted den offering a fine mixed-meat grill, *baccalà* (cod) and various snacks.

Pordenone is on the Venice–Udine train line. Frequent services run to and from Udine (€3.55, 30 to 40 minutes). From Venice (Mestre) trains run about every half-hour (€4.40, 1¼ to 1½ hours). **ATAP** (☎ 800 101 040; www.atap.pn.it) runs buses to the surrounding towns.

Pordenone to Val Cellina

Various excursions lure you from Pordenone. The first takes you 12km west to **Sacile** (population 19,400), a gracious town whose centre is formed by two islands amid the gushing, willow-lined Livenza river and canals. A walk among the fine mansions and arcaded lanes is ample reward.

From Sacile, head to **Caneva**, from where a lane leads past verdant vineyards to hilltop castle ruins (signposted). You could continue northwest about 20km for the forests of the **Bosco del Cansiglio**. Otherwise, arc northeast through **Polcenigo** and **Aviano** before climbing east to the high plateau and modest ski resort of **Piancavallo**.

From Piancavallo, a narrow road descends north to the attractive lakeside hamlet of **Barcis**, in the scenic Val Cellina. Around 15km northeast await the huddled stone villages of **Claut** and **Cimolais**, with their breathtaking mountain views. Both make fine bases for hiking into the rugged **Parco Naturale Regionale delle Dolomiti Friulane** (☎ 0427 8 73 33; www.parcodolomitifriulane.it), on the edge of which they sprawl.

Another back-country route would see you winding and swerving up hill and down dale 17km east of Barcis and past **Andreis** to **Pof-fabro**, the most delightful of a series of huddled hamlets in thick woods. Stop for a drink. There are a couple of places to stay.

From there it's 6km south to Maniago and the plains north of Pordenone.

Buses from Pordenone run to all these places. The most distant is Cimolais (€5.10, 1½ to two hours, up to four times daily).

Along Tagliamento River

Back in Montereale Valcellina, head east along the SS464 to **Spilimbergo** (population 11,700), on the Tagliamento river. Once a flourishing medieval centre that controlled river traffic, it boasts an enchanting historic core and a world-renowned **mosaics school**

(www.scuolamosaicistifriuli.it in Italian; ☎ 8.30am-noon & 1-4pm Mon-Fri) that you can sometimes visit.

Cobbled Corso di Roma is flanked by arched houses and intriguing lanes. The 14th-century **Duomo di Santa Maria Maggiore** (Via Dante 3; ☎ 8am-noon & 2.30-7pm) is a Romanesque-Gothic mongrel and offers a west entrance with seven rose-coloured windows that look like so many portholes. Admire the 13th- and 14th-century frescoes depicting Bible scenes and the magnificent 15th-century organ decorated by Il Pordenone.

Just behind the Duomo rises the brooding carcass of the **Castello** (Piazza Castello; ☎ 9am-12.30pm), a medieval fort whose 15th-century **Palazzo Dipinto** (Painted Mansion) attracts particular attention with its frescoes.

Behind the frescoes lies the excellent **Ristorante La Torre** (☎ 0427 5 05 55; Piazza Castello; meals €40; ☎ Tue-Sat & lunch Sun). The fort was raised by the Spengenberg clan (a German family that had arrived in Friuli in the 11th century and gave its name, in altered form, to the town). By the old town's **east tower**, sip wines and snack on pasta at the hip **Enoteca La Torre** (☎ 0427 29 98; Via di Mezzo 2; ☎ 10.30am-2.30pm & 5pm-midnight Wed-Mon).

