

Vatican City, Borgo & Prati

VATICAN CITY | BORGO | PRATI

Neighbourhood Top Five

1 Sistine Chapel (p126)
Gazing heavenwards at Michelangelo's most celebrated masterpieces: his cinematic Genesis frescoes on the ceiling, and his terrifying vision of the *Last Judgment* on the western wall.

2 St Peter's Basilica (p118)
Being blown away by the super-sized opulence

of this, the most important church in the Catholic world.

3 St Peter's Square (p130)
Trying to line up the columns on the Vatican's central square – it is possible.

4 Castel Sant'Angelo (p130)
Revelling in the wonderful rooftop views

from this landmark castle on the Tiber.

5 Stanze di Raffaello (p122)
Marvelling at the vibrant colours of these fabulously frescoed chambers, home to Raphael's greatest painting, *La Scuola di Atene*.



For more detail of this area see Map p304 ➔

Explore: Vatican City, Borgo & Prati

The Vatican stands atop the low-lying Vatican hill west of the Tiber. Much of its 44 hectares are covered by the Vatican Gardens, which can only be visited by guided tour, and the Palazzo Apostolico, which houses the pope's official residence and the Vatican Museums.

You'll need at least a morning to do justice to the Vatican Museums (p122). The highlight is the Michelangelo-frescoed Sistine Chapel (p126), but there's enough art on display to keep you busy for years. If you're with a tour guide, you can pass directly from the Chapel through to St Peter's Basilica (p118); otherwise you'll have to walk around and approach from St Peter's Square (p130). Once finished in the basilica, you'll be ready for a break. There are few good eating options in the Vatican itself, but the nearby Prati district is full of trattorias and takeaways.

Between the Vatican and the river lies the Borgo. Little remains of the original medieval district, which was largely destroyed by Mussolini in 1936 to make way for Via della Conciliazione, the monumental road that runs from St Peter's Square to Castel Sant'Angelo (p130), the large, drum-shaped castle overlooking the river.

Local Life

➔ **Fast food** Rather than having a full-length midday meal, local office workers tend to grab a snack from the many excellent takeaways in Prati. Join them for *pizza al taglio* at Pizzarium (p132), *panini* at Fa-Bio (p131), or *arancine* at Mondo Arancina (p131).

➔ **Shopping** Prati is prime shopping territory. Spearing off Piazza del Risorgimento, Via Cola di Rienzo is lined with department stores and clothing shops. Boutique hunters should check out Rechicle (p133) for vintage fashions and Il Sellaio (p133) for handmade leather bags.

➔ **Catch a gig** Join the locals for sweet melodies at Alexanderplatz (p133), Rome's oldest jazz joint. Another top venue is the pub Fonclea (p133), which offers an eclectic program of nightly gigs.

Getting There & Away

➔ **Bus** From Termini, bus 40 is the quickest one to the Vatican – it'll drop you off near Castel Sant'Angelo. You can also take the 64, which runs a similar route but stops more often. Bus 81 runs to Piazza del Risorgimento, passing through San Giovanni and the *centro storico* (historic centre).

➔ **Metro** Take metro line A to Ottaviano-San Pietro. From the station, signs direct you to St Peter's.

➔ **Tram** Number 19 serves Piazza del Risorgimento by way of San Lorenzo, Viale Regina Margherita and Villa Borghese.

Lonely Planet's Top Tip

Be wary of the touts around Ottaviano metro station selling skip-the-line tours of the Vatican Museums. These guys are on commission to round up clients and the tours they're pushing could cost you more than the museums' own official tours.

The Vatican Museums' website lists an impressive array of tour packages. These take in the museums and sites across Vatican territories, including subterranean archaeological areas, the Vatican Gardens, and the papal palace at Castel Gandolfo.

Best Places to Eat

- ➔ Pizzarium (p132)
- ➔ Enoteca La Torre (p132)
- ➔ Ristorante L'Arcangelo (p132)
- ➔ Fa-Bio (p131)
- ➔ Fatamorgana (p131)

For reviews, see p131. ➔

Best Places to Drink

- ➔ Sciascia Caffè (p133)
- ➔ Makasar Bistrot (p133)
- ➔ Passaguai (p133)
- ➔ Be.re (p133)

For reviews, see p133. ➔

Best Above & Below Ground

- ➔ St Peter's Basilica Dome (p120)
- ➔ Terrace of Castel Sant'Angelo (p130)
- ➔ Tomb of St Peter (p121)
- ➔ Vatican Grottoes (p121)
- ➔ Necropoli Via Triumphalis (p130)

For reviews, see p130. ➔