

# QUARTERS





JEAN-BERNARD CARLLET

## NAPLES

Sandwiched between a sleeping volcano and the steaming Campi Flegrei, Naples is a rumbling mass of contradictions.

Extremes are something Naples does impressively well. Grimy streets hit palm-fringed boulevards, crumbling façades hide baroque ballrooms and cultish shrines flank cutting-edge clubs. One minute you're in dusty Tangiers, the next you're thinking of Paris.

Stepping onto Piazza Garibaldi from Stazione Centrale, your impression will probably be of the former. Wild traffic, shabby street stalls and smooth-talking African salesmen make for an intense introduction. To the south and southwest, the Mercato quarter is a high-octane spectacle of rough-and-ready markets, multiculturalism and poverty.

A few blocks west of Piazza Garibaldi begins the centro storico (historic centre). Dense, dark and intoxicating, its ancient Greek streets teem with tourists, scooters, shrines and secret hidden treasures.

At its western edge, shop-heavy Via Toledo stretches from Piazza Trieste e Trento in the south to Parco di Capodimonte in the north; its chic southern end is a favourite haunt for *sfogliatella*-munching shopaholics. Immediately to the west lie the mean, washing-strung streets of the Quartieri Spagnoli.

South of Via Toledo, regal Santa Lucia boasts the mighty Piazza del Plebiscito, Palazzo Reale and world opera great Teatro San Carlo. Close at hand, Castel Nuovo (Maschio Angioino) looms over Piazza del Municipio like a giant toy castle.

Looking down on it all is middle-class Vomero, a leafy concoction of gorgeous Liberty villas, soulless apartment blocks and the hulking Castel Sant'Elmo.

West of Piazza del Plebiscito, upmarket Chiaia is Naples' heart of cool, its sleek shops and bars stretching west towards the bobbing-boat port of Mergellina. From here, posh Posillipo climbs the promontory separating the Bay of Naples from the Bay of Pozzuoli. Beyond it lies the Campi Flegrei, a volcanic sprawl of classical ruins, sulphurous steam and sexy summertime beach clubs.

### CAMPANIA ARTECARD

If you're planning on spending three days or more in Naples, it's worth getting the Campania artecard (☎ 800 600 601; [www.campaniartecond.it](http://www.campaniartecond.it)). For more details on this museum-and-transport ticket see p252.

## ORGANISED TOURS

Outside of the city, **CIMA Tours** (Map pp280–1; ☎ 081 20 10 52; [cimatour@tin.it](mailto:cimatour@tin.it); Piazza Garibaldi 114) and **Tourcar** (Map pp280–1; ☎ 081 552 19 38; Piazza G Matteotti 1) organise excursions to the Bay of Naples islands, the Amalfi Coast and Pompeii, Herculaneum and Vesuvius. A half-day tour to Pompeii costs about €50, including admission costs.

### CITY SIGHTSEEING NAPOLI MAP PP280-1

☎ 081 551 72 79; [www.napoli.city-sightseeing.it](http://www.napoli.city-sightseeing.it); Via Parco del Castello, Piazza del Municipio; adult/child/family €20/10/60

City Sightseeing Napoli operates a hop-on, hop-off bus service for tourists. There are three routes, all of which depart from Piazza del Municipio Parco Castello. Route A (*Luoghi dell'Arte*, or Art Tour) covers the city's major art sites including Piazza del Gesù Nuovo, Piazza Dante, the Museo Archeologico Nazionale, Museo di Capodimonte, the Catacomba di San Gennaro, Piazza Bellini, Porta Capuana and Piazza Bovio. The 1¼-hour circular tour departs every 45 minutes between 9.45am and 6pm daily.

Route B (*Le Vedute del Golfo*, or Bay of Naples) follows the sea westwards passing through Santa Lucia, Piazza Vittoria, Villa Pignatelli, Mergellina and Posillipo. Departures are every 45 minutes between 9.30am and 6.30pm daily. The tour takes 1¼ hours.

Route C (San Martino) runs up to Vomero, with stops in Via Santa Lucia, Piazza dei Martiri, Piazza Amedeo, Piazza Vanvitelli, Largo San Martino (for the Certosa di San Martino), Via Salvatore Rosa and Piazza Dante. Tours last 1¼ hours and depart every two hours between 10am and 6pm Saturday and Sunday.

Tickets, which are available on the bus, are valid for 24 hours for each of the three routes. Tour commentaries are provided in eight languages, including English.

### NAPOLI SOTTERRANEA MAP PP280-1

**Underground Naples;** ☎ 081 29 69 44; [www.napolisotterranea.org](http://www.napolisotterranea.org); Piazza San Gaetano 68; tours €9.30; ☎ 2hr tours noon, 2pm & 4pm Mon-Fri, extra tours 10am & 6pm Sat & Sun, 9pm Thu

This company organises guided underground tours that take you 40m below the city to explore an eerie network of ancient passages and caves. The passages were originally hewn by the Greeks to extract the soft tufa stone for construction, and then extended by the Romans as water conduits. Clogged up with illegally dumped refuse over the centuries, they were used as air-raid shelters in WWII.

## IT'S FREE

Villa Comunale (p89)  
Duomo (p75)  
Chiesa di Sant'Anna dei Lombardi (p79)  
Views from Largo San Martino in front of the Certosa di San Martino (p49)  
PAN Art Gallery (p89)

### LEGAMBIENTE MAP PP280-1

☎ 081 420 31 61; [www.napolisworld.it](http://www.napolisworld.it), in Italian; Vico della Quercia 7

A national environmental organisation offering made-to-measure tours in the centro storico and in less explored areas such as the Sanità district.

### NAPOLIJAMM MAP PP278-9

☎ 081 562 13 13; [www.napolijamm.it](http://www.napolijamm.it); Via Sannio 9; adult/child €30/free

Napolijamm runs four walking tours covering the centro storico (red tour); castles and historic palazzi (green tour); sites of famous miracles and mysteries (blue tour); and the *centro storico* by night (pink tour). With the exception of the three-hour pink tour, all tours last four hours. Departure is at 9.30am from one of the two meeting points: Piazza del Gesù Nuovo or outside Caffè Gambrinus in Piazza Trieste e Trento. You should book at least 24 hours in advance.





## CENTRO STORICO & MERCATO

Eating p118; Shopping p139; Sleeping p148; Walking Tours p107

Secret cloisters, cultish shrines and bellowing *baristi* in tiny old-school bars: the centro storico is a bewitching urban blend.

On its greasy streets, renegade scooters dodge handsome young waiters, bronze skulls guard dusty chapels and beer-clutching students chill and chat on cobbled stones.

Running dead straight from east to west, its three *decumani* (main streets) follow the original street plan of ancient Neapolis. The most famous of the three is the decumanus inferior, affectionately called Spaccanapoli (Break Naples). Comprising Via Benedetto Croce, Via San Biagio dei Librai and Via Vicaria Vecchia, it cuts right through the heart of the old city. One block to the north, Via dei Tribunali is the ancient decumanus maior. Most of the major sites are grouped around these two parallel streets, from the macabre Cappella San Severo to the majolica-tiled beauty of the Basilica di Santa Chiara. The northernmost of these three ancient strips, the decumanus superior, is made up of Via Sapienza, Via Anticaglia and Via Santissimi Apostoli. Just to its north is the city's hottest new art space, MADRE.

South and east of the centro storico, the Mercato district is a fast and filthy mix of cheap hotels, cheaper market stalls, Chinese spice shops and retro porn cinemas. At its eastern end, Piazza Garibaldi is the city's tattered welcome mat, home of Stazione Centrale and a long-distance bus hub. Think Harlem with date palms, where Ghanaian men sell fake D&G, Moroccan kids flog bootleg CDs and surly Russian belles serve freshly squeezed OJ. Mind your bags and dive into the market at its western end for dirt-cheap threads and local kitsch.



QUARTERS

## highlights

### CENTRO STORICO & MERCATO

- 1 Basilica di Santa Chiara (below)
- 2 Cappella Sansevero (p68)
- 3 Chiesa e Scavi di San Lorenzo Maggiore (p70)
- 4 Duomo (p75)
- 5 MADRE Art Gallery (p75)
- 6 Porta Nolana (p77)

Cloister paintings, Basilica di Santa Chiara  
JEAN-BERNARD CARLLET

South of smog-choked Corso Umberto I sits Piazza Nolana, its 15th-century city gate, Porta Nolana, and one of the city's wildest morning markets. Further west, you will hit the Borgo degli Orefici (Goldsmiths' Quarter), Naples' medieval heart of bling.

## SPACCANAPOLI

The main streets in the centro storico are Via San Biagio dei Librai (becoming Via Benedetto Croce to the west and Via Vicaria Vecchia to the east) and Via Tribunali one block to the north. Lined with historic churches and palazzi, most of the main sites are either on these streets or not far off them.

## BASILICA DI SANTA CHIARA

MAP PP280-1  
☎ 081 195 759 15; Via Benedetto Croce; cloisters €4; basilica 🕒 9am-1pm & 4.30-7.30pm Mon-Sat, 8am-1pm & 5.30-7.30pm Sun, cloisters 🕒 9.30am-5.30pm Mon-Sat, 9.30am-2pm Sun; 🚊 R4 to Via Monteoliveto  
Simple, vast and severe, the bare Gothic interior that you see today is not the genuine

14th-century article, but a brilliant recreation of Gagliardo Primario's original design. Commissioned by Robert of Anjou for his wife Sancia di Maiorca, this hulking complex was built to house around 200 monks and the tombs of the Angevin royal family. Adhering to the Gothic principles of the day which equated height with vicinity to God, the original design met with a lukewarm reaction in some quarters – Robert's son Charles of Anjou brusquely dismissed it as nothing more than a 'stable'. Four centuries later, it was given a luscious baroque makeover by Domenico Antonio Vaccaro, Gaetano Buonocore and Giovanni Del Gaizo.

It all went up in flames on 4 August 1943 when the church took a direct hit during an Allied air raid on 4 August 1943. However, thanks to the skill and dedication of a small army of experts it has been largely restored to its original Franciscan simplicity. Features that survived the fire include part of a 14th-century fresco to the left of the main door and a chapel containing the tombs of the Bourbon kings from Ferdinand I to Francesco II.

To the left of the church, the famous tiled cloisters are a soothing getaway from the chaos outside. While the Angevin porticoes date back 14th century, the cloisters took on their current look in the 18th century thanks to the landscaping work of Domenico Antonio Vaccaro. The walkways that divide the central garden of lavender and citrus trees are lined with

72 ceramic-tiled octagonal columns connected by benches. Painted by Donato e Giuseppe Massa, the colourful tiles depict various scenes from rural life, from hunting and fishing to languid peasants posing. The four internal walls are covered with softly coloured 17th-century frescoes of Franciscan tales.

Adjacent to the cloisters is a small **museum** with an elegant display of ecclesiastical bits and bobs, including some impressive 14th-century busts and 17th-century tabernacles.

### CAPPELLA E MUSEO DEL MONTE DI PIETÀ MAP PP280-1

☎ 081 580 71 11; Via San Biagio dei Librai 114; church 🕒 9am-2pm daily, gallery 🕒 9am-2pm Sat & Sun; 🚶 CS to Via Duomo

An imposing 16th-century complex, the Cappella e Museo del Monte di Pietà was originally home to the Pio Monte di Pietà, an organisation set up to issue interest-free loans to impoverished debtors. Ironically, it now houses sumptuous paintings, embroidery and silverware belonging to the Banco di Napoli (Bank of Naples). Most impressive, however, is the perfectly preserved mannerist **chapel** and its four richly decorated side rooms. Flanking the entrance to the single-barrel chapel are two sculptures by Pietro Bernini, while above sits Michelangelo Naccherino's *Pietà*. Inside, it is the striking 17th-century frescoes by Belisario Corenzio that take the breath away.

### CAPPELLA SANSEVERO MAP PP280-1

☎ 081 551 84 70; Via de Sanctis 19; admission €6; 🕒 10am-5.40pm Wed-Mon; 🚶 R4 to Via Monteoliveto

For sheer 'how the hell did he do that' impact, the *Cristo Velato* (Veiled Christ) sculpture takes some beating. Giuseppe Sanmartino's incredible depiction of Jesus lying covered by a thin sheet is so realistic that it's tempting to try to lift the veil and look at Christ underneath. The magnificent centrepiece of this opulent building is one of three works that defy belief. Similarly lifelike, Francesco Queirolo's *Disinganno* (Disillusion) shows a man trying to untangle himself from a net, while *Pudicizia* (Modesty) by Antonio Corradini is a deliciously salacious veiled nude. Above them all you'll find riotously colourful frescoes by Francesco Maria Russo.

Originally built around the end of the 16th century to house the tombs of the de Sangro family, this Masonic-inspired temple was

given its current baroque fit-out by the bizarre Prince Raimondo de Sangro. Between 1749 and 1766 he commissioned the top artists of the day to decorate the interior, while he quietly got on with the task of embalming his dead servants. Determined to crack the art of human preservation, Raimondo was regarded with considerable fear by the local population. You can judge for yourself whether they were right by going down the stairs and checking out the two meticulously preserved human arterial systems.

### CASTEL CAPUANO MAP PP280-1

☎ 081 223 72 44; Piazza Enrico De Nicola; 🚶 Garibaldi

This Norman castle has been the seat of the city's civil courts since 1540, and the crowd of noisy families, slick lawyers and menacing police around the main entrance is a permanent feature. The fort was built in 1165 by William I to guard the nearby city gate Porta Capuana. Later enlarged by the Swabian king Frederick II and fortified by Charles I of Anjou, it remained a royal residence until the 16th century when Don Pedro de Toledo made it the city court. The castle is not open to the public.

Across the square, the imposing **Porta Capuana** (Map pp278-9) was one of the city's main medieval gates. Built on the orders of Ferdinand II of Aragon in 1484, the two cylindrical towers, named Honour and Virtue, flank a white marble-clad triumphal arch. Giuliano da Maiano oversaw the addition of Emperor Charles V's intricately decorated coat of arms in 1535.

### CENTRO MUSEI SCIENZE NATURALI

MAP PP280-1

☎ 081 253 51 60; www.musei.unina.it; Via Mezzocannone 8; admission each museum €1.50, all four €3; 🕒 9am-1.30pm & 3-5pm Mon & Thu, 9am-1.30pm Tue & Fri, 9am-1pm Sat & Sun; 🚶 R2 to Corso Umberto I

Housed at the university, this fascinating natural science centre features four museums. The Museo della Mineralogia, one of Italy's most important, features some 30,000 minerals, meteorites and quartz crystals collected from as far afield as Madagascar.

A hit with kids is the Museo della Zoologia, with its colourful collection of butterflies, birds and creepy insects.

Across the courtyard, the Museo della Antropologia boasts an eclectic collection of

prehistoric relics including a grinning Palaeolithic skeleton from Puglia and a cute Bolivian mummy. Dinosaur bones await at the nearby Museo di Paleontologia.

### CHIESA DEL GESÙ NUOVO MAP PP280-1

☎ 081 551 86 13; Piazza del Gesù Nuovo; 🕒 7am-1pm & 4-7.30pm; 🚶 R4 to Via Monteoliveto

The Chiesa del Gesù Nuovo, on the northern side of the piazza, is one of the city's greatest examples of Renaissance architecture. Consecrated by the Jesuits in the 16th century, its diamond-shaped stone façade actually belongs to the 15th-century Palazzo Sanseverino, which was converted to create the church. Legend has it that the carved markings on the *piperno* (volcanic rock) stones are inverted esoteric symbols that have cursed the building (p8).

The exterior itself was designed by Giuseppe Valeriani, while a series of big-name baroque artists, including Francesco Solimena, Luca Giordano and Cosimo Fanzago, transformed the barrel-vaulted interior into the frescoed wonder that you see today.

In sharp contrast to the opulence of the main church is a small **chapel** dedicated to the much-loved local saint Giuseppe Moscati. Here you'll find walls covered with *ex votos* (including golden syringes) and a recreation of the great man's study, complete with the armchair in which he died. Canonised in 1977, Moscati (1880-1927) was a local doctor who spent his life helping the city's poor.

### CHIESA DEL GESÙ VECCHIO MAP PP280-1

☎ 081 552 66 39; Via Giovanni Paladino 38; 🕒 7.30am-noon & 3.45-6pm Mon-Sat, 7.30am-noon Sun; 🚶 R2 to Corso Umberto I

Baroque cranked up to the max, step inside for sumptuous statues by Cosimo Fanzago and frescoes by Francesco Solimena and Battista Caracciolo. Established in 1570 and completely rebuilt in the 17th century, this is Naples' oldest Jesuit church.

### CHIESA DI SAN DOMENICO

MAGGIORE MAP PP280-1

☎ 081 45 91 88; Piazza San Domenico Maggiore 8a; 🚶 R4 to Via Monteoliveto

Rudely giving its back to the Piazza, this vast Gothic number features a double flight of marble steps leading up to the apse. Completed in 1324 on the orders of Charles I of Anjou, it was built onto the medieval church



High-impact façade, Chiesa del Gesù Nuovo

QUARTERS

JEAN-BERNARD CABRELLI

of San Michele Arcangelo as the royal church of the Angevins.