From Spilimbergo, head south, following a branch railway line towards Portogruaro in Veneto. Some villages en route contain gems and surprises. **Valvasone** (population 2100) is a beguiling medieval hamlet clustered around a modest castle-fort and *duomo* (again, Il Pordenone decorated the organ). At **Casarsa della Delizia** (population 8240), 5km south, film-maker Pier Paolo Pasolini was born and is buried. Visit the **Centro Studi Pier Paolo Pasolini** (☎ 0434 87 05 93; www.pasolinicasarsa.org; Via Pasolini 4) to learn about his life (Italian only, hours depend on temporary displays). Another 5.5km south and you hit the beautiful, cobbled-lane town of **San Vito al Tagliamento** (population 13,700), crammed with churches. Most interesting of all is the impressive **Abbazia di Santa Maria in Sylvis** (☎ 0434 69 90 14; Piazza Castello; ☎ 8am-7.30pm) in **Sesto al Reghena** (population 5680). Originally established in the 8th century, the abbey reached the peak of its power in the 12th to 14th centuries. Today, one of seven defensive towers built in the 15th century still stands watch over the 12th-century basilica.

A happy locale for sleeping and eating is **Agriturismo Gelindo dei Magredi** (☎ 0427 9 70 37; www.gelindo.it; Via Roma 16; d €70; ☎ ☎ ☎) in the sleepy farming town of **Vivaro**, 10km west of

Spilimbergo. Spacious, quiet rooms (some with kitchens) and elegant, fresh local cooking are the order of the day. There are orchards, family flats, pool and more.

There are other places to stay in all these towns; for addresses, check out www.porde none-turismo.com and click on Alloggiare. Buses run to and from Pordenone.

UDINE

pop 96,400 / elev 114m

With its engaging Renaissance core and Romanesque-Gothic cathedral, Udine is the region's most Italianate city. The Renaissance master Giambattista Tiepolo lived here for years, leaving various works behind. Although this busy centre inherited something of the Italo-Slav-Germanic mix present in other parts of the region, the town's identity is predominantly Friulian (note the bilingual street signs). Four centuries of Venetian rule left the deepest 'foreign' traces in the city's appearance.

Information

Hospital (☎ 0432 55 21; Piazza Santa Maria della Misericordia 15) About 2km north of the centre.

Internet (per hr €2.40; ☎ 8.30am-11pm) Inside the bus station.

Libreria Carducci (☎ 0432 50 27 86; Piazza XX Settembre 16; ☎ Mon-Sat) Travel guides and maps aplenty.

Main post office (Via Vittorio Veneto 42; ☎ 8.30am-7pm Mon-Sat)

Police station (☎ 0432 41 31 11; Viale Venezia 31)

