

Vatican City, Borgo & Prati

VATICAN CITY | BORGO | PRATI | AURELIO

Neighbourhood Top Five

- 1 Gazing heavenwards at Michelangelo's cinematic ceiling frescoes in the **Sistine Chapel** (p193). See God pointing his finger at Adam and pinch yourself that you're looking at the original painting, not a dime-a-dozen poster copy.
- 2 Being blown away by the super-sized opulence of **St Peter's Basilica** (p184).
- 3 Trying to line up the columns on **Piazza San Pietro** (p200) – it is possible.
- 4 Revelling in the wonderful rooftop views from **Castel Sant'Angelo** (p200).
- 5 Marvelling at the vibrant colours of the fabulously frescoed **Stanze di Raffaello** (p192).



For more detail of this area see Map p364 →

Explore: Vatican City, Borgo & Prati

The Vatican, the world's smallest sovereign state (a mere 0.44 sq km), sits atop the low-lying Vatican hill just a few hundred metres west of the river Tiber. Centred on the domed bulk of St Peter's Basilica and Piazza San Pietro, it boasts some of Italy's most celebrated masterpieces, many housed in the vast Vatican Museums.

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

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

The Vatican, Borgo and Prati districts are all easy to reach by public transport. Most people arrive by metro, getting off at Ottaviano–San Pietro metro station, or by bus from Stazione Termini or the *centro storico*.

Local Life

- ➔ **Fast Food** Rather than having a full-length sit-down lunch, many local office workers grab a snack at the Sicilian snack bar Mondo Arancina (p201). Next door, Gelarmony (p201) is the place for pudd.
- ➔ **Shopping Strips** Sparring off Piazza del Risorgimento, Via Cola di Rienzo is lined with busy department stores.
- ➔ **Live Music** Join the locals for sweet melodies at Alexanderplatz (p203), Rome's top jazz joint. Another favourite venue is the basement pub Fonclea (p203).

Getting There & Away

- ➔ **Bus** From Termini, No 40 is the quickest bus to the Vatican – it'll drop you off near Castel Sant'Angelo. You can also take No 64, which runs a similar route but stops more often. No 492 runs to Piazza del Risorgimento from Stazione Tiburtina, passing through Piazza Barberini and the *centro storico*.
- ➔ **Metro** Take metro line A to Ottaviano–San Pietro. From the station signs direct you to St Peter's.

Lonely Planet's Top Tip

Be wary of the touts around Ottaviano metro station selling queue-jumping tours of the Vatican Museums. Many of these are not authorised and the tours they offer cost more than those sold by the museums' online ticket office or by the Vatican-sponsored Roma Cristiana (www.operaro.manapellegrinaggi.org).

Note that if you want to attend Easter or Christmas mass at St Peter's you have to book tickets through the Prefettura della Casa Pontificia (www.vatican.va).

Best Places to Eat

- ➔ Angeli a Borgo (p201)
- ➔ Gelarmony (p201)
- ➔ Pizzarium (p203)
- ➔ Cacio e Pepe (p202)
- ➔ Osteria dell'Angelo (p202)

For reviews see p201 ➔

Best Places to Drink

- ➔ Alexanderplatz (p203)
- ➔ Passaguai (p203)
- ➔ Art Studio Café (p203)
- ➔ Fonclea (p203)

For reviews see p203 ➔

Best Overground & Underground

- ➔ Dome of St Peter's Basilica (p188)
- ➔ Terrace of Castel Sant'Angelo (p200)
- ➔ St Peter's Tomb (p188)
- ➔ Vatican Grottoes (p188)

For reviews see p200 ➔