The church's three-nave interior, a cross between baroque and 19th-century neo-Gothic, has undergone various facelifts, leaving little of the original Gothic design. Of the few 14th-century remnants, the frescoes by Pietro Cavallini in the **Cappella Brancaccio** take the cake. In the **Cappellone del Crocifisso**, the 13th-century *Crocifisso tra La Vergine e San Giovanni* is said to have spoken to St Thomas Aquinas, asking him: *Bene scripsisti di me, Thoma; quam recipies a me pro tu labore mercedem?* ('You've written good things about me, Thomas, what will you get in return?') – *Domine non aliam nisi te* ('Nothing if not you, O Lord'), Thomas replied diplomatically.

The softly lit sacristy contains a beautiful ceiling fresco by Francesco Solimena and 45 coffins of Aragon princes and other nobles. Curiously enough, the first bishop of New York, Richard Luke Concanen (1747-1810), is also buried here.

## CHIESA DI SAN PAOLO MAGGIORE

MAP PP280-1

☎ 081 45 40 48; Piazza San Gaetano 76; 🕒 9am-5.30pm Mon-Sat, 11am-noon Sun; 🚶 CS to Via Duomo  
Leading up to the entrance of this baroque beauty is a grand double staircase built by Francesco Grimaldi in 1603. Situated on the site of a Roman temple to Castor and Pollux, of which the two columns flanking the entrance are the only visible sign, the church dates to the 8th century but was almost entirely rebuilt at the end of the 16th century. A huge gold-stuccoed interior features paintings by Massimo Stanzione and Paolo De Matteis and stunning frescoes by Francesco Solimena tucked away in the sacristy to the right of the altar.

## CHIESA DI SANT'ANGELO A NILO

MAP PP280-1

☎ 081 420 12 22; entrance at Vico Donnaromita 15; 🕒 9am-1pm & 4-6pm Mon-Sat, 9am-1pm Sun; 🚶 R4 to Via Monteoliveto

Benignly presided over by a quartet of tubby gilt cherubs, this modest 14th-century church contains one of the first great artworks to grace the Neapolitan Renaissance – the majestic tomb of Cardinal Brancaccio, the church's founder. Although considered a part of Naples' artistic heritage, the sarcophagus was actually sculpted by artists in Pisa. Donatello, Michelozzo and Pagno di Lapo Partigiani spent a year chipping away at it before shipping it down to Naples in 1427.

## CHIESA E CHIOSTRO DI SAN GREGORIO ARMENO

MAP PP280-1

☎ 081 420 63 85; Via San Gregorio Armeno 44; church 🕒 8.30am-noon Mon & Wed-Sat, 9.30am-12.30pm Tue & Sun; 🚶 CS to Via Duomo

There are churches and then there is the Chiesa e Chiostro di San Gregorio Armeno. Zealously run by a posse of snappy nuns, the recently restored 16th-century church boasts a jaw-dropping baroque interior designed by Nicolò Tagliacozzi Canale. Highlights include sumptuous wood and papier-mâché choir stalls, a 17th-century marble altar by Dionisio Lazzari and lavish frescoes by Paolo de Matteis and Luca Giordano, whose masterpiece *The Embarkation, Journey and Arrival of the Armenia Nuns with the Relics of St Gregory* recounts the 13th-century exile of nuns fleeing persecution in Constantinople. Once in Naples, the sisters set up this church, naming it after the Bishop of Armenia, San Gregorio, whose earthly

remains they were carrying with them. More famously, though, they also kept the relics and dried blood of Santa Patrizia (St Patricia) who, having escaped from Constantinople, died in Naples some time between the 4th and 8th centuries. Patricia's powdered blood is said to liquefy every Tuesday, unlike that of Naples' patron saint San Gennaro, who can only manage it three times a year.

The peaceful, citrus-filled cloisters are accessible by a gate on nearby Vico G Maffei.

## CHIESA E SCAVI DI SAN LORENZO MAGGIORE

MAP PP280-1

☎ 081 211 08 60; [www.sanlorenzomaggiorenepoli.it](http://www.sanlorenzomaggiorenepoli.it); Via dei Tribunali 316; excavations & museum adult/child €5/3; 🕒 9am-5.30pm Mon-Sat, 9.30am-1.30pm Sun; 🚶 CS to Via Duomo

Soaring, vast and bathed in light, this French Gothic masterpiece was commenced in 1270 by French architects who built the apse. Local architects took over the following century, recycling ancient columns in the nave. Victim of a baroque makeover in the 17th- and 18th centuries, it was stripped back to its original Gothic splendour in the mid-20th century, although a concession was made for Ferdinando Sanfelice's petite baroque façade.

Catherine of Austria, who died in 1323, is buried here in a beautiful mosaiced tomb. Legend has it that this was where Boccaccio first fell for Mary of Anjou, the inspiration for his character Fiammetta, while the poet Petrarch called the adjoining convent home in 1345.

Beneath the church are some extraordinary **scavi** (excavations) of the original Graeco-Roman city. Stretching the length of the underground area is a 54m-long road lined with ancient bakeries, wineries and communal laundries. At the far end of the *cardo* (road) there's a *cryptoporticus* (covered market) with seven barrel-vaulted rooms. There are very few signs to explain the patchwork of crumbling walls and alleyways but this takes little away from the experience – simply let your imagination do the job. (You can, however, buy a glossy leaflet explaining the excavations in Italian or English for €1.50.)

Back upstairs, the recently opened **Museo dell'Opera di San Lorenzo Maggiore** houses a fascinating collection of local archaeological finds, including Graeco-Roman sarcophagi, ceramics and crockery from the digs below. Other treasures include vivid 9th-century ceramics, Angevin frescoes, paintings by Giuseppe Marullo and Luigi Velpi, and camp ecclesiastical drag for 16th-century bishops.



Under the archways of Chiesa di San Lorenzo Maggiore

QUARTERS

JEAN-BERNARD CARLLET

## CHIESA SANTA CATERINA A FORMIELLO

MAP PP278-9

☎ 081 44 42 97; Piazza Enrico de Nicola 65; 🕒 8.30am-8pm Mon-Sat, 8.30am-1pm Sun; 🚶 Garibaldi

Despite the grime, this richly decorated Renaissance church is one of Naples' most beautiful. Harmoniously proportioned and softly lit, it boasts a series of exceptional frescoes by Luigi Garzi, as well as the relics of the martyrs of Otranto. The martyrs were all killed in 1480 when Turkish invaders swept into the Puglian coastal town after a lengthy siege and vented their bloody fury by killing 800 citizens.

Dedicated to Alexandrian martyr Santa Caterina, the church was completed in 1593. For 300 years it belonged to the Dominicans, but in the 19th century they moved out and the military moved in, transforming it into a wool factory.

## CHIESA SANTA MARIA DELLE ANIME PURGATORIO AD ARCO

MAP PP280-1

☎ 081 29 26 22; Via dei Tribunali 39; 🕒 9am-2pm Mon-Sat; 🚶 CS to Via Duomo

Guarded by three bronze skulls, this 17th-century church is macabre. Inside, two winged skulls stare out from either side of the main altar. Built by a congregation dedicated to praying for

souls in purgatory, the church became a centre for the Neapolitan cult of the dead which, although officially banned, is said to be far from extinct. Cult practices included lavishing care and gifts on a skull as a means of keeping in touch with an absent loved one. Below the church in the **hypogeum** (currently closed) you can still see a dusty hoard of skulls and bones.

On a lighter note, the church boasts some fine paintings by Massimo Stanzione and Luca Giordano.

## CHIESA SANTA MARIA DONNAREGINA VECCHIA

MAP P286

☎ 081 29 91 01; Vico Donnaregina 25; 🕒 9am-12.30pm Sat by appointment only; 🚶 CS to Via Duomo  
Home to Naples University's architectural restoration department, this beautiful 14th-century church was built at the behest of Mary of Hungary, wife of Charles II of Anjou. Featuring a light-filled pentagonal apse, its walls and fan-vaults reveal traces of Giottoesque frescoes, decorated with Angevin lilies and the red and white stripes of Hungary. Above the choir, coffered ceilings drip with beautiful frescoes by Pietro Cavallino, while Mary's spectacular marble tomb (created by Tina da Camaino between 1326 and 1327) sits along the left-side wall.

## CHIESA SANTA MARIA MAGGIORE

MAP PP280-1

Via dei Tribunali 16; ☎ 9am-1pm Mon-Sat; 🚶 CS to Via Duomo

The full title of this church, Santa Maria Maggiore alla Pietrasanta, is a reference to a 17th-century practice of kissing the church's *pietrasanta* (holy stone) to gain indulgences. Dating to the 6th century, the church was originally built by San Pomponio, the Bishop of Naples. According to legend, he did so to appease worried locals, who reported sightings of the devil in the form of a pig on the site. The church was modified in the 17th century by Cosimo Fanzago, whose dome is visible from miles around. The Romanesque **campanile** (bell tower) is one of Naples' oldest, built sometime between the 10th and 11th centuries. Adjacent to the church, the 15th-century **Cappella Pontano** boasts an exquisite majolica-tiled floor.

## CHIESA SAN PIETRO A MAIELLA

MAP PP280-1

☎ 081 45 90 08; Piazza Luigi Miraglia 25; 🕒 7.30am-noon & 5.30-7.30pm Sun-Fri, 5-7.30pm Sat; 🚶 M Dante Not many churches are dedicated to hermits. But not many hermits go on to become popes as Pietro del Morrone did when, in 1294, he was named Pope Celestine V. The typically Gothic interior dates to the 14th century, but the ceiling is pure baroque, with 10 superlative round paintings by Mattia Preti. Along with the impressive gilded wooden ceilings, they were discovered under stucco during a late-19th-century restoration. Further baroque touches are provided by Cosimo Fanzago and Massimo Stanzone, whose *Madonna Appearing to Celestine V* hangs in one of the side chapels on the right.

Soak it all up to the sound of Bach; since 1826, Naples' Conservatory – one of Italy's finest music schools – has been housed in the adjoining **convent**.

## GUGLIA DI SAN GENNARO MAP PP280-1

Piazza Riario Sforza; 🚶 CS to Via Duomo

The oldest of the three obelisks in the centro storico, the Guglia di San Gennaro was dedicated to the city's patron saint in 1636. And like the Guglia di San Domenico it was a token of gratitude, only this time to San Gennaro for protecting the city from the 1631 eruption of Mt Vesuvius. The stonework is by Cosimo Fanzago, the bronze statue at the top by Tommaso Montani.

## LARGO SAN GIOVANNI MAGGIORE

MAP PP280-1

🚶 R2 to Corso Umberto I

This fetching little square heaves with students, who drink and groove at *Kestè* (p130). Dominating the square's western flank is Giovanni da Nola's impressive 16th-century **Palazzo Giusso**, home to the Istituto Universitario Orientale. Facing this is the **Chiesa San Giovanni Pappacoda** (Map pp280-1), whose original 15th-century structure barely survived the attentions of an 18th-century makeover. Antonio Baboccio's Gothic portal remains, along with a bell tower constructed out of tufa, marble and *piperno* stone.

## OSPEDALE DELLE BAMBOLE

MAP PP280-1

☎ 339 587 22 74; Via San Biagio dei Librai 81;

🚶 M Dante

You may not have a Barbie in need of a facelift while in Naples, but the city's legendary doll hospital is worth an emergency visit – hanging dolls' heads, injured saints, flower-sprouting mannequins and fairy lights. All that's missing is a puppet called Pinocchio.

## PALAZZO SPINELLI DI LAURINO

MAP PP280-1

Via dei Tribunali 362; 🚶 CS to Via Duomo

Dodge past the porter patrolling the entrance to this Renaissance palazzo and you'll find an unusual oval-shaped courtyard. This, together with the imposing double staircase, was the work of architect Ferdinando Sanfelice, whose hallmark staircase design was a must-have for 18th-century Neapolitan nobility.

On the 1st floor, Parisian Natalie de Saint Phalle exhibits the cutting-edge work of her artists-in-residence in one week exhibitions commencing 23 March, 23 June and 23 September.

## PIAZZA BELLINI

MAP PP280-1

🚶 M Dante

Just to the north of the western end of Via dei Tribunali, lively Piazza Bellini is a hotspot for the city's bohemians. Each night, its ivy-clad cafés and bars hum with jazz-loving writers, left-leaning students and a healthy dose of flirtatious glances. At its centre, 4th-century ruins of the Greek **city walls** add a classical touch.



QUARTERS

JEAN-BERNARD CAIREL

## PIAZZA DEL GESÙ NUOVO MAP PP280-1

🚶 M Dante

Flanked by the spiky **Chiesa del Gesù Nuovo** (p69) and the **Basilica di Santa Chiara** (p67), this lively square is one of Naples' most beautiful. For hundreds of years it was the principal western entrance to the city. But it wasn't until two major modifications in the 16th century that the piazza took on its current proportions. Firstly, Ferrante Sanseverino knocked down the houses that were blocking his beautiful 15th-century palazzo (later to become the Chiesa del Gesù Nuovo) and in one fell swoop cleared the square's northern flank. Some years later, Spanish viceroy Don Pedro de Toledo demolished the Angevin city gate and once again moved the city walls westwards.

At its centre soars Giuseppe Genuino's ornate **Guglia dell'Immacolata** (Map pp280-1), built between 1747 and 1750. On 8 December, the Feast of the Immacolata, firemen scramble up to the top to place a wreath of flowers at the Virgin Mary's feet.

## PIAZZA SAN DOMENICO MAGGIORE

MAP PP280-1

🚶 M Dante

For some unexplained reason, this airy square is a hit with dreadlocked Spaniards. Along with local students and foreign tourists, they flock here for a late-night beer, cigarette and chat.

Headed by the **Chiesa di San Domenico Maggiore** (p69) and flanked by imposing **palazzi**, the piazza was a series of humble kitchen gardens

until the 15th century when the Aragonese decided to make San Domenico their royal church. In the 17th century, various aristocrats built their townhouses around the square. At its centre sits the very baroque **Guglia di San Domenico** (Map pp280-1). Decorated by Cosimo Fanzago and completed in 1737 by Domenico Antonio Vaccaro, it was a token of gratitude to San Domenico for ridding the city of the plague epidemic of 1656.

## PIO MONTE DELLA MISERICORDIA

MAP PP280-1

☎ 081 44 69 44; Via dei Tribunali 253; gallery admission €5; church 🕒 9am-2pm daily, gallery 🕒 8.30am-2pm Thu-Tue; 🚶 CS to Via Duomo

Caravaggio's masterpiece *Le Sette Opere di Misericordia* (The Seven Acts of Mercy) is considered by many to be the single most important painting in Naples. And it's here that you'll see it, hung above the main altar of this small octagonal church. The painting magnificently demonstrates Caravaggio's *chiaroscuro* style that had a revolutionary impact in Naples (see p46). A disturbing image, it depicts two angels reaching down towards a group of shadowy Neapolitan characters, while on the right a hungry grey-bearded man is breast-fed by a young woman.

On the 1st floor of the 17th-century church, a small **art gallery** boasts a fine collection of Renaissance and baroque paintings by names such as Francesco de Mura, Giuseppe de Ribera and Paul van Somer.

## PORT'ALBA MAP PP280-1

Via Port'Alba; Dante

A Mediterranean Diagon Alley, Port'Alba is an atmospheric porthole into the centro storico. Crammed with vintage bookshops and stalls, this is the place for leather-bound classics, dog-eared Manzoni or obscure 1950s sci-fi novels. The gate, which leads through to Piazza Dante, was opened in 1625 by Antonio Álvarez, the Spanish viceroy of Naples. At the eastern end of Via Port'Alba, southbound Via San Sebastiano boasts the world's greatest concentration of musical instrument shops alongside 49th St in New York.

## STATUA DEL NILO MAP PP280-1

Piazza Nilo, Via Nilo; R4 to Via Monteoliveto

This rather grim statue of the ancient Egyptian river god Nilo was put up by the city's Alexandrian merchants, who lived in the area

## ALTAR TO THE MARADONA

Opposite the Statua del Nilo there's an altar to an altogether more temporal deity. Argentine football player Diego Armando Maradona is worshipped throughout the city and so it's only natural that he should have his own shrine. Displayed on the wall outside the Bar Nilo, the Maradona altar (Map pp280-1) a small glass case containing a number of artefacts relating to the great man. Stuck to an epic poem written in his honour is a small wiry black hair – 'Kapel Original of Maradona' reads the English label, a direct translation of the Italian *Capello Originale di Maradona*. You can also admire a small container full of genuine Maradona tears. And shame on anyone who suggests it's only water.



during Roman times. When they moved out the statue disappeared, eventually turning up minus its head in the 15th century. Renamed *Il Corpo di Napoli* (The Body of Naples), it remained headless until the end of the 18th century when a great bearded bonce was added.

## VIA SAN GREGORIO ARMENO

MAP PP280-1

CS to Via Duomo

Naples is famous for its traditional *presepi* (nativity scenes) and Via San Gregorio Armeno is where Italians come to buy theirs. Running off Spaccanapoli, the street heaves with artisan studios and shops in which crib-makers craft an eclectic range of figurines and crib pieces, from beautiful hand-carved baby saviours to cutting celebrity caricatures. Popular after Silvio Berlusconi's election defeat was a figurine of the media mogul carrying his head and testicles on a platter.

## VIA DUOMO

Built as part of the late 19th-century Risanamento (slum-clearance programme), Via Duomo connects Corso Umberto I with Via Foria and more or less runs parallel to Via Toledo.