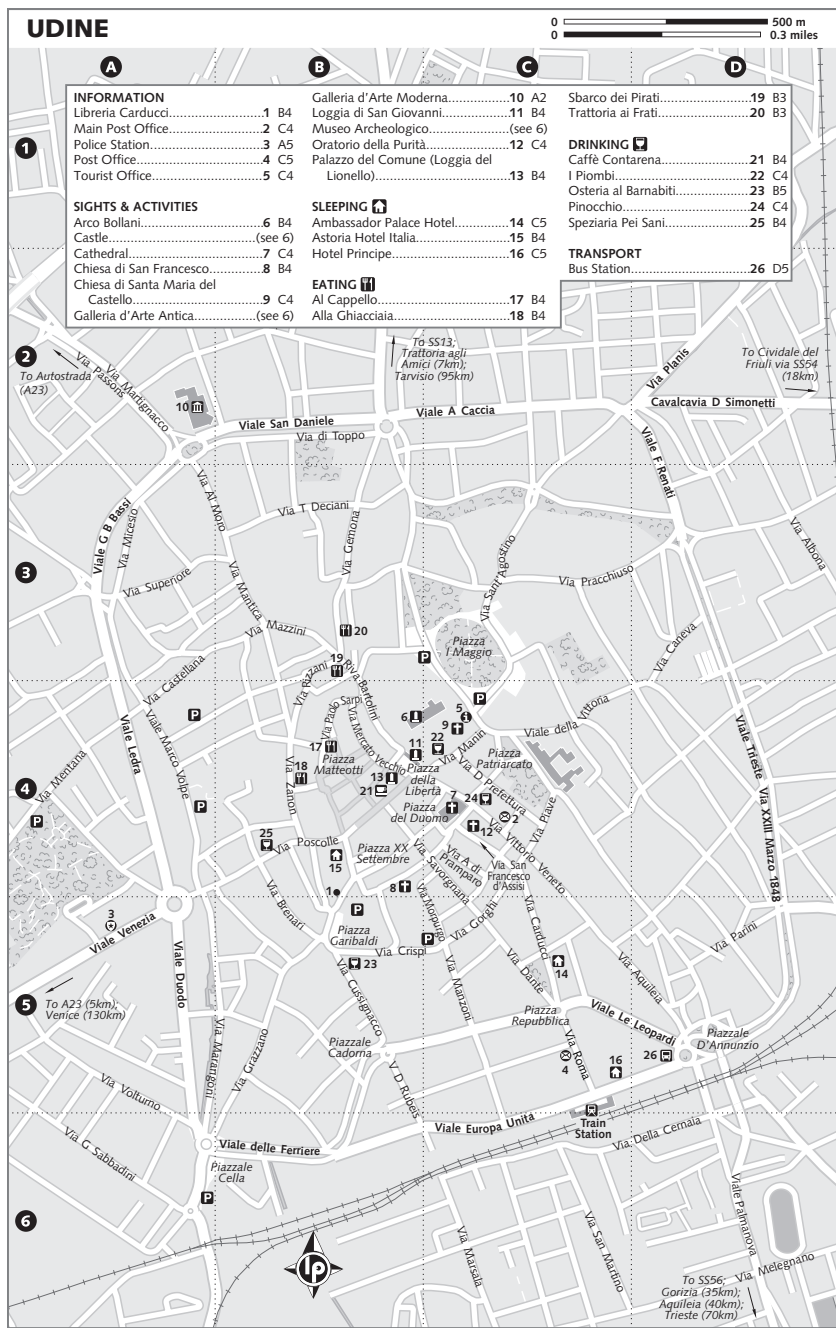
Tourist office (☎ 0432 29 59 72; www.udine-turismo.it; Piazza I Maggio 7; ☎ 8.30am-6.30pm Mon-Sat, 10am-4pm Sun)

Sights

PIAZZA DELLA LIBERTÀ & AROUND

Udine's Renaissance heart beats in Piazza della Libertà. The 15th-century **Palazzo del Comune** (Town Hall), also known as the Loggia del Lionello after its architect (a goldsmith by the name of Nicolò Lionello), is a clear reminder of Venetian influence, as is the **Loggia di San Giovanni** opposite, which features a clock tower modelled, albeit in squatter format, on the one gracing Venice's Piazza San Marco. As in Venice, Moorish figures strike the hours.

The **Arco Bollani** (Bollani Arch), next to the Loggia di San Giovanni, was designed by Andrea Palladio in 1556 and leads up to the castle used by the Venetian governors. The way is lined by the Porticato del Lippomano, a



late-15th-century portico raised along one of the city's former defensive walls.

The **castle** (built in the mid-16th century after an earthquake in 1511 destroyed the previous castle) houses the **Galleria d'Arte Antica** (☎ 0432 27 15 91; adult/child €3/1.50, Sun morning free; ☎ 9.30am-12.30pm & 3-6pm Tue-Sun), which has a handful of works by Caravaggio (there is a portrait of St Francis in room 7), Carpaccio (such as the adoration of Christ's blood in room 3) and Tiepolo (several works in room 10). The bulk of the collection is dedicated to lesser-known Friulian painters and religious sculpture.

Admission includes a visit to the **Museo Archeologico**, also in the castle, with objects dating as far back as the Iron Age. The 12th-century **Chiesa di Santa Maria del Castello** on the hill used to stand within the medieval castle walls and still boasts some frescoes inside.

