

Vatican City, Borgo & Prati

VATICAN CITY | BORGO | PRATI | AURELIO

Neighbourhood Top Five

1 Gazing heavenwards at Michelangelo's masterpieces in the **Sistine Chapel** (p108) – on the ceiling, his cinematic Old Testament frescoes; on the western wall, his terrifying vision of the *Last Judgment*.

2 Being blown away by the super-sized opulence of **St Peter's Basilica** (p122).

3 Trying to line up the columns on **St Peter's Square** (p134) – it is possible.

4 Revelling in the wonderful rooftop views from **Castel Sant'Angelo** (p134).

5 Marvelling at the vibrant colours of the fabulously frescoed **Stanze di Raffaello** (p108).



For more detail of this area see Map p312 ➔

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 a few hundred metres west of the Tiber. Centred on the domed bulk of St Peter's Basilica, it boasts some of Italy's most revered artworks, many of which are 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 onto a 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 St Peter's Sq, itself one of the Vatican's most dramatic sights. 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 excellent trattorias, takeaways and restaurants.

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

The Vatican, Borgo and Prati districts are all easy to reach by public transport.

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 and lunch on *pizza al taglio* (pizza by the slice), *arancine* (deep-fried rice balls stuffed with cheese and vegetables) and gelato.

➔ **Shopping** Sparring off Piazza del Risorgimento, Via Cola di Rienzo is a popular shopping strip lined with department stores and midrange clothes shops.

➔ **Catch a Gig** Join the locals for sweet melodies at Alexanderplatz (p138), Rome's oldest and most famous jazz joint. Another top venue is the basement pub Fonclea (p138).

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 bus 64, which runs a similar route but stops more often. Bus 492 runs from Stazione Tiburtina to Piazza del Risorgimento and Cipro metro station, 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. These guys are on commission to round up clients and the tours they offer might well cost more than those sold on the museums' official website.

Note that if you want to attend Easter or Christmas mass at St Peter's you'll have to book (free) tickets through the **Prefettura della Casa Pontificia** (www.vatican.va/various/prefettura/index_en.html).

Best Places to Eat

- ➔ Pizzarium (p138)
- ➔ Romeo (p136)
- ➔ Velavevodetto Ai Quiriti (p136)
- ➔ Enoteca La Torre (p137)

For reviews, see p135. ➔

Best Places to Drink

- ➔ Sciascia Caffè (p138)
- ➔ Makasar (p138)
- ➔ Art Studio Café (p138)
- ➔ Passaguai (p138)

For reviews, see p138. ➔

Best Overground & Underground

- ➔ Dome of St Peter's Basilica (p122)
- ➔ Terrace of Castel Sant'Angelo (p134)
- ➔ Tomb of St Peter (p125)
- ➔ Vatican Grottoes (p125)

For reviews, see p134. ➔