## BASILICA DI SAN GIORGIO

MAGGIORE MAP PP280-1

081 28 79 32; Via Duomo 237; 8.15am-noon & 5-7.30pm Mon-Sat, 8.30am-1.30pm Sun; CS to Via Duomo

Standing on the site of a pagan temple, the austere Basilica di San Giorgio Maggiore is one of Naples' oldest churches, built by St Severus in the 4th century. Despite a thorough restyling by designaholic Cosimo Fanzago in the mid-17th century, the earthy Palaeo-Christian apse survives. Less fortunate was the right-hand nave of the church, demolished to make way for Via Duomo in the late 19th century. The third chapel features frescoes by Francesco Solimena.

## CHIESA E PINACOTECA DEI

GIROLAMINI MAP PP280-1

081 44 91 39; Via Duomo 142; church varies, cloisters & gallery 9.30am-12.30pm Mon-Sat; CS to Via Duomo

Opposite the Duomo is the entrance to the Chiesa dei Girolamini, also called San Filippo

Neri, a rich baroque church of two façades. The more imposing 18th-century façade is closed for restoration. The adjoining 17th-century convent features a raffish cloister, complete with rambling lemon trees and faded majolica tiles. A small gallery on the convent's 1st floor features superb local art, including works by Luca Giordano and Battista Caracciolo.

## DUOMO MAP PP280-1

081 44 90 97; www.duomodinaipoli.com; Via Duomo 147; 8am-12.30pm & 4.30-7pm Mon-Sat, 8.30am-1pm & 5-7pm Sun; CS to Via Duomo

Every year in May, September and December thousands gather in the Duomo to pray for a miracle – that the blood of the city's patron saint San Gennaro, kept here in two phials, will liquefy and save Naples from any potential disaster. When the miracle failed to occur in 1944, Vesuvius erupted. When it failed in 1980, the city was hit by a devastating earthquake.

Vast and stunning, Naples' spiritual centre-piece sits on the site of earlier churches, themselves preceded by a pagan temple to Neptune. Begun by Charles I of Anjou in 1272 and consecrated in 1315, it was largely destroyed in a 1456 earthquake. Copious nips and tucks over the centuries, including the addition of a late-19th-century neo-Gothic façade, have created a melange of styles and influences.

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

The 17th-century baroque **Cappella di San Gennaro** (Chapel of St Januarius; also known as the Chapel of the Treasury) was designed by Giovanni Cola di Franco and completed in 1637. It features a fiery painting by Giuseppe de Ribera and a bevy of silver busts and bronze statues depicting all the saints of Naples' churches. Above them, a heavenly dome glows with frescoes by Giovanni Lanfranco. Hidden away in a strongbox behind the altar is a 14th-century silver bust in which sits the skull of San Gennaro and the two phials which hold his miraculous blood.

The next chapel eastwards contains an urn with the saint's bones and a cupboard full of femurs, tibias and fibulas. Below the high altar is the **Cappella Carafa**, a Renaissance chapel built to house yet more of the saint's remains.

On the north aisle the **Basilica di Santa Restituta** sits one of Naples' oldest basilicas, dating to the 4th century. Incorporated into the main cathedral, it was subject to an almost complete



View through to the Duomo

QUARTERS

JEAN-BERNARD CARRELL

makeover following damage incurred in an earthquake in 1688. Beyond this is the Duomo's **archaeological zone** (admission €3; 9am-12pm & 4.30-7pm Mon-Sat, 9am-12.30pm Sun). The tunnels beneath lead down into the fascinating remains of the site's original Greek and Roman buildings and roads. Here, too, is the baptistry, the oldest in Western Europe, with its glittering 4th-century mosaics.

## MADRE (MUSEO D'ARTE CONTEMPORANEA DONNAREGINA)

MAP P286

081 562 45 61; www.museomadre.it; Via Settembrini 79; €7; 10am-9pm Mon-Thu & Sun, 10am-midnight Fri & Sat; Cavour

The hottest gallery in town, MADRE is to Naples what MoMA is to Manhattan. Housed in the historic Donnaregina Palace, this world-class art space was designed by Portuguese architect Alvaro Siza y Vieira and boasts the city's best collection of contemporary art. While the ground and 2nd floors host cutting-edge temporary exhibitions, the 1st floor houses the museum's permanent collection. Highlights include Jeff Koons' über-kitsch *Wild Boy and Puppy*, Rebecca Horn's eerie collection of synchronised skulls and moving mirrors *Spirits*, and a perspective-warping installation by Mumbai-born artist Amish Kapok.

## FOR CHILDREN

**Centro Musei Scienze Naturali** (p68)  
**Edenlandia** (p106)  
**Città della Scienza** (p106)  
**Stazione Zoologica** (p89)  
**Catacomba di San Gennaro** (p93)  
**Anfiteatro Flavio, Pozzuoli** (p103)  
**Solfatar crater, Pozzuoli** (p104)

## MUSEO DEL TESORO DI SAN GENNARO

MAP PP280-1  
☎ 081 29 49 80; Via Duomo 149; admission €5.50;  
🕒 9am-6.30pm Mon-Sat, 10am-5pm Sun; 🚗 CS to Via Duomo

The city's love affair with San Gennaro is well documented at this savvy museum at the Duomo's southern end. Two floors glimmer with precious ex voto gifts made to the saint, from bronze busts and sumptuous paintings to silver ampullas and a gilded 18th-century sedan chair used to shelter the saint's bust on rainy procession days. Included in the price of the ticket is a multilingual audioguide.

## MERCATO

East of Via Pietro Colletta and south of Corso Umberto I lie the shabby and lively streets of the Mercato district. This is the place for rough-and-ready markets, fashion fakes, dusty baroque and streetside kebabs.

## CHIESA DI SAN PIETRO MARTIRE

MAP PP280-1  
☎ 081 552 68 55; Piazzetta Bonghi 1; 🕒 7am-1pm & 5-7pm; 🚗 R2 to Corso Umberto I

Originally commissioned to help clean up the crime-packed port in the 13th century, this Dominican church and monastery received an elegant cloister by Giovan Francesco di Palma in the 16th century. During the decade of French rule (1806-15) the monks were kicked out and the monastery became a tobacco factory. It remained so until 1978 when, after a major revamp, the professors of the faculty of Literature and Philosophy at University of Naples moved into their new, and current, home.

## CHIESA DI SANTA MARIA DEL CARMINE

MAP PP280-1  
☎ 081 20 11 96; Piazza del Carmine; 🕒 6.30am-12.30pm Mon-Sat, 6.30am-2pm Sun; 🚗 152 to Via Nuova Marina

One of Naples' oldest churches, Santa Maria del Carmine plays a starring role in Neapolitan folklore. When Conrad (Corradino) of Swabia was charged for attempting to depose the king in 1268, his mother Elisabetta di Baviera desperately tried to collect the money to pay Charles I of Anjou a ransom for her son's life. But the money arrived too late and Conrad was beheaded for treason. Grief-stricken, she gave the money to the church, on the condition that the Carmelite brothers prayed for him every day. They agreed and the cashed-up brothers built the church you see today. There's a monument to Conrad in the transept.

However, it's the 13th-century Byzantine icon behind the main altar, the *Madonna della Bruna*, that is the star attraction here. Attributed with miraculous powers, the Madonna is celebrated every year on 16 July when crowds flock here to see the 17th-century **campanile** lit up by fireworks. The city's tallest bell tower, its onion-dome design is the work of Giacomo di Conforto and Giovanni Donzelli.

Further myth (and miracle) surrounds a wooden crucifix that hangs in a tabernacle under the church's main arch. According to legend, a cannonball fired at the church in 1439 during the war between Alfonso of Aragon and Robert of Anjou flew into the church and headed straight for the crucifix. In the nick of time Jesus ducked and the cannonball sailed harmlessly past.

History rather than tradition records that it was from this church that Tommaso Aniello (Masaniello) harangued the mob into rising against the Spanish rulers. Defeated and killed by the Spanish, he is said to be buried in an unmarked tomb in the church.

At the southern end of the square, on the opposite side of busy Via Nuova Marina, stand remnants of the city's 14th-century medieval fortress, **Castello del Carmine**.

## PIAZZA DEL MERCATO

MAP PP280-1  
🚗 CS5 to Corso G Garibaldi  
Where cars now park, heads once rolled. For centuries, this scruffy square was the site of gruesome public executions, including that of Conrad of Swabia, whose mother paid for the nearby **Chiesa di Santa Maria del Carmine** (left), and those of over 200 ill-fated supporters of the 1799 Parthenopean Republic. Equally grim is its honour as the starting spot for the devastating plague of 1656.

The square sits at the easternmost point of the city's old medieval wall. To the north



Porta Nolana market

## QUARTERS

shines the green- and yellow-tiled dome of the boarded-up Chiesa di Santa Croce al Mercato, while in the southwest corner you will find a bizarre pyramid supported by four curious creatures. Only one remains intact – with the head of puffy-cheeked girl and the body of a lion.

One block west along Via Sant'Eligio stands the starkly gothic **Chiesa Sant'Eligio** (Map pp280-1; ☎ 081 553 84 29; Via Sant'Eligio; 🕒 8-12.30pm Mon-Fri, 8am-12.30pm & 5-6.30pm Sat, 10am-1.30pm Sun). The first Angevin church in Naples, Sant'Eligio was built in 1270 by Charles I of Anjou and features a beautiful external clock arch complete with a (working!) 15th-century clock.

## PORTA NOLANA & MERCATO

MAP PP280-1

**Via Sopramuro**; 🚗 R2 to Corso Umberto I  
At the head of Via Sopramuro stands the 15th-century Porta Nolana, one of the medieval city gates. Two cylindrical towers, optimistically named Faith and Hope, support an arch decorated with a bas-relief of Ferdinand I of Aragon on horseback. Under and beyond it, sits the most vivacious street market in all of Naples (see the boxed text, p140). Street theatre at its rawest, it's an intoxicating scene of glistening seafood, buxom vegetables,

plump cheeses, contraband cigarette stalls and pink inflatable dolphins.

## SANTISSIMA ANNUNZIATA

MAP PP280-1  
☎ 081 254 26 08; Via dell'Annunziata 34; 🕒 7.30am-noon & 4.30-7.30pm Mon-Sat, 7.30am-1pm Sun; 🚗 R2 to Corso Umberto I

This 14th-century religious complex is well known for its former orphanage as it is for its jasmine-scented, light-filled basilica. Designed by Carlo Vanvitelli (son of the better-known Luigi) at the end of the 18th century, the basilica's white and light-grey interior is a bold affair with some 44 Corinthian columns lining the nave and a soaring 67m-high dome. The third chapel on the left features the wooden statue of the Virgin Mary, one of the few remnants from the original 14th-century church. Affectionately known as *mamma chiatta* (chubby mother), its image was once reproduced on the leaden medals worn by the children left at the former orphanage to the left of the basilica (☎ 081 28 90 32; 🕒 9am-6pm Mon-Sat).

Hear you can still see the infamous **ruota** (wheel) set in the orphanage wall. In use up until the 1980s, desperate parents would place the baby in a hollow in the wheel and turn it. On the other side of the wall sat a nun ready to take the baby, wash it in the adjacent basin and record its time and date of entry.





## TOLEDO & QUARTIERI SPAGNOLI

Eating p120; Shopping p141; Sleeping p150

In the 19th century, Grand Tour travellers swooned at its grand design. Today, the masses hit the strip to swoon over new-season threads and decked-out locals.

On the night that Italy won the 2006 World Cup, hundreds of thousands of flag-wrapped fans poured onto Via Toledo to blow their horns, let off firecrackers and make fun of their frog-eating opponents. Since its construction by Spanish viceroys Don Pedro de Toledo in the 16th century, this palazzo-flanked high street (also known as Via Roma) has pulled a crowd. Its pedestrianised southern end is the place for trend-savvy shopping, with old-school shops and kitsch further up near Piazza Dante. From here, Via Toledo becomes Via Enrico Pessina as it continues north to the booty-packed Museo Archeologico Nazionale and beyond. East of Via Toledo, along Via A Diaz, the city takes a brutal turn with colossal fascist classics like the Palazzo delle Poste.

Immediately west, however, are the razor-thin, criss-crossing streets of the Quartieri Spagnoli. Originally built to house Don Pedro's Spanish troops, the area is better known as a hotbed of crime and urban malaise. The infamous *bassi* (one room, ground-floor houses) became, and still are, home to entire families, while the mean streets provided fertile ground for the spread of the Camorra (the Neapolitan Mafia); that said, a run-in with the Godfather is highly unlikely. With an eye on your bag, venture in for some daytime exploration. The district might be low on sites per se but its washing-strung streets harbour hidden delights, from classic trattorie and century-old artisan workshops, to the unmissable Pignasecca market.

## highlights

### TOLEDO & QUARTIERI SPAGNOLI

- 1 Accademia di Belle Arti (below)
- 2 Chiesa di Sant'Anna dei Lombardi (right)
- 3 Galleria Umberto I (right)
- 4 Museo Archeologico Nazionale (p80)
- 5 La Pignasecca Market (p140)



Galleria Umberto I

## CHIESA DI SANT'ANNA DEI LOMBARDI MAP PP280-1

☎ 081 551 33 33; Piazza

Monteoliveto; ☎ 8.30am-12.30pm

Mon-Fri; 🚗 R4 to Via Monteoliveto

The Chiesa di Sant'Anna dei Lombardi is a sanctified stunner. In fact, it's often spoken of as more a museum of Renaissance art than a church; a fact that owes much to the close links that existed between the Neapolitan Aragonese and the Florentine Medici dynasty.

The main, but by no means only attraction is Guido Mazzoni's spectacular *Pietà*. Dating to 1492, the terracotta ensemble is made up of eight life-size terracotta figures surrounding the dead body of Christ. Originally the figures were painted, but even without colour they make quite an impression.

The *Sacrestia* is a work of art in itself. The walls are lined with gloriously inlaid wood panels by Giovanni da Verona, while the ceiling is covered by Giorgio Vasari's 16th-century frescoes depicting the Allegories and Symbols of Faith.

Across Via Monteoliveto from the church is the 16th-century **Palazzo Gravina** (Map pp280-1), the seat of Naples University's architecture faculty.

## GALLERIA PRINCIPE DI NAPOLI

MAP PPP280-1

☎ 081 44 42 45; Piazza Museo Nazionale; 🏛 Museo Naples' oldest shopping arcade has seen better days. Now abandoned, it was designed by Nicola Briglia and built between 1876 and 1883. Its soaring neoclassical look is almost identical to that of its younger, better-loved sibling Galleria Umberto I, located at the lower end of Via Toledo.

## GALLERIA UMBERTO I MAP PP280-1

Via San Carlo; 🚗 R2 to Via San Carlo

Doppelgänger of Milan's Galleria Vittorio Emanuele, the trick to appreciating this mammoth glass-and-steel masterpiece is to walk with your head tilted up: its grand central dome soars to a lofty 56 metres. The mysterious stars of David imbedded in the glasswork are said to suggest local Jewish investment in the building. Complete with a sumptuous marble floor, the Galleria makes a surreal setting for impromptu late-night soccer games.

## ACCADEMIA DI BELLE ARTI MAP PP280-1

☎ 081 44 42 45; Via Santa Maria di Costantinopoli 107; admission €5; ☎ 10am-2pm Mon-Thu, 2-6pm Fri, 10am-2pm Sat; 🏛 Dante

Buzzing with brush-clutching art students, this academy was once the convent of San Giovanni Battista delle Monache. Built in the 17th-century, it was given a thorough makeover in 1864 by architect Enrico Alvino, who gave the building a neoclassical façade, grand staircase, and two noble lions to guard the main entrance. The 1st-floor gallery houses an important collection of mainly 19th-century Neapolitan work, many by former academy alumni, including watercolourist Giacinti Gigante and sculptor Vincenzo Gemito. That so many of Gemito's busts were created in 1874 is not a coincidence – he frantically chipped away to pay his way out of military service.



Pompeii's *La Battaglia di Alessandro Contro Dario* mosaic, now in Museo Archeologico Nazionale

JEAN-BERNARD CARRETT

## MUSEO ARCHEOLOGICO NAZIONALE MAP P286

☎ 081 44 01 66; [www.marketplace.it/museo.nazionale](http://www.marketplace.it/museo.nazionale); Piazza Museo Nazionale 19; admission €6.50; 🕒 9am-7.30pm Wed-Mon; 🚗 Museo

Even if the idea of an archaeological museum usually sends you to sleep, this place will amaze you. With many of the best finds from Pompeii and Herculaneum on display, as well as hundreds of classical sculptures and a trove of ancient Roman porn, the Museo Archeologico Nazionale is world museum heavyweight. You could easily spend a couple of days exploring the museum, although it is possible to do an abridged tour in a morning.

Originally a cavalry barracks and later the seat of the city's university (Palazzo dei Regni Studi), the museum was established by the Bourbon king Charles VII in the late 18th century to house the rich collection of antiquities he had inherited from his mother, Elisabetta Farnese. However, he never lived to see its inauguration; he died in 1788, 28 years before the Reale Museo Borbonico (Royal Bourbon Museum) was opened by his successor Ferdinand IV. Forty-four years later, in 1860, the museum became the property of the new Italian state.

The museum is spread over five floors. Before you venture into the galleries (numbered in Roman numerals), it's worth investing €7.50 in the *National Archaeological Museum of Naples* quick-guide or, to concentrate on the highlights, €4 for an audioguide in English.