CATHEDRAL & AROUND

Heading south from Piazza della Libertà down Via Vittorio Veneto, you reach Piazza del Duomo and Udine's 13th-century Romanesque-Gothic **cathedral**. Housed in a couple of chapels is the **Museo del Duomo** (☎ 0432 50 68 30; admission free; ☎ 9am-noon & 4-6pm Tue-Sat, 4-6pm Sun), among whose most interesting elements are the 13th- to 17th-century frescoes in the Cappella di San Nicolò. Across the street is the **Oratorio della Purità** (Piazza del Duomo) with a beautiful ceiling painting of the Assumption by Giambattista Tiepolo, and eight biblical scenes in chiaroscuro by Giandomenico Tiepolo on the walls. The building had been raised as a theatre in 1680 but the patriarch of Aquileia had it transformed 80 years later out of repugnance for such a devilish institution so close to the cathedral. Ask in the cathedral for a guided tour (free) of the oratory, which is otherwise generally not open.

South of Piazza del Duomo, the 13th-century **Chiesa di San Francesco** (Largo Ospedale Vecchio; adult/child €5/3.50; ☎ exhibitions 9am-noon & 3.30-7pm Tue-Sun) was once one of Udine's most striking churches. It is now used as a gallery and is open only during exhibitions.

GALLERIA D'ARTE MODERNA

The **Modern Art Gallery** (☎ 0432 29 58 91; Piazzale Paolo Diacono 22; adult/child Mon-Sat €3/1.50, admission free Sun; ☎ 9.30am-12.30pm & 3-6pm Tue-Sat, 9.30am-12.30pm Sun) was established in 1885 after a rich Udinese merchant left his estate to the city. Since then,

the gallery has absorbed other collections as well. It features works by well-known 20th-century Italian artists, such as De Chirico, Severini and Morandi.

Sleeping

For farmhouse accommodation around Udine, contact **Agriturismo del Friuli-Venezia Giulia** (☎ 0432 20 26 46; www.agriturismofvg.com; Via Gorgi 27).

Hotel Principe (☎ 0432 50 60 00; www.principe-hotel.it; Viale Europa Unita 51; s/d €69/99; **P** ☎) Set back from the busy road in a thankfully quiet courtyard, the Principe is a smart and friendly option that's handy to the train station. Pale blues and neutral creams dominate room décor.

Astoria Hotel Italia (☎ 0432 50 50 91; www.hotelastoria.udine.it; Piazza XX Settembre 24; s/d from €76/131; **P** ☎) This green-shuttered, yellow, arcaded hotel is housed in a charming historic building on a quiet square in the old town. Rooms are a little compact but tastefully arranged.

Ambassador Palace Hotel (☎ 0432 50 37 77; www.ambassadorpalacehotel.it; Via Carducci 46; s/d €118/148; **P** ☎) This smart four-star choice provides a touch of understated elegance in a good central location. Spacious rooms boast parquet floors, and heavy curtains. The singles are a little poky.

Eating

Several open-air cafés and restaurants are dotted around Piazza Matteotti and the surrounding pedestrian streets. Via Paolo Sarpi and surrounding streets are lined with lively restaurants and bars.

Sbarco dei Pirati (☎ 0432 2 13 30; Riva Bartolini 12; meals €20) Pots, pans, saws, clogs, saddles and other assorted junk hang from the walls and ceiling. Typical meaty Friulian fare fills the brief menu, popular with students and those on a student budget.

Trattoria ai Frati (☎ 0432 50 69 26; Piazzetta Antonini 5; meals €25; ☎ Mon-Sat) A delightful old-style eatery on a cobbled cul-de-sac and with tiny timber tables, expect such local specialities as *frico* (a thick, succulent cheese-and-potato omelette), or *tagliolini* served with San Daniele ham.

Alla Ghiacciaia (☎ 0432 50 24 71; Via Zanon 13; meals €25-30; ☎ Tue-Sun) Once an ice factory, this is a pleasing spot to eat local cuisine with a meaty bent, especially if you grab a table by the narrow, burbling canal.

