



Day Trips from Rome

Ostia Antica p236

Wander through complete streets, gaze at Roman toilets and see an original Roman menu at the ancient port of Ostia Antica, whose preservation in places matches that of Pompeii.

Tivoli p237

This hilltop town is home to two Unesco World Heritage sites: Villa Adriana, the mammoth country estate of the emperor Hadrian, and 16th-century Villa d'Este, with its fantastical gardens featuring musical fountains.

Castelli Romani p239

Studding the hills to the south of Rome are 13 hilltop towns that have long been a green escape for Romans.

Cerveteri & Tarquinia p244

The exquisite tombs and fantastic museums of these once important Etruscan centres provide a window into a mysterious ancient world.

Viterbo p245

A medieval gem, graceful Viterbo evokes its 13th-century golden age, and is also famous for its health-imbuing hot springs.

Orvieto p249

This gorgeous hilltop Umbrian town is an easy and rewarding day trip.

Ostia Antica

Explore

Half a day or more would be ideal to explore the impressive remains of Ostia Antica. This ancient Roman city was a busy working port until 42 AD, and the ruins are substantial and well preserved. The main thoroughfare, the **Decumanus Maximus**, runs over 1km from the city's entrance (the Porta Romana) to the Porta Marina, which originally led to the sea, and it's still the main drag. The site gets busy at weekends, but is usually empty during the week.

The Best...

- ➔ **Sight** Thermopolium
- ➔ **Place to Eat** Ristorante Cipriani

Top Tip

Bring a picnic or time your visit so that you can eat at one of the restaurants in the town, as the canteen-style cafe on site can get busy.

Getting There & Away

- ➔ **Car** Take Via del Mare, parallel to Via Ostiense, and follow the signs for the *scavi* (ruins).
- ➔ **Train** From Rome, take metro line B to Piramide, then the Ostia Lido train (half-hourly) from Stazione Porta San Paolo, getting off at Ostia Antica. The trip is covered by the standard BIT tickets.

Need to Know

- ➔ **Location** 25km southwest of Rome

SIGHTS

Founded in the 4th century BC, Ostia (named for the mouth or *ostium* of the Tiber) became a great port and later a strategic centre for defence and trade, with a population of around 50,000, of whom 17,000 were slaves, mostly from Turkey, Egypt and the middle East. In the 5th century AD barbarian invasions and the outbreak of malaria led to its abandonment followed by its slow burial – up to the 2nd-

floor level – in river silt, hence its survival. Pope Gregory IV re-established the town in the 9th century.

RUINS

RUIN

(📍06 5635 2830; www.ostiaantica.info; Viale dei Romagnoli 717; adult/reduced €6.5/3.75; ☀8.30am-7.15pm Tue-Sun summer, to 6pm Mar, to 5pm Nov-Feb, last admission 1hr before closing) Ostia was a busy working port until it began to decline in the 3rd century AD, and the town was made up of restaurants, laundries, shops, houses and public meeting places.

On both sides of the main thoroughfare, **Decumanus Maximus**, are networks of narrow streets lined by buildings.

At one stage, Ostia had 20 baths complexes, including the **Terme di Foro** – these were equipped with a roomful of stone toilets (the *forica*) that remain largely intact. Pivot-holes show that the entrances had revolving doors and there are 20 marble seats that remain intact. Water flowed along channels in front of the seats, into which the user would dip a sponge on a stick to clean themselves.

The most impressive mosaics on site are at the huge **Terme di Nettuno**, which occupied a whole block and date from Hadrian's renovation of the port. Make sure you climb the elevated platform and look at the three enormous mosaics here, including Neptune driving his seahorse chariot, surrounded by sea monsters, mermaids and mermen. In an adjacent room is a mosaic with Neptune's wife, Amphitrite, on a hippocampus, accompanied by Hymenaeus – the god of weddings – and tritons. In the centre of the complex are the remains of a large arcaded courtyard called the Palaestra, in which athletes used to train. There's an impressive mosaic depicting boxing and wrestling.

Next to the Nettuno baths is a good-sized **amphitheatre**, built by Agrippa and later enlarged to hold 4000 people. Stucco is still visible in the entrance hall. In late antiquity, the orchestra could be flooded to present watery tableaux. By climbing to the top of the amphitheatre and looking over the site, you'll get a good idea of the original layout of the port and how it would have functioned.

Behind the amphitheatre is the **Piazzale delle Corporazioni** (Forum of the Corpo-