Starting in the basement you'll find the Borgia collection of Etruscan and Egyptian relics, while it's on the ground floor that the Farnese collection of colossal Greek and Roman sculptures is displayed. The two highlights of classical sculpture are the world-famous *Toro Farnese* (Farnese Bull) in Room XVI and the gigantic *Ercole* (Hercules). Sculpted in the

early 3rd century AD and noted in the writings of Pliny, the *Toro Farnese*, probably a Roman copy of a Greek original, depicts the death of Dirce, Queen of Thebes. According to Greek mythology she was tied to a wild bull by Zeto and Amphion as punishment for her treatment of their mother Antiope, the first wife of King Lykos of Thebes. Carved from a single colossal block of marble, the sculpture was discovered in 1545 near the Baths of Caracalla in Rome and was restored by Michelangelo, before eventually being shipped to Naples in 1787.

*Ercole* (Room XI) was discovered in the same Roman dig and like the *Toro Farnese* remained in Rome until 1787. Originally without legs, Ercole had a new pair made for him by Guglielmo della Porta. In fact, the story goes that the Farnese were so impressed with della Porta's work that they refused to reinstate the original legs when they were subsequently found. The Bourbons, however, had no such qualms and later attached the originals to their rightful place. You can see the della Porta legs displayed on the wall behind *Ercole*.

Continuing up the grand staircase, the mezzanine floor houses exquisite mosaics from Pompeii and ancient smut in the Gabinetto Segreto (Secret Chamber). Of the series taken from the Casa del Fauno in Pompeii, it is *La Battaglia di Alessandro Contro Dario* (The Battle of Alexander against Darius) in Room LXI that stands out. The best-known depiction of Alexander the Great, the 20-sq-metre mosaic was probably made by Alexandrian craftsmen working in Italy around the end of the 2nd century BC. Of the other mosaics in the collection, that of a cat killing a duck in Room LX impresses with its portrayal of feline ferocity, while in Room LXIII, the study of Nile River animals combines art with zoology.

Beyond the mosaics is the **Gabinetto Segreto** and its small but much-studied collection of ancient erotica. The room was only reopened to the public in 2000 after decades of being accessible only to the seriously scientific, although you still need to book at the front desk to see it. Guarding the entrance is a marble statue of a lascivious-looking Pan draped over a very coy Daphne. Pan is then caught in the act, this time with a nanny goat, in the collection's most famous piece – a small and surprisingly sophisticated statue taken from the Villa dei Papiri in Herculaneum. There is also a series of nine paintings depicting erotic positions, which served as a menu for brothel clients.

Originally the royal library, the **Sala Meridiana** (Great Hall of the Sundial) on the 1st floor is enormous. Measuring 54m long and 20m high, it contains the Farnese *Atlante*, a statue of Atlas carrying a globe on his shoulders, and various paintings from the Farnese collection. The rest of the 1st floor is largely devoted to a treasure trove of discoveries from Pompeii, Herculaneum, Stabiae and Cuma. Items range from huge murals and frescoes to a pair of gladiator's helmets, household items, ceramics and glassware – even egg cups. Rooms LXXXVI and LXXXVII house an extraordinary collection of vases of mixed origins, many carefully reassembled from fragments.

Finish your tour up on the 2nd floor, where there are various engraved coppers and Greek vases.

## PALAZZO DELLE POSTE MAP PP280-1

☎ 081 551 14 56; Piazza G Matteotti 3; 🕒 8.15am-6.30pm Mon-Fri, 8am-noon Sat; 🚗 R4 to Via Monteliveto

Looking like a giant, graffitied UFO, Naples' main post office is a striking fascist concoction. Product of an urban renewal programme that wiped out the San Giuseppe quarter, it was designed in 1935 by Giuseppe Vaccaro and features a number of fascist architectural hallmarks: most notably its foreboding scale and black marble columns – a reference to the black armbands worn by Mussolini and his right-wing posse. Predictably, the front steps are a popular rallying spot for young neofascists.

## PIAZZA DANTE MAP PP280-1

🚗 Dante

On hot summer evenings, Piazza Dante turns into a communal living room, packed

with entire families who stroll, eat, smoke, play cards, chase balloons, whinge about the in-laws or simply sit and stare.

Dominating the eastern flank of the square is the enormous pink façade of the **Convitto Nazionale**. Now housing a boarding school, shops and cafés, it was the piece-de-resistance of Luigi Vanvitelli's spectacular 18th-century square. Dedicated to the Bourbon king Charles VII, it was known as the Foro Carolino until Italian unification in 1860 when it was renamed Piazza Dante. At the centre of the square, a sand-blasted marble Dante looks out over anarchic Via Toledo in arm-raised disbelief.

Below it all, the **Dante metro station** doubles as a cutting-edge art space with installations from some art-world heavyweights. As you head down on the escalator, look up and catch Joseph Kosuth's *Queste Cose Visibili* (These Visible Things) above you. Huge and eye-squinting neon, it's an epic quotation from Dante's *Il Convivio*. Along the wall at the bottom of the escalator you'll find artist Jannis Kounellis's renegade train tracks running over abandoned shoes (Locals have been known to add a pair of their own trainers to the mix.) Right behind you, above the second set of escalators, sits *Intermediterraneo*, Michelangelo Pistoletto's giant mirror map of the Mediterranean Sea.

## QUARTERS

## EYE FOR AN EYESORE

Infamous home of self-serving politicians and devil-may-care developers, Naples is home to a fair share of aesthetic atrocities. Here's the best of the worst.

**Centro Direzionale** (Map pp278–9; Corso Meridionale) Designed by Japanese architect Kenzo Tanje in the 1980s, this soulless minicity of dated glass towers and wind tunnels features a freaky-looking church that resembles a party hat.

**Jolly Hotel** (Map pp280–1; Via Medina 70) Neapolitans love to hate this 30-storey block. Looking like a lanky concertina, it has been a cyst on the city skyline since 1960. Not surprisingly, the city council that rubber-stamped it has since been discredited.

**Cinema di Santa Lucia** (Map pp284–5; Via Generale Orsini 37) This once glorious cinema is now a luxury carpark. Under its art deco ceiling, A-list cars rest their glossy wheels for €3/hr. At the time of writing, plans were underway to convert the front part of the cinema into a discount supermarket.



## SANTA LUCIA & CHIAIA

Eating p122; Shopping p141; Sleeping p151; Walking Tours p110

Santa Lucia is a scene-stealing combo of sweeping squares and fur-clad *signore* in chandeliered cafés. Further west, neoclassical Chiaia cranks up the style.

At the heart of Santa Lucia lies Piazza dei Plebiscito, a sprawling sea of cobblestones and colonnades. Flanking its eastern edge is the Palazzo Reale, former royal downtown pad and a decadent mass of gilded thrones and crystal chandeliers. Behind the palace sits the legendary Teatro San Carlo and bulky Castel Nuovo (Maschio Angioino), one-time home of Angevin kings, imprisoned barons and a hungry renegade crocodile.

Directly south, ferries dock at Stazione Marittima while further southwest candlelit diners tuck into seafood at portside Borgo Marinaro. The district's main street is Via Santa Lucia, a palazzo-flanked strip of pizzerie, bars and legend – Prince Rainier of Monte Carlo once strolled here arm-in-arm with Princess Grace and mafia boss Lucky Luciano dropped by for a bite to eat. Until the 19th century, the sea reached the fishermen's houses tucked behind its western flank. Soaring above their peeling façades is Monte Echia and the Pizzofalcone district, inhabited since the 7th century BC and a little-known warren of dense, dark streets, macabre votive shrines and knockout views over city and bay.

Further west, and a figurative world away, Chiaia is a mix of designer boutiques, slick sushi bars and glammed-up bars and clubs. Stock up on Prada on Via Calabritto, fashion mags on Piazza dei Martiri and *aperitivo* cocktails on Vico Belledonne. This is where you'll find the hot new PAN art gallery, former Rothschilds pad Villa Pignatelli (now a museum) and Europe's oldest aquarium, elegantly poised in Villa Comunale, the city's famous seaside park.

## highlights

### SANTA LUCIA & CHIAIA

- 1 Borgo Marinaro & Castel dell'Ovo (below)
- 2 Castel Nuovo (right)
- 3 Lungomare (p88)
- 4 Palazzo Reale (p85)
- 5 PAN Art Gallery (p89)
- 6 Teatro San Carlo (p135)



## SANTA LUCIA

No overhead washing here, just Naples at its blue-blooded best: peep into royal boudoirs, sit where Oscar Wilde once sipped and take a deep breath on an elegant square.

### ACQUEDOTTO MAP PP284-5

☎ 081 40 02 56; [www.lanapolisotterranea.it](http://www.lanapolisotterranea.it);  
Piazza Trieste e Trento; admission €10; 🕒 1½hr guided  
tours 10am, noon, 6pm Sat, 10am, 11am, noon, 6pm  
Sun, 9pm Thu; 🚗 R2 to Piazza Trieste e Trento

Deep below Naples' royal quarter lies a series of Graeco-Roman tunnels that were once part of the city's aqueduct system. Used as air-raid shelters in WWII, the tufa-rock tunnels run below Via Chiaia.

Guided tours are organised by La Napoli Sotterranea, run in Italian and depart from Caffè Gambrinus at the times listed above.

### BORGOMARINARO MAP PP284-5

🚗 C25 to Via Partenope

According to legend, this small island of volcanic rock is where the heartbroken siren Partenope washed ashore after failing to seduce Ulysses with her song. This is also

where the Greeks first settled the city in the 7th century BC, calling the island Megaris. A humble fishing hub in the 19th and early 20th centuries, Borgo Marinaro is now a lively mix of bars, restaurants and cocktail-sipping night-owls, all in the shadow of the looming Castel dell'Ovo.

## QUARTERS

### CASTEL DELL'OVO MAP PP284-5

☎ 081 240 00 55; Borgo Marinaro; 🕒 9am-6pm

Mon-Fri, 9am-1pm Sat & Sun; 🚗 C25 to Via Partenope

According to myth, the Castel dell'Ovo owes its improbable name – Castle of the Egg – to Virgil. The Roman poet was said to have buried an egg on the site where the castle now stands, ominously warning that when the egg breaks the castle (and Naples) will fall. Killjoys prefer to say that the name of the castle is due to its oval shape.

Built in the 12th century by the Normans, the castle is the city's oldest. Its particular position had long been appreciated – originally by the Roman general Lucullus, who had his villa here – and it became a key fortress in the defence of Campania. It was subsequently used by the Swabians, Angevins and Alfonso of Aragon, who modified it to suit his military needs.

Today the castle is invaded by tourists, taffeta-clad brides and dictatorial wedding photographers all out for the perfect sea-view shot.

The in-house Museo di Etnopreistoria (Map pp284-5; ☎ 081 764 53 43; 🕒 10am-1pm Mon-Fri by appointment only) features a cool collection of prehistoric tools, fossils and ceramics.

### CASTEL NUOVO (MASCHIO ANGIOINO) MAP PP280-1

Piazza Municipio ☎ 081 795 58 77; admission €5;

🕒 9am-7pm Mon-Sat; 🚗 R2 to Piazza del Municipio  
Known to Neapolitans as the Maschio Angioino (Angevin Keep) and to everyone else as the Castel Nuovo, this imposing 13th-century castle is one of Naples' most striking buildings.

When Charles I of Anjou took over Naples and the Swabians' Sicilian kingdom, he found himself in control not only of his new southern Italian acquisitions, but also of possessions in Tuscany, northern Italy and Provence (France). It made sense to base the new dynasty in Naples, rather than Palermo in Sicily, and Charles launched an ambitious construction programme to expand the port and city walls.

His plans included converting a Franciscan convent into the castle that still stands in Piazza del Municipio.

Christened the *Castrum Novum* (New Castle) to distinguish it from the older Castel dell'Ovo and Castel Capuano, it was erected in three years from 1279. A favourite royal residence, it was a popular hang-out for the leading intellectuals and artists of the day. Petrarch, Boccaccio and Giotto all stayed here, the latter repaying his hosts by painting much of the interior. However, of the original structure only the Cappella Palatina remains; the rest is the result of renovations by the Aragonese two centuries later, as well as a meticulous restoration effort prior to WWII. The heavy grey stone that dominates the castle was imported from Mallorca. The two-storey Renaissance triumphal arch at the entrance, the Torre della Guardia, commemorates the triumphal entry of Alfonso I of Aragon into Naples in 1443.

Now the venue of city council meetings, the stark stone **Sala dei Baroni** (Hall of the Barons) is named after the barons who were slaughtered here in 1486 for plotting against King Ferdinand I of Aragon. Its striking ribbed vault fuses ancient Roman and Spanish late-Gothic influences.

The walls of the **Cappella Palatina** were once graced by Giotto frescoes, of which only fragments remain on the splays of the Gothic windows. Above the chapel's elegant Renaissance doorway is a beautiful Catalan-style rose window.

The cappella forms part of the **museum**, spread across several halls on three floors. The 14th- and 15th-century frescoes and sculptures on the ground floor are of the most interest.

The other two floors mostly display paintings, either by Neapolitan artists, or with Naples or

Campania as subjects, covering the 17th to the early 20th centuries. Worth seeking out is Guglielmo Monaco's 15th-century bronze door, complete with a cannonball embedded in it. The Sala Carlo V hosts temporary exhibitions of contemporary art.

In the summer months the castle's courtyard is often used for outdoor concerts, including productions from the nearby Teatro San Carlo.

### CHIESA DELLA PIETÀ DEI TURCHINI MAP PP280-1

☎ 081 552 04 57; Via Medina 19; 🗺 varies; 🚶 R2 to Via Medina

Originally a poorhouse, this modest 16th-century church takes its name from the *turchino* (deep blue) uniforms the children used to wear. Fashion aside, it's known as a historic conservatory and birthplace of the famous Neapolitan musical group *Pietà dei Turchini* (see p133). One of the conservatory's most famous alumni was the composer Alessandro Scarlatti (1660–1725).

### CHIESA SANTA MARIA INCORONATA MAP PP280-1

Via Medina 60; 🗺 9am-5pm Mon-Sat; 🚶 R2 to Via Medina

The beautiful Gothic arches of the Chiesa Santa Maria Incoronata date to the mid-14th century. Situated on the sunken site that Charles I of Anjou had earmarked for his planned Castel Nuovo, the church was built on the wishes of Giovanna of Anjou, who wanted somewhere to conserve a fragment of her most precious relic – Jesus' crown of thorns.

Now used as an exhibition space, it's worth a stop for the 14th-century frescoes by Roberto Oderisi.

### FONTANA DELL'IMMACOLATELLA

MAP PP284-5

Via Partenope; 🚶 C25 to Via Partenope

Diva of the local fountain scene, the Fontana dell'Immacolatella is a grand three-arched affair. Known also as the Fontana del Gigante, it was built by Michelangelo Naccherino and Pietro Bernini in 1601. Two minor arches, under which stand statues of river gods, flank a grand central arch topped by a look-at-me collection of obelisks, cherubs and coats of arms.

### FONTANA DI NETTUNO MAP PP280-1

Via Medina; 🚶 R2 to Via Medina

A study Neptune tops this baroque ensemble by Cosimo Fanzago, Michelangelo Naccherino and Pietro Bernini, father of the more famous Gian Lorenzo Bernini. Under the glistening god, a cast of lions and spewing creatures complete the lavish picture. Built in 1601, this city favourite has had several addresses. Its last move came when work on the metro forced a transfer from Piazza Bovio to its current position. Will it stay or will it go? Only the Gods know.

### PALAZZO REALE MAP PP284-5

☎ 081 40 04 54; entrance on Piazza Trieste e Trento; admission €4, audioguide €4; 🗺 9am-7pm Thu-Tue; 🚶 CS to Piazza Trieste e Trento

Former downtown royal pad, this sprawling palace was built around 1600. Envisaged as a monument to Spanish glory (Naples was under Spanish rule at the time), it was designed by local architect Domenico Fontana and completed two long centuries later in 1841.

From the courtyard, an ego-boosting double staircase leads to the royal apartments which house the **Museo del Palazzo Reale**, a rich and eclectic collection of baroque and neoclassical furnishings, porcelain, tapestries, statues and paintings.

First stop at the top of the stairs is the Teatrino di Corte (1768), a lavish private theatre created by Ferdinand Fuga to celebrate the marriage of Ferdinand IV and Maria Carolina of Austria. Incredibly, Angelo Viva's statues of Apollo and the Muses set along the walls are made of papier-mâché.

Snigger smugly in Sala (Room) XII, where the 16th-century canvas *Gli Esattori delle Imposte* (The Tax Collectors) by Dutch artist Marinus Claesz Van Roymerswaele confirms that attitudes to tax collectors have changed



Monumental Palazzo Reale

QUARTERS

JEAN-BERNARD CARRELET

little in 500 years (think two hideous-looking creatures gleefully recording their day's takings in a ledger).

The next room, Sala XIII, used to be Joachim Murat's study in the 19th-century but was used as a snack bar by Allied troops in WWII. Meanwhile, what looks like a waterwheel in Sala XXIII is actually a nifty rotating reading desk made for Maria Carolina by Giovanni Uldrich in the 18th century.

The *Cappella Reale* (Royal Chapel) houses a colossal 18th-century *presepe* (nativity scene). Impressively detailed, its cast of wise men, bustling peasants and munching mules were crafted by a series of big-name Neapolitan artists including Giuseppe Sanmartino, creator of the legendary *Cristo Velato* in the Cappella Sansevero (see p68).

Extending out from Sala IX, the once-impressive hanging gardens are still closed for restoration, although a sweet smile at the staff member on duty might score you a peek. Otherwise, head to the picture-perfect garden to the left of the palace's main ground-floor entrance. Entry is free and there are bay views to boot.