Al Cappello (☎ 0432 29 93 27; Via Paolo Sarpi 5; meals €30-35; 🍷 lunch & dinner Tue-Sat, lunch Sun) Wine lovers should not miss this historic spot, where hundreds of tempting tipples are scribbled on the giant blackboard. Food is predominantly snacky, although with a few you could easily reach lunchtime saturation.

Trattoria agli Amici (☎ 0432 56 54 11; www.agliamici.it; Via Liguria 250, Località Godia; meals €60-70; 🍷 lunch & dinner Tue-Sat, lunch Sun) It is worth making the trek out of central Udine to this classic of traditional and creative cooking, which the Scarello family has run successfully since 1887. Try the *ravioli di formaggi di malga, trippe ed ortaggi croccanti* (a cheese-filled dumpling with tripe and crispy vegetables). The tasting menu (€70 including wine) is tempting.

Drinking

ourpick **Caffè Contarena** (☎ 0432 51 27 41; www.caffe.contarena.it; Via Cavour 11; 🍷 9am-2am Mon-Sat) An Art Deco fantasy with high ceilings and lots of polished timber, this is Udine's glamour-puss scene. The maxim in this stunning café beneath the arcades of Palazzo d'Aronco is sip coffee or cocktails and look good.

I Piombi (☎ 0432 50 61 68; Via Manin 12; 🍷 10am-2am) Head downstairs into what for centuries was the city's prison. A labyrinth of vaulted brick rooms host long timber benches that creak under the weight of beers, wine, food and a crowd of happy inmates.

Pinocchio (☎ 392 995 86 99; Via Lovaria 3a; 🍷 7pm-3am Tue-Sun) Hip Pinocchio boasts a sprawling bar, low lights and thumping music. Locals balance cocktails while eyeing each other off, although sometimes they are distracted by live acts. Cocktails cost €5, less in happy hour from 7pm.

Speziaria Pei Sani (☎ 0432 50 50 51; Via Poscolle 13; 🍷 10am-9pm Mon-Sat) Walls are lined with bottle after bottle of wine and grappa at this superb wine bar, a fave with Udine's student body.

Osteria al Barnabiti (☎ 347 174 78 50; www.barnabiti.com; Piazza Garibaldi 3a; 🍷 10am-midnight Mon-Thu, 10am-1am Fri & Sat) The first oddity is the bar itself, a series of giant old wooden lecterns with inkwells. Hang about for fine wines, or get into some of the harder stuff if you choose. Light meals, such as assorted cold meats and cheeses, are available to assist absorption.

Getting There & Away

From the **bus station** (☎ 0432 50 69 41; Viale Europa Unità 31), services operated by **SAF** (☎ 800 915 303,

0432 60 81 11; www.saf.ud.it) go to and from Trieste (€5.10, 1¼ hours, hourly), Aquileia (€3, one to 1¼ hours, up to eight daily), Lignano Sabbiadoro (€5.10, 1½ hours, eight to 11 daily) and Grado (€3.55, 1¼ hours, 12 daily). Buses also link Udine and Friuli-Venezia Giulia airport (€3.55, one hour, hourly).

From Udine's **train station** (Viale Europa Unità) services run to Trieste (€5.65, 1 hour and 10 minutes), Venice (€7.10, 1¾ to 2½ hours, several daily) and Gorizia (€3, 25 to 40 minutes, hourly).

VILLA MANIN

Contemporary-art lovers will adore the exhibitions at **Villa Manin** (☎ 0432 90 66 57; www.vilamanin.it; Piazza Manin 10; adult/child €8/5; 🍷 museum 9am-12.30pm & 2.30-6pm Tue-Fri, 10am-6.30pm Sat & Sun), a villa in **Passariano**, 30km southwest of Udine. Home to the Venetian noble Manin family from the 1600s until as late as the 1990s (when the last count died heirless), which included the last of Venice's doges, the vast mansion is surrounded by 19 hectares of manicured gardens. Napoleon Bonaparte humiliated Doge Ludovico Manin by turning the mansion into his headquarters in mid-1797 and, in October, signing the Treaty of Campoformido, under which Venice passed to Habsburg Austria. Alight from a train on the Venice-Udine line at Codroipo and take a taxi (or, if you have the patience, one of the few SAF buses) for the five-minute, 3km, ride.

CIVIDALE DEL FRIULI

pop 11,600 / elev 138m

Lucky Cividale del Friuli, with its small medieval centre, has survived several devastating earthquakes since Julius Caesar founded it in 50 BC.

Just 15km east of Udine, Cividale is most picturesque where the 15th-century **Ponte del Diavolo** (Devil's Bridge) crosses the emerald-green Natisone river. Blown up by retreating Italian troops in 1917, the bridge was rebuilt after the war. Legend says the devil threw the 22m-high stone bridge into the river at an earlier point in its history.

Walk through the cobbled lanes to the **Tempio Longobardo** (Longobardo Temple; ☎ 0432 70 08 67; Borgo Brossano; adult/child €2.50/1.50; 🍷 9.30am-12.30pm & 3-6.30pm Mon-Sat, 9.30am-1pm & 3-7.30pm Sun Apr-Sep, 9.30am-12.30pm & 3-5pm Mon-Sat, 9.30am-12.30pm & 2.30-6pm Sun Oct-Mar). Also known as the Oratorio di Santa Maria in Valle, this church is an

GREEN VALLEYS & TOPOLO' STATION'

The hills and deep-green Natisone river valleys that butt up against Slovenia, west of Cividale, are a pleasure for slow explorers. And if you are there in July, wind your way to Topolò (via Grimacco and Clodig, whence it's a steepish 4km drive), a hamlet at the end of the road with about 35 ageing inhabitants. Cooked up in the 1990s to bring renewed life and attention to this much neglected part of the region, the Stazione Topolò artistic 'happening' has snowballed into a low-budget but high-voltage scene. All sorts of creative folk from around the world come for a fortnight in July, are put up by the locals for free and run all sorts of projects (for free), from music to poetry. See www.stazioneditopolo.it (in Italian).

exquisite example of Lombard artwork. To the west, the 16th-century **cathedral** (Piazza del Duomo) houses the **Museo Cristiano** (Christian Museum; ☎ closed for restoration at the time of writing), where the star attraction is the 8th-century Altar of Ratchis, with its fascinating naive carvings.

Also worth a lookover is the nearby **Museo Archeologico** (☎ 0432 70 07 00; Piazza del Duomo 1; admission €2; ☎ 9am-2pm Mon, 8.30am-7pm Tue-Sun) housing a collection of Roman and medieval sculptures and tombstones.

The **tourist office** (☎ 0432 71 04 60; www.cividale.net; Piazza Paolo Diacono 10; ☎ 9.30am-noon & 3.30-6pm), on a pretty square in the old town, has plenty of information on walks around the medieval core of Cividale, whose colourful, centuries-old houses, boutique shops and winding streets make such rambles rewarding.

Of the three hotels, the most enticing is the peaceful **Locanda Al Castello** (☎ 0432 73 32 42; www.alcastello.net; Via del Castello 12; s/d €80/130; (P)), housed in a former Jesuit monastery set amid soothing green grounds, around 1km from the historic centre. It has its own restaurant. Timber furniture dominates some rooms, while in others you might find a wrought-iron bed.

Chow down on *cialcions* (a sweetish dumpling typical of the area) at **Al Monastero** (☎ 0432 70 08 08; Via Ristori 9; meals €25-30; ☎ lunch & dinner Tue-Sat, lunch Sun). Housed in the old town, it is decorated with original frescoes and antique furniture. Meat and game dominate the main courses.

Private trains (www.ferrovieudinecividale.it) connect Cividale with Udine (€2.10, 15 minutes) at least hourly.