The palace also houses the **Biblioteca Nazionale** (National Library; ☎ 081 781 92 31; 🗺 9am-7.30pm Mon-Fri, 9am-1pm Sat), which includes at least 2000 papyrus scrolls discovered at Herculaneum and fragments of a 5th-century Coptic Bible. Bring ID or miss out.

## THE CROCODILE HUNTED

Every hulking castle needs a legend. While the Castel dell'Ovo has its hidden egg (p83), the Castel Nuovo (p83) had a very peckish crocodile. Philosopher and writer Benedetto Croce recounts the tale in his 1919 publication *Storie e Leggende Napolitane* (Neapolitan Stories and Legends). The story takes us down into the dark, dank dungeon beneath the Angevin-built fortress. In here, the king would accommodate his imprisoned enemies, who included the conspirators in the infamous Baron's Plot of 1486. A seemingly impenetrable structure, bewilderment ensued when prisoners started disappearing Houdini-style. When security was beefed up, guards made a shocking discovery. Through a discreet hole entered a crocodile that would snap up prisoners and drag them out to sea. It's assumed that the sneaky beast made it to Naples on a ship from Egypt. Efficient, clean and cruel, the hungry croc fell in favour with the king for a while. Alas, its own days were numbered: lured into the pit with a slab of horse meat, the snappy Egyptian was impaled, stuffed and hung above the castle's second entrance door. According to Croce, it remained there until the mid 19th-century. Where it went after that, and just how reliable the legend is, remains an urban mystery.

## PIAZZA DEL PLEBISCITO MAP PP284-5

🚇 CS to Piazza Trieste e Trento

Until the world's G7 bigwigs landed in Naples for their 1994 summit, the city's largest piazza was also Europe's most impressive car park. Today, legs substitute wheels and this vast cobbled space is a hotspot for New Year revellers and World Cup celebrations.

The piazza's undisputed star is this colossal **Chiesa di San Francesco di Paola** (Map pp284-5; ☎ 081 74 51 33, 🕒 8am-noon & 3.30-6pm Mon-Sat, 8am-1pm Sun), a later addition to the colonnade of columns that formed the highlight of Joachim Murat's original piazza (1809). A neoclassical copy of the Pantheon in Rome, the church is striking more for its size than any artistic merit; its dome measures 34m in diameter and 53m in height. Designed by architect Pietro Banchini, it was commissioned by Ferdinand I in 1817 to celebrate the restoration of his kingdom after the Napoleonic interlude.

Facing the church is the Palazzo Reale (p85), with its eight statues of past kings. The royal theme continues centre square with Antonio Canova's statue of a galloping Bourbon king Charles VII and a nearby statue of his son Ferdinand I by Antonio Calì.



Piazza del Plebiscito

MARTIN MOOS

**SanGiacomo degli Spagnoli** (☎ 081 552 37 59; Piazza Municipio 27; 🕒 7.30-11am Mon-Fri, 10.30am-1pm Sun), burial place of the 16th-century Spanish viceroy Don Pedro de Toledo (p29) and his wife Maria. On the northern flank stands the Teatro Mercadante (p134), a local theatre heavyweight.

## PIAZZA TRIESTE E TRENTO MAP PP284-5

🚇 CS to Piazza Trieste e Trento

Cocktail-sipping poseurs and packs of flirting teens make this an essential city pitstop. Grab a lemon granita from the hole-in-the-wall

## PIAZZA DEL MUNICIPIO MAP PP280-1

🚇 R2 to Piazza del Municipio

Dominated by the iconic Castel Nuovo (Maschio Angioino), Piazza Municipio is not looking its best at the moment as construction work continues on the new metro system (see the boxed text, below). At the head of the square stands the 19th-century **Palazzo San Giacomo**. Attached to it is the 16th-century **Chiesa**

## RUINING SCHEDULES

In January 2004, construction workers in **Piazza del Municipio** (above) struck archaeological gold. Working on the extension of Metro Line 1, they accidentally unearthed three perfectly-preserved Roman vessels. In nearby Via Armando Diaz, excavation work on the new Toledo station uncovered a 2nd-century Roman spa complete with frescoed coffered ceilings. Further east, on Piazza Nicola Amore, detailed parts of a 2nd-century Roman temple were found, as well as statues of the Imperial Roman family.

For historians and archaeologists, the extension of Metro Line 1 has been a gift from the Gods, revealing parts of ancient Neapolis they would never have reached alone. Indeed, due to Naples' hilly topography, the city's metro system is one of the world's deepest, and just the ticket for some hardcore archaeology.

For many commuters, however, the discoveries have simply meant more delays for the long-overdue project, set to connect Piazza Dante and Via Toledo to Stazione Centrale. Yet, despite the setbacks, few doubt the wait will be worth it. What had been planned as standard stations for hurried commuters are now set to become train-stopping showpieces of archaeological booty. So when will you be sneaking a peek? According to the city's transit authority, 2008. According to commuters... *l'anno mai, il mese poi* (the twelfth of never).

*acquaio* (drink stall) and take in the famous locals, which include the Palazzo Reale, Teatro San Carlo and legendary Caffè Gambrinus.

Squeezed into its northeast corner is the **Chiesa di San Ferdinando** (☎ 081 41 81 18, 🕒 8am-noon Mon-Sat, 9.30am-1pm Sun), which features ceiling frescoes of the good-living Jesuits and a fine marble tomb by Tito Angelini in which lies Lucia Migliaccio, the Duchess di Floridia and wife of King Ferdinand I. Designed by Giovan Giacomo di Conforto in the early 17th century, it was modified by Cosimo Fanzago.

## RACCOLTA DE MURA MAP PP284-5

☎ 081 795 77 36; Piazza Trieste e Trento; admission free; 🕒 9am-1.30pm Mon-Fri; 🚇 CS to Piazza Trieste e Trento

Hidden among the chairs of the Bar del Professore (next to the Caffè Gambrinus) is an entrance to an underpass. Go down it and you'll hit one of the city's best-kept secrets – a tiny gallery dedicated to Neapolitan song and dance. Hanging on its pink-tiled walls is a fetching collection of old music-hall programmes and posters, vintage photos of the Festa di Piedigrotta and models of Punchinello (Naples' original version of Mr Punch). Stereo speakers provide a suitable background of warbling Neapolitan crooners.

## TEATRO SAN CARLO MAP PP284-5

☎ 081 797 21 11, tour bookings ☎ 081 66 45 45; [www.teatrosancarlo.it](http://www.teatrosancarlo.it); Piazza Trieste e Trento, Via San Carlo 98; tours €5; 🚇 R2 to Via San Carlo

The stuff of tenors' dreams, the sumptuous Teatro San Carlo is Italy's largest and oldest opera house. Inaugurated on 4 November 1737 by King Charles VII, it burnt down in 1816 before rising from the ashes courtesy of Antonio Niccolini, who'd added the neoclassical façade a few years earlier. Utterly deceiving, its straight-laced exterior gives few clues to the red and gold opulence waiting inside, which includes six gilded levels and pitch-perfect acoustics.

Twenty-minute guided tours depart from the theatre's main entrance between 9am and 6pm Monday to Sunday (excluding August) and are conducted in various languages, including English. Book between 9am and 2pm on the tour bookings number listed above.

## MONTE ECHIA

Rising up behind Piazza del Plebiscito, Monte Echia is the oldest part of Naples, once forming the ancient city of Parthe-



The illuminated Piazza Trieste e Trento

MARTIN MOOS

nope. Today it's an area of few sites but remarkable views. The top spot to enjoy them is from the unkempt garden at the top of Via Egiziaca a Pizzofalcone: from Piazza Carolina (behind the columns on the northern side of Piazza del Plebiscito) head up the hill until you reach Via Egiziaca a Pizzofalcone, turn left and carry on all the way to the top of the steep hill. You'll know when you get there.

## CHIESA SANTA MARIA DEGLI ANGELI MAP PP284-5

☎ 081 764 49 74; Piazza Santa Maria degli Angeli; 🕒 7.30-11.30am & 5.30-7pm Mon-Sat, 8.30am-1.30pm & 6-7.30pm Sun; 🚇 C22 to Via Monte di Dio

This yellow-hued baroque church was financed by Costanza Doria del Carretto, a noble lady with a deep purse and pious heart, and donated to the priests of the Teatini order.

Step inside for works by Neapolitan stalwarts Massimo Stanzione and Luca Giordano, as well as Francesco Grimaldi's famous dome.

## LA NUNZIATELLA MAP PP284-5

☎ 081 764 15 20; Via Generali Parisi 16; 🚇 C22 to Via Nunziatella

A hulking red heap perched high above Chiaia, the convent of Nunziatella is home to the sharp, preened cadets of Italy's prestigious Royal Military Academy of the Nunziatella.

Built in 1588, the convent was donated to the Jesuits by its benefactor, noblewoman Anna Mendoza Marchesana della Valle. It was used as a novitiate until the Jesuits were kicked out of town in the mid-18th century.

The adjacent church is also part of the academy. Famous for its beautiful 17th-century baroque interior – frescoes by Francesco de Mura, an altar by Sanmartino, the floor by Ferdinando Sanfelice – it’s open to civilians by appointment only.

## CHIAIA

Chiaia is Naples’ ‘It’ spot – preferred playground of fashionistas, soap stars and tied-*clad bella gente* (beautiful people). At night, the chic cobbled streets west of Piazza dei Martiri buzz with crowds who hit the city’s coolest restaurants, bars and clubs for some designer *dolce vita* (sweet life).

## CHIESA SANTA MARIA IN PORTICO

☎ 081 66 92 94; Via Santa Maria in Portico 17; ☎ 8-11am & 4.30-7pm; 🚶 C25 to Riviera di Chiaia  
Craving baroque? This 17th-century church should hit the spot. Check out the fabulous



Taking a dip at the *lungomare*

DALLAS STRIBBLEY

frescoes by Fabrizio Santafede (a good name for a church painter – ‘Santafede’ means ‘holy faith’), Paolo De Matteis, Giovan Battista and Fedele Fischetti. In the sacristy there’s a life-size 17th-century *presepe*, while the stuccowork and high altar is by Domenico Antonio Vaccaro. The *piperno* stone façade is by Arcangelo (another apt name – it means ‘archangel’) Guglielminelli and not, as was previously believed, Cosimo Fanzago.

## LUNGOMARE

🚶 C25 to Via Partenope  
Strolling the *lungomare* (seafront) is as Neapolitan as lunch at Nennella (p121). Running the length of Via Partenope and Via Francesco Caracciolo, this 2.5km seaside stretch is particularly beautiful as the sun sets and the light over the sea takes on an orange hue – picture Capri on the horizon, Mt Vesuvius looming to the south and you hopelessly smitten. On Sunday mornings, hit Via Francesco Caracciolo for a car-free passing parade of sexy skaters, gym-fit joggers and gelato-licking *flâneurs*.

## MUSEO PIGNATELLI

☎ 081 761 23 56; Riviera di Chiaia 200; admission €2; ☎ 8.30am-1.30pm Wed-Mon; 🚶 C25 to Riviera di Chiaia

In the early 19th century, Naples was gripped by classical fever. If it was Doric or Ionic, it was *in*. So when Ferdinand and Acton, a minister at the court of King Ferdinand IV (1759–1825), asked Pietro Valente to design Villa Pignatelli in 1826, Valente whipped up this striking Pompeian lookalike, complete with English garden.

Bought and extended by the Rothschilds in 1841, it became home to the Duke of Monteleone, Diego Aragona Pignatelli Cortes in 1867, before his granddaughter Rosina Pignatelli donated it to the state, which opened it (and its treasures) to the public.

The museum is a mix of opulent furniture, art and hunting paraphernalia (including a collection of royal whips). Highlights include the Meissen and Viennese porcelain in the Salotto Verde (Green Room) and the leather-lined smoking room.

The 1st floor features mainly 18th- to 20th-century Neapolitan paintings and busts from the Banco di Napoli’s extensive art collection, including Francesco Guarino’s chiaroscuro-rich *San Giorgio* (1645–1650).

The adjoining **Museo delle Carrozze** contains a collection of 19th- and 20th-century carriages, but is currently closed for restoration.

## PAN (PALAZZO DELLE ARTI NAPOLI)

☎ 081 795 86 05; www.palazzoartinapoli.net, in Italian; Via dei Mille 60; admission free; ☎ 9.30am-7.30pm Mon & Wed-Sat, 9.30-2.30pm Sun; 🚶 Amedeo  
One of the city’s two new hotbeds of contemporary art – the other being MADRE (p75) – PAN is the brainchild of European art curator and critic Lóránd Hegyi. Three slick white minimalist floors host three innovative exhibitions per year, spanning everything from painting, photography and sculpture to multimedia, design and architecture. Past exhibitions have included a retrospective of the work of set designer Dean Tavoularis (*Rumble Fish, Peggy Sue Got Married*), as well as cutting-edge art from names like Anselm Kiefer, Katerina Vincourova and Jiri Černický. Housed in a pink 16th-century palace once belonging to Francesco di Sangro, PAN also boasts an experimental art lab, multimedia library, archive and slick café and bookshop.

## PIAZZA DEI MARTIRI

🚶 C25 to Piazza dei Martiri  
If Chiaia is Naples’ drawing room, Piazza dei Martiri is its sultry chaise longue. Anyone worth their Gucci shades heads here for *caffè* and languid outdoor lounging. Get a crash course in both at squareside café **La Caffettiera** (p123).

Taking centre stage on the square is Enrico Alvino’s 19th-century monument to Neapolitan martyrs, with four lions representing the anti-Bourbon uprisings of 1799, 1820, 1848 and 1860.

On the western flank of the square, at No 58, **Palazzo Partanna** (Map pp284–5) is a neoclassical update of an original 18th-century edifice, while at No 30, **Palazzo Calabritto** (Map pp284–5) is a Luigi Vanvitelli creation.

Culture of a readable nature is on hand at **Feltrinelli** (p142), Naples’ best bookshop, in the northeastern corner of the square.

## STAZIONE ZOOLOGICA (AQUARIO)

☎ 081 583 32 63; www.szn.it; Viale Aquario 1; adult/child €1.50/1; ☎ 9am-5.30pm Mon-Fri, 9am-6pm Sat, 9am-7.30pm Sun; 🚶 C25 to Riviera di Chiaia  
Europe’s oldest aquarium is more ‘vintage’ than ‘cutting-edge’ with its dripping tanks of spooky

squid and nervous little Nemos. Housed in an elegant neoclassical building designed by Adolf von Hildebrandt, its 23 tanks contain some 200 species of marine flora and fauna exclusively from the Bay of Naples, while its biology library is one of the largest of its kind in the world. Founded in 1872 by German naturalist Anton Dohrn, its research centre plays a vital role in rehabilitating Loggerhead sea turtles injured by ships in the bay.

## VIA CHIAIA

🚶 C5 to Piazza Trieste e Trento, 🚶 C25 to Piazza dei Martiri  
Linking Piazza Trieste e Trento with Piazza dei Martiri (and Santa Lucia with Chiaia), pedestrianised Via Chiaia is a lively mix of trendy boutiques, imposing palazzo and perma-tanned fashion slaves. Built in the 16th century, it follows the line of the natural divide that separates the hills of Pizzofalcone and Mortella. Towards the western end of the street you pass under what looks like a triumphal arch but is, in fact, a bridge built in 1636 to connect the two hills.

The most famous kid on the block is at the 16th-century **Palazzo Cellamare** (Via Chiaia 149). Built as a summer residence for Giovan Francesco Carafa, close friend of the Spanish viceroy Don Pedro de Toledo, it later housed Bourbon monarchy guests, including Goethe and Casanova.

## VILLA COMUNALE

☎ 081 761 11 31; Piazza Vittoria; ☎ 7am-midnight; 🚶 C25 to Riviera di Chiaia

Another Luigi Vanvitelli production, this long, leafy seaside strip was originally built for Bourbon royalty. Called the *Passeggio Reale* (Royal Walkway), it was off-limits to the plebs except on 8 September, the day of the **Festa di Piedigrotta** (see p19). Rumour has it that taking one’s wife to the park on that day was a clause in many a marital contract. Husbands across the city must have heaved a sigh of relief when the park finally went public in 1869.

Dividing the Riviera di Chiaia from Via Francesco Caracciolo and the sea, this urban oasis boasts a vintage aquarium, bandstand, tennis club and at least eight fountains. Named after the ducks that used to swim in it, the *Fontana delle Paperelle* (Duck Fountain) replaced the famous *Toro Farnese* which, in 1825, was transferred to the Museo Archeologico Nazionale (p80).



QUARTERS

## highlights

### VOMERO, CAPODIMONTE & LA SANITÀ

- 1 Chiesa Santa Maria della Sanità & Catacomba di San Gaudioso (p95)
- 2 Catacomba di San Gennaro (p93)
- 3 Certosa di San Martino (right)
- 4 Chiesa San Giovanni a Carbonara (p96)
- 5 Palazzo Reale di Capodimonte (p93)
- 6 Parco di Capodimonte (p95)

## VOMERO, CAPODIMONTE & LA SANITÀ

Eating p125; Shopping p144; Sleeping p153; Walking Tours p113

Home to *professori* and their polo-shirted teens, Vomero is the city's middle-class heartland, while La Sanità is its impoverished underbelly.

A respectable 250m above the raffish city centre, tree-lined avenues, Liberty villas and chic boutiques set the scene for bourgeois Neapolitan living. Wedged in between it all are some of the city's ugliest post-war apartment blocks, which tumble down the hill like oversized pastel boxes. At Vomero's heart sits Piazza Vanvitelli, fringed by vintage cafés, voguish *palazzi* and a funky art-clad metro station.