SAN DANIELE DEL FRIULI pop 8000

So exquisitely sweet it melts in your mouth, San Daniele prosciutto is raw ham taken from the hind leg of a black pig and salted and

cured for 12 to 18 months. In August, locals from San Daniele, 20km northwest of Udine, ham it up disguised as hams during the **Aria di Festa**, a four-day annual ham festival. Almost 15% of all prosciutto consumed in Italy is from San Daniele.

The village is home to 27 *prosciuttifici*, although the most you'll get to see of these large industrial ham-curing plants is a 30-minute tour of the curing room where the hams are hung to air. The **tourist office** (☎ 0432 94 07 65; www.infosandaniele.com; Via Roma 3; ☎ 9.30am-12.30pm Mon-Sat) has a list of *prosciuttifici* that accept visits (book ahead).

On a loftier note (if you find it open), wander into the small **Chiesa di San Antonio Abate** (Via Garibaldi), an initially Romanesque church bursting with the colour of 15th-century frescoes done by Pellegrino da San Daniele, aka Martino da Urbino (1467-1547).

Three hotels and four B&Bs cover bedding-down needs. The tourist office has information (as does its website).

You can buy all the ham your heart and stomach desire in many places. At **La Casa del Prosciutto** (☎ 0432 95 74 22; Via Ciconi 22-24, ☎ closed Tue), you can sit down for a ham meal. For a light lunch of San Daniele prosciutto wrapped around *grissini* (bread sticks), or just a ham-slice platter, hunker down at **Bar Municipio** (☎ 0432 95 50 12; Via Garibaldi 21; ☎ Sun-Fri), or any local *prosciutteria*. At elegant **Da Scarpan** (☎ 0432 94 30 66; Via Garibaldi 41; meals €35; ☎ lunch & dinner Thu-Mon, lunch Tue) you can sample your ham in more elaborate dishes, or indeed skip it altogether.

Three cycling itineraries (each 22km) lead cyclists through the hills around the village; ask at the tourist office. **Vacanze in Mountain Bike** (☎ 0432 94 10 44; www.bikelandia.it; Via Osoppo 97) organises bike tours.

Regular buses run to San Daniele from Udine (€2.50, 40 minutes).

NORTH OF UDINE

The SS13 road races out across the flat land north of Udine towards the mountainous Carnia region. Detours off either side plunge you into verdant, rolling country. Keep your eyes peeled for signs saying *frasca* or *agriturismo*. These are simple farmer's houses where you can sip their wines and in many cases also sample platters of locally produced cold meats and cheeses.

The most striking stop is **Venzone** (population 2330), 30km north of Udine. You'd never know this enchanting white-stone, walled medieval village (especially when it's decked out with lavender in spring), was rebuilt stone by stone after earthquakes razed it in 1976. The quakes, in May and September, shook much of northern Friuli (most towns around here crumbled). The first killed 989 people and injured 3000 across the region.

Nearby **Bordano** is one of Europe's largest butterfly centres. Some 1500 butterfly species (500 of which are nocturnal) flutter around **Monte San Simeone** (1505m), and in town, more than 400 species of tropical butterflies are bred at the **Casa delle Farfalle** (☎ 0432 98 81 35; www.casaperlefarfalle.it; Via Canada 1; adult/child €6.50/4.50; ☎ 9.30am-12.30pm & 2-4pm Mar & Oct, 9.30am-noon & 2-5.30pm Apr-Sep).

TARVISIO & THE GIULIE ALPS

North of Udine's earthquake zone, the lowlands give way to Alpine country on the way to Austria.

The eastern half of northern Friuli is characterised by forbidding and rocky bluffs along the valley to **Tarvisio** (population 5020; eleva-

tion 754m), an alpine-walking and skiing resort 7km short of the Austrian border and 11km from Slovenia. It is also known for its Saturday market. Instead of the motorway or the busy SS13 road, take the mountain-and-forest route via **Sella Nevea**.

The main ski centres are at Tarvisio (with a good 4km run) and Sella Nevea (where the 2.6km Canin red run is the most satisfying). In coming years, new lifts will link Sella Nevea with the Bovec ski resort on the Slovene side of the border.

Tarvisio's tourist office (☎ 0428 21 35; www.tarvisiano.org; Via Roma 10) has information on places to stay in and around the town. Try to get a room, or at least a place at the dinner table, at the eccentric **Casa di Oberrichter** (☎ 0428 66 05 70; Via Superiore 4; d €90) in Malborghetto, 7km west of Tarvisio. This rambling, 1600-sq-metres six-centuries-old house is all stone, timber and stairs. Spacious rooms with sturdy wooden floors could sleep four. A meal is guaranteed delirium. Savour the *fagottini* (little pasta sacks) stuffed with potato and pears and drenched in a sugar-and-cinnamon sauce, a local and irresistible speciality.

Trains connect Tarvisio with Udine (€7.25, 1½ hours, up to seven daily).

CARNIA

West of Tarvisio stretches the mountain region known as Carnia. It presents wild and beautiful walking country and curious villages. Explore www.carnia.org.

At the area's capital and gateway, **Tolmezzo** (population 10,600), visit the four-storey **Museo Carnico delle Arti e Tradizioni Popolari** (☎ 0433 4 32 33; www.carniamusei.org; Via della Vittoria 2; adult/child €4/3; ☎ 9am-1pm & 3-6pm Tue-Sun), with a rich display on mountain life and folklore.

Of the five hotels here, the top pick is the central, pleasant **Albergo Roma** (☎ 0433 46 80 31; Piazza XX Settembre 14; s/d €44/100; ☐ ☎).

Several valley routes wind north and west of Tolmezzo. The main road north (SS52b) to the Ploekennpass Alpine crossing into Austria passes **Sutrio** (17km from Tolmezzo), a straggling mountain village known for its woodwork and with several places to stay (check the municipal website, www.comune.sutrio.ud.it). From there, take the road west to Comeglians via Ravaschetto and Tualis, popular spots with locals for a country-air holiday. Just south of Comeglians, a minor road (SS465) leads west along the beautiful **Val Pesarina**. A handful of

VILLAGE LIFE

Instead of hotels, you could opt for an *albergo diffuso*: rental apartments and houses in small mountain villages with centralised hotel-style reception and services. This innovative accommodation idea was born in Carnia. Various towns, including Sauris and Sutrio, participate in this low-impact accommodation that helps the towns survive. Check www.clubalbergodiffuso.it. Related sites worth visiting are: www.borghiauten.ticidalia.it (an association of villages striving for sustainable development) and www.alpine-pearls.com (promoting sustainable accessibility to villages across the Alps).

hamlets and churches add charm, especially the last of them, **Pesariis**. This gem of 15th- to 17th-century houses has, since the 17th century, been home to precision clockmakers. Inspect the clockwork placed in front of the church. So much for Switzerland!

The SS465 continues into the Veneto, narrowing through deeper woods and meeting another road that you could follow back east a way to Sauris (closed by snow in winter). From Tolmezzo, take the mountain road to **Ampezzo**, a village with a huddle of centuries-old houses. The road passes the plunging Lumiei gorge to emerge at the cobalt-blue **Lago di Sauris**, an artificial lake about 4km east

of **Sauris di Sotto**. Another 4km on (up eight switchbacks) is the prettier **Sauris di Sopra**. This twin hamlet is a curious island of German-speakers (who call it Zahre), whose Tyrolean culture is equally expressed in their timber houses. The area is known for its fine hams, sausages and locally brewed beer (light and darker, the former with the hint of a Weizenbier flavour). There are several places to stay and lots of fine walking trails. For more information see www.sauris.com.

Back on the SS52, you arrive in **Forni di Sopra**, a modest ski resort. Get accommodation information at the tourist office (☎ 0433 88 67 67; Via Cadore 1).