While not a tourist hotspot per se, this is where you'll find the bulky Castel Sant'Elmo, the must-see Certosa di San Martino and the manicured sprawl of Villa Floridiana and its Museo Nazionale della Ceramica Duca di Martina.

Loftier ambitions await further northeast at Capodimonte. Transformed by Charles VII of Bourbon from a hopelessly hill to a royal hunting reserve, the Parco di Capodimonte is a lavish sprawl of lawns, lakes, woods and pedal-happy cyclists. At its southern end, Charles' extravagant hunting lodge, the Palazzo Reale di Capodimonte, houses one of Italy's greatest art collections, with names like Caravaggio, Bellini, Botticelli and Warhol in an obscenely impressive line-up.

Immediately to the south, squeezed between Via Foria and Via Santa Teresa degli Scalzi, the impoverished, overpopulated streets of La Sanità are a bewitching mix of crumbling tufa façades, garish market stalls, creaking overhead clotheslines and curious *bambini* (children). Comedy great Totò was born here (at Via Santa Maria Antesaecula 109, to be precise!), Vittorio de Sica's *Ieri, Oggi, Domani* (*Yesterday, Today, Tomorrow*) was partly filmed here and tens of thousands of skeletons lie waiting to meet you in the catacombs below.

### VOMERO

All roads might lead to Rome, but all Neapolitan funiculars lead to Vomero. Hop on and head on up for knockout views, top-notch art and a chilled out preppy-vibe.

### CASTEL SANT'ELMO MAP P283

☎ 081 578 40 30; Via Tito Angelini 22; admission €3; 🕒 8.30am-7.30pm Thu-Tue, 9am-6.30pm Sun; 🚠 Vanvitelli, Funicular Montesanto to Morghen

It might look strong and mean, but this hulking star-shaped heap has seen little military action. The biggest blow it received came in 1587 when a bolt of lightning hit the castle's stock of gunpowder, killing some 150 people. It has, however, seen plenty of prisoners, as its dungeons were used as a military prison until the 1970s.

Originally, however, it was neither a castle nor a fort that topped the tufa rock, but a church. Dedicated to St Erasmus (from which the name Elmo is derived), it rested on the top of Vomero hill for some 400 years before Robert

of Anjou turned it into a castle in 1349. In 1538, Spanish viceroy Don Pedro de Toledo had it further fortified, giving it its present look.

Somewhat emasculated, it's now mainly used as an exhibition and conference centre. Although you can visit the castle's roof (for the best view in town) most of the castle is closed if there's no exhibition on. Admission times and price vary according to the exhibition.

### CERTOSA DI SAN MARTINO MAP P283

☎ 081 578 17 69; Largo San Martino 5; admission €6; 🕒 8.30am-7.30pm Thu-Tue; 🚠 Vanvitelli, Funicular Montesanto to Morghen

The Certosa di San Martino and its Museo Nazionale di San Martino are, in a word, unmissable. Barely 100m from the castle, this former Carthusian monastery houses one of the city's richest collections of Neapolitan art and history, wisely collected by its resident monks. From precious frescoes and sculpture to vintage *presepi* and pumpkin-style carriages, the museum is a crash course in Neapolitan art and soul.

Originally built by Charles of Anjou in 1325, the Certosa (charterhouse) has been decorated, adorned and altered over the centuries by some of the greats of Italian art

JEAN-BERNARD CARLLET



In the park at Villa Floridiana

GREG ELMIS

scene in an ornately decorated eggshell – to the colossal Cuciniello creation, which covers one wall of what used to be the monastery's kitchen. Angels fly down to a richly detailed landscape of rocky houses, shepherds and local merry-makers, all carved out of wood, cork, papier-mâché and terracotta.

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

A pictorial history of Naples is told in the section *Immagini e Memoria della Città* (Images and Memories of the City). Here you'll find portraits of historic characters (Don Pedro de Toledo in Room 33, Maria Carolina di Borbone in Room 43); antique maps, including a 35-panel copper map in Room 45; and rooms dedicated to major historical events such as the Revolt of the Masaniello (Room 36) and the plague (Room 37). Room 32 boasts the beautiful Tavola Strozzi (Strozzi Table), whose fabled depiction of 15th-century maritime Naples is one of the city's most celebrated historical records.

### VILLA FLORIDIANA & MUSEO NAZIONALE DELLA CERAMICA DUCA DI MARTINA MAP P283

☎ 081 578 84 18; Via Domenico Cimarosa 77; 🚗 park 8.30am-1hr before sunset daily, museum 🕒 8.30am-2pm Wed-Mon; admission museum €2.50, park free; 🚻 Vanvitelli

Not one for understated gift giving, King Ferdinand I had the elegant Villa Floridiana and its stately gardens built for his second wife, the Duchess of Florida. Purchased by the Italian government in 1919, the gardens were opened to the public and the villa turned into a ceramics museum. In a city short on space, the park is a soothing tonic of oaks, palms and terraces looking out over city and sea.

Sitting snugly at the bottom of the park in the Villa Floridiana, the Museo Nazionale della Ceramica Duca di Martina boasts a 6000-piece collection of European, Chinese and Japanese china, ivory, enamels and Italian majolica.

The Oriental collection, including Chinese Ming (1368–1644) ceramics and Japanese Edo (1615–1867) vases, is displayed in the basement, while upstairs on the ground floor you'll find Renaissance majolica pottery. Continue up to the 1st floor for European ceramics, which include sumptuous Meissen pieces.

## CAPODIMONTE

Sitting at the northern end of Via Toledo (which is known as Corso Amedeo di Savoia Duca d'Aosta by this stage), the hill of Capodimonte is home to the Parco di Capodimonte and its art-heavy Palazzo Reale. Down below on its southern slope sit the macabre catacombs of San Gennaro, ancient home of skulls, cults and Palaeo-Christian frescoes.

### CATACOMBA DI SAN GENNARO MAP P286

☎ 081 741 10 71; Via Capodimonte 16; adult/child €5/3; 🕒 guided tours 9am, 10am, 11am, noon, 2pm, 3pm Tue-Sun; 🚶 24 to Via Capodimonte

The oldest and most famous of Naples' ancient catacombs, the Catacomba di San Gennaro date to the 2nd century. Originally they belonged to a noble family, but when San Gennaro's body was interred here in the 5th century they became a hotspot for Christian pilgrims. Naples' bishops were also buried here until the 11th century.

Spread over two levels, the catacombs house a mix of tombs, corridors and broad vestibules held up by columns and arches. The crumbling walls are decorated with 2nd-century Christian frescoes and 5th-century mosaics, including the oldest known portrait of San Gennaro.

To reach the catacombs, go through the gates to the left of the Chiesa di Madre di Buon Consiglio; the ticket office is in a small ivy-clad building. Tours (in Italian) last about 45 minutes but only depart if there are more than two people.

### CHIESA DI MADRE DI BUON CONSIGLIO MAP P286

☎ 081 741 49 45; Via Capodimonte 13; 🕒 8am-12.30pm & 4.30-7.30pm Mon-Sat, 8am-1pm & 5-7.30pm Sun; 🚶 24 to Via Capodimonte

Feel like you've seen this church before? It may be because it's a snack-size replica of the Basilica di San Pietro in Rome. But unlike the real thing, this Neapolitan version is still a relative tot. Designed by Vincenzo Vecchia and completed in 1960, it took 40 years to build. Inside you'll find numerous works of art transferred here after the earthquake of 1980. While none are likely to excite art buffs, the mock-Vatican exterior warrants a quick kitsch Polaroid.

## OSSERVATORIO DI CAPODIMONTE MAP P286

☎ 081 557 51 11; www.na.astro.it; Salita Moiarriello 16; 🕒 9am-1.30pm by appointment; 🚶 24 to Via Capodimonte

Overcast skies never faze the crew at Italy's oldest observatory – they simply look earthward for some of the best sea and skyline views in town. Perched high above the city, this elegant neoclassical number was founded by King Ferdinand I of Bourbon in 1819 and built according to the designs of astronomers Giuseppe Piazzai and Federico Zuccari. The in-house museum features an interesting collection of astronomical instruments and its stunning location makes a heavenly setting for occasional music concerts throughout the year. Check the website for upcoming events.

### PALAZZO REALE DI CAPODIMONTE MAP P286

☎ 081 749 91 11; Parco di Capodimonte; adult/child €7.50/free, adult 2-5pm €6.50; 🕒 8.30am-7.30pm Thu-Tue; 🚶 24 to Via Capodimonte

Believe it or not, this colossal peachy pad was meant to be a hunting lodge. At least that's what Charles VII of Bourbon had asked for when construction began in 1738. But it seems that size really did matter to the king, whose plans for the place kept getting grander and grander. By 1759, the city had a new palace. Just as well, really, for when Charles inherited his mother Elisabetta Farnese's hefty art collection, space was at a premium. Indeed, so impressive was this collection that artists and 17th-century travellers flocked from all over Europe to eruditely 'ooh' and 'ahh'.

However, visits were abruptly halted during the decade of French rule (1806–15) when the palace became the official residence of Joseph Bonaparte and Joachim Murat. The history of the museum proper resumed in 1860 when a Galleria d'Arte Moderna was established. Today, the palace boasts one of the best and most extensive art collections in Italy.

The museum is spread over three floors and 160 rooms. The 1st floor is dominated by the Galleria Farnese and the Appartamento Reale (Royal Apartment); the 2nd floor contains the Galleria delle Arti a Napoli; while the top floor is dedicated to modern art. Before you embark on the museum, consider forking out €4 for an audioguide – the English and Italian commentary is interesting.





Palazzo Reale di Capodimonte

JEAN-BERNARD CARILLET



Narrow passages characterise underground Naples

JEAN-BERNARD CARILLET

Within the park walls there are five lakes, a wood, and various 18th-century buildings, including the **Palazzo Porcellane**, where porcelain was once produced. Those after more peace than people watching should head for its northern reaches. The easiest entrance is through the Porta Grande on Via Capodimonte.

## LA SANITÀ

Positioned outside the city walls until the 18th century, La Sanità (despite its name, which means 'healthy') was for centuries where the city buried its dead. Below its grimy streets lies a macabre otherworld frozen in time. Authentic and raw, La Sanità is also a little edgy, so it's best not to loiter here after dark.

## ALBERGO DEI POVERI MAP PP278-9

**Piazza Carlo III;** **Cavour**

Not impartial to a spot of PR, Bourbon king Charles VII built this giant poorhouse at a main city entrance to promote himself as enlightened and compassionate. It was a grand gesture indeed – the Albergo dei Poveri (Hostel of the Poor) is Europe's largest public building. If all had gone according to architect Ferdinando Fuga's plans, though, it would have been bigger. His original designs called for a façade 600m long, with five internal courtyards. When construction came to a halt in 1829, however, he settled for the smaller version that you see today. The façade measures a mind-blowing 349m, there are three internal courtyards and the whole edifice covers 103,000 sq metres. Undergoing a slow restoration, it currently houses 85 families, by now the descendants of needy families housed there after WWII. According to locals, they share the place with a number of luminous ghosts.

## CHIESA SANTA MARIA DELLA SANITÀ & CATACOMBA DI SAN GAUDIOSO MAP P286

081 544 13 05; [www.santamariadellasanita.it](http://www.santamariadellasanita.it); **Via della Sanità 124; catacombs adult/child €5/3; church**  
 8.30am-12.30pm & 5-8pm Mon-Sat, 8.30am-1.30pm Sun, **catacombs guided tours** 9.30am, 10.15am, 11am, 11.45am, 12.30pm; **Cavour**  
Topped by a green-and-yellow tiled dome, the much-loved Basilica Santa Maria della Sanità is known also as the Chiesa di San Vincenzo,

To do the whole museum in one day is impossible – you'd need at least two to start getting to grips with the place. For most people, though, a full morning is sufficient for a shortened best-of tour.

First-floor highlights are numerous. In Room 2 you can see family portraits of the Farnese by Raphael and Titian; depictions of Cardinal Alessandro Farnese (later Pope Paul III), show a thin, rather weedy-looking man. Next door in Room 3 the *Crocifissione* (Crucifixion; 1426) by Masaccio is one of Capodimonte's most famous pieces. Botticelli's *Madonna con Bambino e Angeli* (Madonna with Baby and Angels; Room 6), Bellini's *Trasfigurazione* (Transfiguration; Room 8) and Titian's *Danae* (Room 11) are all must-see pieces, while Pieter Bruegel's disturbing 16th-century canvases make an eerie impression in Room 17. In Room 20, a glum-looking Hercules has a hard time choosing between a stern-looking Virtue and a fun-loving Vice in Annibale Carracci's 16th-century painting *Ercole al bivio* (Hercules at the Crossroads).

In the **Galleria delle Cose Rare** (Gallery of Rare Objects) you can imagine how the dinner table of Cardinal Alessandro Farnese might have looked. His blue majolica table service has his coat of arms embossed in gold on every piece, while the elaborate centrepiece depicting Diana the huntress can be used as a goblet by taking off the stag's detachable head.

A study in regal excess, the **Appartamento Reale** (Royal Apartment) occupies Rooms 31 to 60. Huge, sumptuous rooms heave with valuable Capodimonte porcelain, heavy curtains and shiny inlaid marble. Meet your knight in shining armour in Room 46 then hit the **Salottino di Porcellana** (Room 52) for a study in tasteless extravagance – think 3000 pieces of porcelain stuck to the wall or hanging from the ceiling. Created between 1757 and 1759 for the Palazzo Reale in Portici, it was transferred to Capodimonte in 1866. The 1st-floor Appartamento Reale is also home to Voltaire's *Eruzione del Vesuvio dal Ponte Maddalena* (Eruption of Vesuvius from the Bridge of Maddalena).

The 2nd floor is no less rich than the 1st, and is packed to its elegant rafters with works produced in Naples between the 13th and 18th centuries. The first room you come to, however, is lined with a series of gigantic 16th-century Belgian tapestries depicting episodes from the Battle of Pavia.

Simone Martini's work *San Ludovico di Tolosa* (1317) is brilliantly displayed in Room 66. Considered the museum's finest example of 14th-century art, Martini's golden work portrays the canonisation of Ludovico, brother of King Robert of Anjou.

The piece that many come to Capodimonte to see, *Flagellazione* (Flagellation; 1607–10) hangs in reverential solitude in Room 78, at the

end of a long corridor. Caravaggio's dramatic and subliminally homoerotic image of Jesus about to be flogged was originally painted for the de Franchis family chapel in the Chiesa di San Domenico Maggiore. And like his other great Neapolitan work *Le Sette Opere di Misericordia* (The Seven Acts of Mercy; see p73), its intensity and revolutionary depiction of light was to have a huge influence on his contemporaries.

Continue through the 28 rooms that remain on the 2nd floor for works by Ribera, Giordano, Solimena and Stanzone. If you have any energy left, the small **gallery of modern art** on the 3rd floor is worth a quick look, if nothing else for Andy Warhol's popstastic Mt Vesuvius.

But you're not finished yet. On the ground floor, the **Gabinetto Disegni e Stampe** (Drawing and Print Room) contains some 27,000 pieces, including several sketches by Michelangelo and Raphael. All done, pick up a few art books in the well-stocked gift shop.

## PARCO DI CAPODIMONTE MAP P286

9am-1hr before sunset; 24 to **Via Capodimonte**  
Like Hampstead Heath with sunshine, this 130-hectare park was designed by Ferdinando Sanfelice in 1742 as a hunting reserve for King Charles VII. In order to provide the proper environment for the prey he wished to hunt, the grounds were turned into a botanical wonderland; a fact not lost on Neapolitans, who flock here for a spot of weekend R&R.

in honour of the cult of San Vincenzo Ferreri. Gracing dusty Piazza della Sanità since the 17th century, its architectural highlight is a sumptuous double stairway leading up to a raised altar. Below the altar sits the 5th-century **Cappella di San Gaudioso**, entrance to the catacombs below.

Burial site of San Gaudioso, a North African bishop who died in Naples in AD 452, these eerie catacombs reveal traces of mosaics and frescoes from various periods; the earliest from the 5th century, while later examples are from the 17th and 18th centuries. But it's not so much the art that strikes you, as the gruesome history that the catacombs tell.

The damp walls reveal two medieval methods of burying the dead. The first involved burying the corpse in the foetal position in the belief that you should depart this world as you enter it. The second method, and the one favoured by the 17th-century rich, was to be buried upright in a niche with one's head cemented to the wall. Once sapped of fluids, the headless body would be buried and the skull set over a fresco of the dearly departed.

Tours of the catacombs last about an hour, while an atmospheric night tour features costumed actors and local produce to feast on (€25). Book ahead for an English-speaking guide.

## CHIESA SAN GIOVANNI A CARBONARA MAP PP278-9

☎ 081 29 58 73; Via Carbonara 5; 🕒 9am-6pm Mon-Sat; 🚇 Cavour

This fabulous Gothic cluster comprises a church, a chapel and a cloister, fronted by an 18th-century double-flight staircase by stairmeister Ferdinando Sanfelice. While the chapel is currently closed, the wooden-beamed church is a treasure-trove of stunning marble sculpture.

Standing at 18m behind the main altar, the colossal monument to King Ladislas (built in 1428) is a sublime mix of Renaissance and Gothic styles.

Other important works include the *Crocifisso* (Crucifixion; 1545) by Giorgio Vasari, the early 16th-century *Monumento Miroballo* by Tommaso Malvito and Jacopo dell Pila, and the *Cappella Caracciolo del Sole* with its vintage majolica-tiled floor and colourful 15th-century frescoes. In this beautiful round chapel you'll also find the tomb of Gianni Caracciolo, the ambitious lover of King Ladislas' sister Queen Joan II of Naples. Caracciolo's increasing political power led the queen to plot his demise and in 1432 he was stabbed to death

in the Castel Capuano. The tomb is the work of Leonardo da Besozzo.

## CIMITERO DELLE FONTANELLE

MAP P283

☎ 081 29 69 44; Piazza Fontanella alla Sanità 154; 🕒 currently closed; 🚇 Museo

The perfect place to sneak up on someone, this creepy underground cemetery heaves with the skulls and bones of some 40,000 Neapolitans. First used during the plague of 1656, it became the city's main burial site during the cholera epidemics of 1835 and 1974.

At the end of the 19th century it became a cult spot for the worship of the dead. Adherents would adopt a skull, pray for its soul and lavish it with treats in the hope of a little good fortune. When condensation formed on the skull, it was seen a sign of good fortune for its custodian. Dry bones, however, were seen as a sign of impending doom. Some custodians were so attached to their bony friend that they would encase it in a glass shrine for protection.

So popular was the cult that a tram line served the cemetery and its gift-bearing devotees up until the 1950s. In 1969, a fed-up Cardinal Ursi banned what was becoming an increasingly fetishistic practice and contrary to Catholic doctrine.

Although the site is normally only open during the **Maggio dei Monumenti** (May of the Monuments; p18), at the time of writing there were plans to reopen it permanently. Contact Napoli Sotterranea (☎ 081 29 69 44) for updates.

## ORTO BOTANICO MAP PP278-9

☎ 081 44 97 59; Via Foria 223; 🕒 9am-2pm Mon-Fri by appointment only; 🚇 Cavour

Slap-bang on gridlocked Via Forio, Naples' botanical garden has its work cut out for it. Yet, in spite of the fumes, the vegetation stands tall, lush and utterly inviting.

Founded by Joseph Bonaparte between 1807 and 1819, the gardens belong to Naples University, hence the need to request a look. But it's worth asking nicely – if for no other reason than to stretch out under a So-Cal palm and breathe away that road-rage stress.

Dedicated botanists will be impressed with an oxygen-rich collection of plants from the major American, African, Asian and Australian deserts, an arboreal fern section and an ancient citrus orchard.



Decorative dome inside the Chiesa San Giovanni a Carbonara

## PALAZZO SANFELICE MAP P286

Via della Sanità 2; 🚇 Cavour

Don't let yourself be fooled by the run-of-the-mill exterior and scruffy La Sanità address. When Ferdinando Sanfelice built this pile for his family in 1726, it quickly became an avant-garde icon. The main talking point was the wildly theatrical double-ramped staircase in the second internal courtyard. From here onward, there was no stopping Sanfelice, who perfected his dramatic staircase design in various palazzi across the city. Unmissable is the one in the **Palazzo dello Spagnolo** (Map p286; Via Vergini 19).

While technically neither of these two buildings is open to the public, the porter

should let you go through if you ask nicely. Porters generally work office hours, so avoid going in the early afternoon if you want to find someone there to let you in.

## PORTA SAN GENNARO MAP P286

Via Foria; 🚇 Cavour

This city gate was rebuilt in its current position in the 15th century after the expansion of the city walls. Named after San Gennaro because it marks the beginning of the route up to the Catacomba di San Gennaro, it retains traces of a 17th-century fresco by Mattia Preti. The artist decorated all the major city gates to give thanks for the end of the plague epidemic in 1656.

## NAPLES ALLA NAPOLETANA

Crafty pickpockets, scooter-riding bandits, smooth-talking scammers: Naples' reputation as a den of iniquity too often upstages the city's many virtues. While petty theft and scams are rife, following a few local rules should have you staving off the bad guys:

- Dress down. Leave that Rolex in the hotel safe. Also, avoid carrying large amounts of money on you, especially in easy-to-reach pockets.
- Keep handbags and small backpacks under your arm (not over your shoulder) and never leave bags unattended.
- Avoid dodgy districts. While much of central Naples is generally safe during the day, areas like the Quartieri Spagnoli, La Sanità, Mercato and Piazza Garibaldi can be edgy at night. Be vigilant and stick to well-lit, crowded areas.
- Know your surroundings. Hotel and hostel staff are a great source of local wisdom. Ask them for tips on navigating the area safely, carry their number and address on you and know how to get back safely.
- Be weary of scams. A notorious one on Piazza Garibaldi involves scammers placing fake bets on guessing under which cup a ball is hiding. They always get it right, unlike unsuspecting travellers, who are set up to lose. At Stazione Centrale, be wary of strangers who insist on seeing you onto the right train. Once on the platform, they may demand a €10 'tip'.



## MERGELLINA & POSILLIPO

Eating p126; Sleeping p154

Rambling elegantly, Mergellina exudes an air of faded grandeur. But for a taste of the high-life head up to Posillipo – Naples’ version of Beverly Hills.

Lemon-hued Liberty palazzi line the slightly scruffy seafront, slinky palms catch a southerly breeze and elegant elderly widows walk their miniature Dachshunds in the afternoon sun.

Before the Riviera di Chiaia was built in the 17th century, this was little more than a quaint fishing village on the city’s outskirts. Today it’s Naples’ second port and an important transport hub. Dominating Piazza Piedigrotta, its Art Nouveau train station serves both metro and regional lines. At Mergellina’s hydrofoil terminal, thousands of people set off every day for the islands, while nearby in Piazza Sannazzaro traffic roars through a fume-choked tunnel linking central Naples to suburban Fuorigrotta. The piazza itself is named for Mergellina-born Renaissance poet Jacopo Sannazzaro. Labelled the Christian Virgil, his verses influenced the development of modern-day Italian. The real Virgil’s tomb is in nearby Parco Virgiliano.

Mergellina’s star attraction, however, is its waterfront. On balmy nights, its kitsch bars and vintage ice-cream parlours, known as Chalets (Map pp284–5), pull huge crowds for a languid slice of *la dolce vita* (the sweet life).

Set on the headland dividing the Bay of Naples from the Bay of Pozzuoli, Posillipo is the place for lush leafy streets, sprawling villas, secret swimming coves and chichi restaurants filled with Sophia Loren lookalikes. For star-worthy views, head to Parco Virgiliano at the western tip of the cape, where dizzying panoramas take in the bay, Mt Vesuvius and the little island of Nisida where Brutus is said to have conspired against Julius Caesar.

## highlights

### MERGELLINA & POSILLIPO

- 1 Parco Virgiliano (p100)
- 2 Chiesa Santa Maria di Piedigrotta (right)
- 3 Porticciolo (p101)
- 4 Grotta di Seiano (right)
- 5 Marechiaro (right)



Porticciolo at Mergellina (p101)

JEAN-BERNARD CARLLET

### CHIESA SANTA MARIA DEL PARTO MAP PP284-5

☎ 081 66 46 27; Via Mergellina 21; 🕒 8am–12.30pm & 4–7pm; 🚇 Mergellina

Founded by poet Jacopo Sannazzaro, this Renaissance favourite was built on land donated to him by King Frederick of Aragon in 1497. The church was completed shortly before the poet died in 1530. Sannazzaro’s tomb sits behind the altar.

Created in 1537 by Giovanni Angelo Montorsoli, Bartolomeo Ammannati and Francesco del Taddain, it features various mythological gods, including Apollo, Minerva, Pan and Mars in a depiction of Arcadia.

Another resident icon is Leonardo da Pistoia’s painting of *St Michael Vanquishing the Devil*, also known as the *Devil of Mergellina*. Tradition holds that the devil in question was a lusty local lass who had made a move on the unwavering bishop Diomede Carafa.

### CHIESA SANTA MARIA DI PIEDIGROTTA MAP PP284-5

☎ 081 66 97 61; Piazza Piedigrotta

🕒 7am–noon & 5.30–8pm Mon–Sat, 7am–1.30pm & 5.30–8pm Sun; 🚇 Mergellina

The fishing families of Mergellina had already built a church on this site when, in 1353, the Virgin Mary appeared to a Benedictine monk, a nun and Pietro the Hermit (later to become Pope Celestine V; (see Chiesa San Pietro a Maiella on p72) telling them to build her a church. She was taken at her word and the church was consecrated within the year. Since then, the church has remained the central focus of the Festa di Piedigrotta (p19), celebrated on 8 September.

Originally, the façade faced the rock, or *grotta*, to which the church owes its name (*piedigrotta* means ‘foot of the cave’), but in 1553, it was reversed to face the city. In 1853, Enrico Alvino added the current neoclassical façade.

Inside, it’s the 13th-century wooden statue of the *Madonna con Bambino* (Madonna with Baby) that the faithful come to see.

### GROTTA DI SEIANO OFF MAP P287

☎ 081 230 10 30; Discesa Coroglio 36; 🚇 140 to Via Posillipo

At the bottom of a long, steep and exhausting descent (Discesa Coroglio), the Grotta di Seiano is not, in fact, a cave but a 1st-century tunnel linking the Roman Villa Pausilypon to Pozzuoli. Ventilated by three air ducts opening onto the sea, it was dug out of the tufa rock by Cocceius, the same Roman engineer who built the Crypta Neapolitana in Parco Virgiliano (p100). When the villa’s owner Publio Vedio Pollicione died in 15 BC, he bequeathed his cliff-top pad to friend and emperor, Augustus.

Both the villa and the tunnel are currently closed for restoration.

### MARECHIARO MAP P287

Via Marechiaro; 🚇 140 to Via Posillipo

Immortalised in a traditional 19th-century Neapolitan song ‘Marechiaro’ (Clear Sea) by Salvatore di Giacomo and Francesco Paolo Tosti, the little fishing village of Marechiaro is one for die-hard romantics. Complete with its own church, the Chiesa di Santa Maria del Faro, this is *the* place for candle-lit meals by lapping seas.

To get here, get off the bus on Via Posillipo and head down Via Marechiaro on the left. It takes about 30 minutes on foot.

## PALAZZO DONN'ANNA MAP P287

Largo Donn'Anna 9; ☎ 140 to Via Posillipo

The most famous unfinished palazzo in Posillipo, Palazzo Donn'Anna takes its name from Anna Carafa, for whom it was built as a wedding present from her husband Ramiro Guzman, the Spanish viceroy of Naples. When Guzman hot-footed it back to Spain in 1644 he left his wife heartbroken in Naples. She died shortly afterwards and Cosimo Fanzago gave up the project. The semiderelict palazzo is not open to the public.

Not far from Palazzo Donn'Anna are the ruins of Villa Hamilton, the former residence of the British ambassador to the Kingdom of Naples. Sir William Hamilton is remembered less as a diplomat than as a wronged husband – his wife Emma was the long-time mistress of Lord Horatio Nelson.

## PARCO VERGILIANO MAP PP284-5

☎ 081 66 93 90; Salita dell Grotta 20; ☎ 9am-1hr

before sunset Tue-Sun; M Mergellina

Squeezed in between a railway bridge and the cliffs of Posillipo hill, this shady urban oasis hides two historical treasures; Virgil's tomb and the world's longest Roman tunnel.

The exact whereabouts of Virgil's body is a mystery. He died in Brindisi in 19 BC, and legend has it that his remains were then brought to Naples. Buried in a vault dating to the Augustan age, his tomb lies at the top of an exceedingly steep flight of stairs above the entrance to the closed **Crypta Neapolitana**. Built in the 1st century AD to connect Naples with Pozzuoli, this 700m-long feat of ancient engineering is the world's longest Roman tunnel and one of the best places to catch a cool draft on a hot summer's day.

Also buried in the park is the 19th-century poet Giacomo Leopardi.

## PARCO VIRGILIANO MAP P287

Viale Virgilio; ☎ 9.30am-11.30pm; ☎ 140 to Via Posillipo

Playground of the city's well-heeled denizens, this 9600 sq-metre park sits high above the shimmering sea on the westernmost tip of posh Posillipo hill. Kick back on a terrace and soak up the views; from Capri to the south, Nisida, Procida and Ischia to the southwest, to the Bay of Pozzuoli and Bagnoli to the west. Open 14 hours a day, this leafy getaway features swings and slides for the kids and



## WORTH A TRIP

An easy 25km north of Naples sits the modest town of Caserta (Map p171) and its colossal **Palazzo Reale** (Royal Palace; ☎ 0823 44 80 84; Via Douhet 22, Caserta; admission €6; ☎ 8.30am-7pm Wed-Mon). More commonly known as the Reggia di Caserta, this Unesco-listed pad is considered one of the greatest – and last – achievements of Italian baroque architecture. It is also where Tom Cruise shot scenes for *Mission: Impossible 3* and where George Lucas filmed the interior shots of Queen Amidala's royal residence in *Star Wars Episode 1: The Phantom Menace* and *Star Wars Episode 2: Attack of the Clones*.

Work on palace began in 1752 after Charles VII of Bourbon, ruler of Naples, wanted a palace to rival Versailles. Neapolitan Luigi Vanvitelli was commissioned for the job and built a palace not just equal to Versailles, but even bigger – think 1200 rooms, 1790 windows, 34 staircases and a 250m-long façade. You enter by Vanvitelli's immense staircase and follow a route through the royal apartments, richly decorated with tapestries, furniture and crystal. Beyond the library is a room containing a vast collection of *presepi* composed of hundreds of hand-carved nativity pieces.

To clear the head afterwards, take a walk in the elegant **landscaped grounds** (☎ 8.30am-2hr before sunset, last entry 1hr before closing Wed-Mon). They stretch out for some 3km to a waterfall and fountain of Diana and the famous **Giardino Inglese** (English Garden; tours every hr Wed-Mon) with its intricate pathways, exotic plants, pools and cascades. The weary can cover the same ground in a pony and trap (from €5) or for €1 you can bring a bike into the park. A picnic is another good idea. Within the palace there's also the **Mostra Terrea Motus** (admission free with palace ticket; ☎ 9am-6pm Wed-Mon), illustrating the 1980 earthquake that devastated the region. All done, revive yourself in the palace's cafeteria and restaurant and start drawing up those home extension plans.

CPTC buses connect Caserta with Naples' Piazza Garibaldi (€2.80) about every 30 minutes between 8am and 8pm. Some Benevento services also stop in Caserta. Trains from Naples also reach the town (€2.80). Both bus and train stations are near the Palazzo Reale entrance, signposted from each. If you're driving, follow the signs for 'Reggia'.

low-key bars for the grown-ups. The trendy Posillipo market takes place outside the main gates on Thursdays (p140).

## PORTICCIOLO MAP PP284-5

Via Francesco Caracciolo; ☎ 140 to Via Francesco Caracciolo

Once home to the area's fishing fleet, Mergellina's marina is now a crowd-pulling combo of anchored yachts and kitsch Neapolitan **Chalets**; neon-lit gelaterie and bars right on the water's edge. On summer evenings, families, love-struck teens and the odd worn-out tourist flock here for gelati, cocktails and a spot of double parking.

## STAZIONE MERGELLINA MAP PP284-5

☎ 081 761 21 02; Piazza Piedigrotta; M Mergellina

In the 1920s and '30s, Stazione Mergellina was the station to be seen alighting a train. Currently under the surgeon's knife, it's set to steal the scene again. Designed by Gaetano Coia in 1925, its beaux-arts style is a flouncy combo of glass and iron framework, grand classical columns and high camp extravagance, including two depictions of Mercury languidly posing above the station entrance.

## VILLA ROSEBERY MAP P287

Via Ferdinando Russo 26; ☎ 140 to Via Posillipo

In an area famed for its blue-ribbon real estate, Villa Rosebery is a star resident. Built in the 18th century, its history is both romantic and epic. It was used by Luigi di Bourbon in the early 19th century for his trysts with the dancer Amina Boschetti, and it was from here that King Vittorio Emanuele III left Italy in 1946 after the abolition of the monarchy.

The complex consists of three buildings – the Palazzina Borbonica, the Piccolo Foresteria and the Cabina a Mare – surrounded by lush, extensive waterside gardens.

During the Maggio dei Monumenti (p18), the estate is sometimes open to the public, who flock here in droves to see what their taxes can buy.

## STEAMY WINDOWS

Head to any city lookout after 10pm and chances are you'll find a small sea of parked cars happily rocking and rolling. Windows covered up with newspaper, they harbour lust-struck couples in the mood for *lurve*. In Naples, most backseats have a saucy tale (or more) to tell. Indeed, you'd be hard pressed to find any Italian under 60 who doesn't fondly remember fumbling in the back of a Fiat. Shagging in the car is as Italian as pizza, Prada and dodgy politicians. Indeed, when Fiat CEO Gianni Agnelli died in 2003, then prime minister Silvio Berlusconi fondly reminisced about how many Italians experienced their 'first kiss' on those squeaky backseats.

Yet, the reason behind this tight-fit tradition is more a case of necessity than kink. A recent study by the EU revealed that a staggering 64% of Italians aged between 18 and 35 still live at home with their parents, compared to 21% in Germany and 12% in Finland. A case of spoilt *mammoni* (mummies boys... and girls)? Although many non-Italians like to think so, the truth has more to do with economics than immaturity. Italy's chronic lack of employment and high taxes make the prospect of moving out impossible for many young adults. In Naples, where youth unemployment is over 60%, the problem is acutely amplified. As a result, many young lovers simply have no choice but to hit the backseat for a bit of privacy.

Despite its celebrated status, shagging in the car can land lovebirds in legal hot water. In 1999, a young couple caught in the act was charged with committing a lewd act in public. Since then, blackening out the windows with newspaper has given new meaning to the term 'safe sex'.

Feeling kinky? Then park your car at one of these classic make-out spots:

**Largo San Martino** (Map pp278-9)

Stunning city views and the occasional police patrol, so don't forget the newspaper.

**Parco Virgiliano** (Map p287)

Daytime home to the respectable Mercatino di Posillipo (see the boxed text, p140), this car park is Naples' number-one spot for after-dark backseat antics.

**Via Coroglio** (Map p287)

Close to beachside club L'Arenile di Bagnoli (see the boxed text, p132) the car parks here are a hit for summertime love.

**Via Manzoni** (Map p287)

High up in Posillipo, the views of Bagnoli and the Bay of Pozzuoli make for the perfect lip-locking backdrop.



## CAMPI FLEGREI

Sleeping p154

Steaming, bubbling and volcanic, the Campi Flegrei (Fiery Fields) are Naples' best-kept secret.

Stretching west from Posillipo Hill to the Tyrrhenian Sea, this pock-marked landscape of craters, lakes and fumaroles heaves with ancient myths and legends. This is where Icarus plunged to his death with melted wings, where Aeneas sought the Sibyl's advice, and where Roman emperors came to soak, swim and indulge. Hillsides are littered with thermal baths, sunken villas lie under the sea and unassuming streets hide some of Italy's finest archaeological sites.

Predating the city of Naples, the Greek settlements of the Campi Flegrei are the oldest in Italy. Cuma, the first mainland stronghold in the area, was already a thriving city in the 7th century BC when the Greeks founded Parthenope (the area around Pizzofalcone in Naples) in 680 BC. Pozzuoli, the area's main centre, was founded around 530 BC while Neapolis (where Naples' centro storico now stands) sprung up in 470 BC. Beneath Pozzuoli's streets, you can roam the ancient port's alleys and taverns. Nearby, you can climb Europe's newest mountain (Monte Nuovo), let nature freak you out at the hissing Solfatara Crater and look for the mythical entrance to hell at peaceful Lago d'Averno.

Before exploring the area it's worth stopping at the **tourist office** (☎ 081 526 66 39; Piazza G Matteotti 1a; 🕒 9am-2pm & 2.30-3.40pm Mon-Fri Oct-May, 9am-1pm & 4-7.30pm daily Jun-Sep) in Pozzuoli to pick up a copy of the very useful leaflet *Welcome to the Campi Flegrei*. Also a good idea is the €4 cumulative ticket that covers the Tempio di Serapide and the archaeological sites of Baia and Cuma.



Solfatara Crater (p104), Pozzuoli

JEAN-BERNARD CABRIEL

QUARTERS

## highlights

### CAMPI FLEGREI

- 1 Rione Terra (p104)
- 2 Solfatara Crater (p104)
- 3 Piscina Mirabilis (p105)
- 4 Acropoli di Cuma (p106)
- 5 Monte Nuovo (see the boxed text, p104)

## POZZUOLI

Pozzuoli has had its fair share of ups and downs – literally. A victim of *bradyism* (the slow upward and downward movement of the earth's crust), its seabed rose a dramatic 1.85m between 1982 and 1984, rendering its harbour too shallow for large vessels. An earthquake in October 1983 saw 40,000 residents evacuated, many permanently.

Founded by political exiles from the Aegean island of Samos, the town was initially under Cuman control. It came into its own under the Romans, who in 194 BC colonised it, renamed it Puteoli (Little Wells), and turned it into a major port. It was here that St Paul is said to have landed in AD 61, that San Gennaro was beheaded and that screen goddess Sophia Loren spent her childhood.

Today, Pozzuoli's future is looking up again – so to speak. Cranes dot the skyline, property values are soaring and frazzled Neapolitans are moving in for fresher air and seafood. Chilled-out, ancient and an easy 13kms from Naples, it's worth dropping in for some laid-back exploration.

The tourist office (opposite) is five minutes' walk downhill from the metro station.

### ANFITEATRO FLAVIO MAP P288

☎ 081 526 60 07; Via Terracciano 75; admission €4;  
🕒 9am-1hr before sunset Wed-Mon; 🚗 Cumana to Pozzuoli, 🚇 Pozzuoli

The third-largest amphitheatre in Italy, the Anfiteatro Flavio could hold over 20,000 spectators and was occasionally flooded for mock



The ancient Anfiteatro Flavio

GREG ELLIAMS

## RIONE TERRA MAP P288

☎ 848 80 02 88; Largo Sedile di Porto; admission €3; 🕒 9am-6pm Sat & Sun; 🚗 Cumana to Pozzuoli, 🚗 Pozzuoli

Rising 33m above sea level at the western end of the seafront, Rione Terra is the Pozzuoli's oldest quarter and ancient Puteoli's acropolis. During the age of Augustus, an existing *Capitolium* here was lavishly restructured in white marble by architect Lucius Cocceius Auctus. Renamed the Temple of Augustus, it famously rivalled the temples of Rome.

Between the late 5th century and the early 6th century, the temple was again restructured, becoming Pozzuoli's Duomo. In 1632, the cathedral was dedicated to San Procolo and given a baroque revamp by Bartolomeo Picchiatti and Cosimo Fanzago. When it caught fire in 1964, the temple was revealed once more and now both structures are undergoing an ambitious restoration, due for completion in 2008.

Indeed, the Tempio-Duomo project is one part of a major restoration of the quarter, which was abandoned en masse in the 1970s due to severe *bradeyism*. Ironically, this mass abandonment was a blessing for archaeologists, who unearthed fascinating parts of the ancient port.

Visitors can now head underground into an archaeological wonderland of ancient Roman roads, shops and even a brothel. You can walk down the *decumanus maximus*, check out ancient taverns, peer into millers' shops (complete with intact grindstones) and decipher graffiti written by the poet Catullus in a dingy slaves' cell.

## SOLFATARA CRATER MAP P288

☎ 081 526 23 41; Via Solfatara 161; admission €5.50; 🕒 8.30am-7pm; 🚗 Pozzuoli

Unnerving and surreal, this geological freakshow is a vivid reminder of just how active the ground below here is. Called *Foro Vulcani* (home of the god of fire) by the Romans, the crater's acrid steam, bubbling mud and sulphurous water have been lauded as health cures for thousands of years. At the far end of the crater you can see the *Stufe*, in which two ancient grottos were excavated at the end of the 19th century to create two brick *sudatoria* (sweat rooms). Christened Purgatory and Hell, they both reach temperatures of up to 90°C.

To get here, catch any city bus heading uphill from the metro station and ask the driver to let you off at Solfatara.

## MOUNTAIN, ANYONE?

It's not every week that a mountain just appears on the scene. But this is exactly what happened just west of Pozzuoli in 1538. It all began in the early 1530s, when the area began experiencing an unusual level of seismic activity. Meanwhile, locals began noticing a dramatic uplift of the land between Lake Averno, Monte Barbaro and the sea, which displaced the coast by several hundred metres. Little did they know that under them a *Monte Nuovo* (New Mountain; Map p287; ☎ 081 804 14 62; Via Virgilio; 🕒 9am-1hr before sunset; 🚗 Cumana to Arco Felice) was getting set for its grand debut. At 8pm on 29 September 1538, a crack appeared in the earth near the ancient Roman settlement of Tripergole, spewing out a violent concoction of pumice, fire and smoke over six days. By the end of the week, Pozzuoli had a new 134m-tall neighbour. Today, Europe's newest mountain is a lush and peaceful nature reserve. Off the tourist track, its shady sea-view slopes are the perfect spot for a chilled-out stroll or picnic

## TEMPIO DI SERAPIDE MAP P288

Via Serapide; 🚗 Cumana to Pozzuoli, 🚗 Pozzuoli

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

## BAIA

About 7km west of Pozzuoli, Baia takes its name from Baios, a shipmate of Ulysses who died and was buried here. An upmarket Roman holiday resort, it acquired something of a reputation as a sordid centre of sex and sin. Today much of the ancient town is under water (*bradeyism* again) and modern development has left what is effectively a built-up, ugly and uninspiring coastal road. It does, however, boast a dramatic castle that is home to the area's best archaeological museum.

A further 4km south sits the sleepy fishing town of Bacoli, where you'll find the magical *Piscina Mirabilis*.

## LAGO D'AVERNO MAP P287

Via Lucrino Averno; 🚗 Cumana to Lucrino, 🚗 Sepsa to Lucrino

If someone tells you to go to hell, Lago d'Averno (Lake Averno) is a good place to start. In Virgil's *Aeneid*, it's from here that Aeneas descends into the underworld.

In 37 BC the Roman general Marcus Vipsanius Agrippa linked the crater lake to nearby Lake Lucrino and subsequently to the sea, turning it into a strategic naval dockyard.

While the battleships have gone, the ruins of the *Tempio di Apollo* (Temple of Apollo) remain. Built during the reign of Hadrian in the 2nd century AD, this thermal complex once boasted a domed roof almost the size of the Pantheon in Rome. Today, only four great arched windows remain.

This chilled-out, vine-fringed lake is an easy 1km walk north of Lucrino train station.

## MUSEO ARCHEOLOGICO DEI CAMPI FLEGREI MAP P287

☎ 081 523 37 97; Via Castello; admission €4; 🕒 9am-7pm Tue-Sat, 9am-1hr before sunset Sun; 🚗 Cumana to Lucrino, 🚗 Sepsa to Baia

Packed with local ancient booty, this is where you will find the bewitching *Nymphaeum*, dredged up from underwater Baiae and skilfully reassembled. Monuments consecrated to the nymphs, *nymphaeums* were a popular spot to tie the proverbial knot. Other finds include a bronze equestrian statue of the Emperor Domitian (altered to resemble his more popular successor Nerva upon his deposition) and recent finds from Rione Terra (opposite).

The museum sits in the Castello di Baia, built in the late 15th century by the Aragonese as a defence against possible French invasion. Later enlarged by Naples' Spanish viceroy Don Pedro de Toledo, it served as a military orphanage for most of the 20th century. The views over the bay are sublime.

## PARCO ARCHEOLOGICO DI BAIA MAP P287

☎ 081 868 75 92; Via Sella di Baia 22, Bacoli; admission €4; 🕒 9am-5pm Tue-Sun; 🚗 Cumana to Lucrino & then 🚗 Sepsa to Baia

In Roman times, this 1st-century BC palace and spa complex was hot – literally and figuratively. Emperors would entertain themselves and their splash-happy guests in a series of lavishly decorated thermal baths that descended to the sea. While the hedonists have long gone,

some of its treasures remain; including some exquisite floor mosaics, a beautifully stuccoed *balneum* (bathroom), outdoor theatre and the impressive *Tempio di Mercurio*, with its domed swimming pool filled with giant goldfish. In the summer months, the outdoor theatre is occasionally used for opera performances by the Teatro San Carlo (p135).

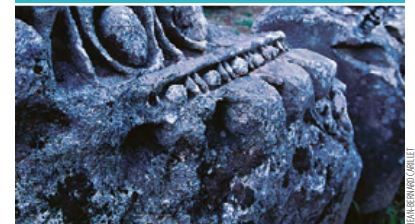
## PISCINA MIRABILIS MAP P287

☎ 081 523 31 99; Via Piscina Mirabilis; 🕒 varies; 🚗 Sepsa to Bacoli

An archaeological *pièce de résistance*, the *Piscina Mirabilis* (Exquisite Pool) lies tucked away in a Bacoli backstreet. To access it, contact custodian Signora Filomena at No 9. Awaiting underground is the world's largest Roman cistern. Featuring 48 soaring pillars and a barrel-vaulted ceiling, it resembles a great subterranean cathedral, eerily bathed in shafts of sunlight. Erected in the Augustan age, its 12,600 cubic-metre water supply served the military fleet at nearby Miseno. Fresh water flowed into the cistern from the Serino river aqueduct which was then raised up to the terrace with hydraulic engines, exiting through doors in the central nave. To this day,

## ATLANTIS, ITALIAN STYLE

Just off the coast of Baia, submerged in the sea, lie the mesmerising ruins of ancient Baiae. The former holiday hotspot for cashed-up Romans, it eventually fell victim to *bradeyism*, sinking into obscurity for hundreds of centuries. In 1956, celebrity diver Raimondo Bucher discovered the ruins. While many of the finds are now displayed in the Museo Archeologico dei Campi Flegrei (left), this underwater treasure trove still shimmers with beautiful mosaics and ruins, including parts of Emperor Claudius' summer villa. From the port at Baia, CYMBA operates tours of the *Città Sommersa* (Underwater City) on a glass-bottomed boat (☎ 349 497 41 83; prenotazioni@baiasommersa.it; 🕒 Tue-Sun; tours €10/7). Tour times change sporadically, so call ahead.



## A CHOICE DIP

Right below the Castello di Baia sits the fabulous Spiaggia del Castello (Castle Beach; Map p287). A sandy double-sided affair, it's only accessible by boat from a nearby jetty. To reach the jetty, catch the SEPSA bus to Baia and get off outside the FIART factory just south of town. Walk a further 200m south and turn left at the green iron gate. At the end of the driveway is the jetty. A one-way ticket costs €3 and you can also hire a sundeck (€5) or umbrella (€4) for stylish waterside sunning. Avoid the weekend summer crowds by coming earlier in the week.

engineers marvel at the cistern's sophistication: its pounded terracotta walls and floor are still emulated today. Admission is free but save face and tip the Signora – €1 will do.

## CUMA

The stuff of legends, Cuma exerted a powerful sway on the ancient imagination. Its sun melted Icarus' wings and its shores received Trojan hero Aeneas.

Ancient Cumae was the earliest Greek colony on the Italian mainland, founded in the 8th century BC by Greek colonists from the island of Euboea. The Romans took control in the 3rd century BC and built the impressive Grotta di Cocceio (closed), a straight-line tunnel connecting Cuma to the inland harbour at Lago di Averno.

### ACROPOLI DI CUMA MAP P287

☎ 081 854 30 60; Via Montecuma; €4; 🕒 9am-2hrs before sunset; 🚗 12 from Pozzuoli

The centre of the ancient settlement of Cuma was the *acropoli* (acropolis). Situated at the base of the acropolis, the **Tempio di Apollo** (Temple of Apollo) was built on the site where Daedalus is said to have flown into Italy. According to Greek mythology, Daedalus and his son Icarus took to the skies to escape King Minos in Crete. En route Icarus flew too close to the sun and plunged to his death as his wax-and-feather wings melted from the heat.

At the top of the acropolis stands the **Tempio di Giove** (Temple of Jupiter). Dating to the 5th century BC it was later converted into a Christian basilica, of which the remains of the altar and the circular baptismal font are visible.

However, it's the haunting **Antro della Sibilla Cumana** (Cave of the Cumaean Sibyl) that steals the show. Hollowed out of the tufa bank, its

erie 130m-long trapezoidal tunnel leads to the echo-filled vaulted chamber where the oracle was said to pass on messages from Apollo. The poet Virgil, probably inspired by a visit to the cave himself, writes of Aeneas coming here to seek the Sibyl, who directs him to Hades (the underworld), entered from nearby Lago d'Averno (p105). Less poetic are the recent studies that maintain the tunnel was originally built as part of Cuma's defence system.

If you plan on coming here by bus, take the P12R operated by CTP ([www.ctpn.it](http://www.ctpn.it) in Italian). It's also worth asking the driver for departure times back to Pozzuoli; it'll save yourself a long and tedious wait by the roadside later.

## ELSEWHERE

The city's northwest Fuorigrotta district is home to the Edenlandia amusement park and the Stadio San Paolo (p134) football stadium. Close by you'll find the huge exhibition space, the **Mostra d'Oltremare** (Map p287; ☎ 081 725 80 00; Piazzale Tecchio 52; 🚗 152) built by Mussolini between 1937 and 1940.

For information on Vesuvius, Pompeii and the Amalfi Coast see the Amalfi Coast and Ancient Sites chapters.

### CITTÀ DELLA SCIENZA MAP P287

Science City; ☎ 081 735 21 11; [www.cittadellascienza.it](http://www.cittadellascienza.it); Via Coroglio 104, Bagnoli; adult/child €7/5; 🕒 9am-5pm Tue-Sat, 10am-7pm Sun, extended hr Jul; 🚗 Bagnoli, 🚗 C9/C10

Part of a major redevelopment of the Bagnoli steelworks area, this huge, high-tech museum takes the 'geek' out of science. Get clued up on physics at the science gym, walk through constellations in the high-tech planetarium (€2) or just go plain silly pressing lots of funky buttons.

### EDENLANDIA MAP P287

☎ 081 239 40 90; Viale Kennedy 76; adult/child under 1.1m €2/free, rides €1.50 each; 🕒 varies, call ahead; 🚗 Cumana to Edenlandia

Fabulously kitsch and loads of fun, the Edenlandia amusement park boasts over 200 attractions, including dodgem cars, a fairytale castle, high-tech 3D cinema and flight simulator. The €2 admission covers the cinema, variety show and children's theatre.

© Lonely Planet Publications. To make it easier for you to use, access to this chapter is not digitally restricted. In return, we think it's fair to ask you to use it for personal, non-commercial purposes only. In other words, please don't upload this chapter to a peer-to-peer site, mass email it to everyone you know, or resell it. See the terms and conditions on our site for a longer way of saying the above - 'Do the right thing with our content.'