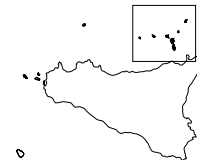


Aeolian Islands



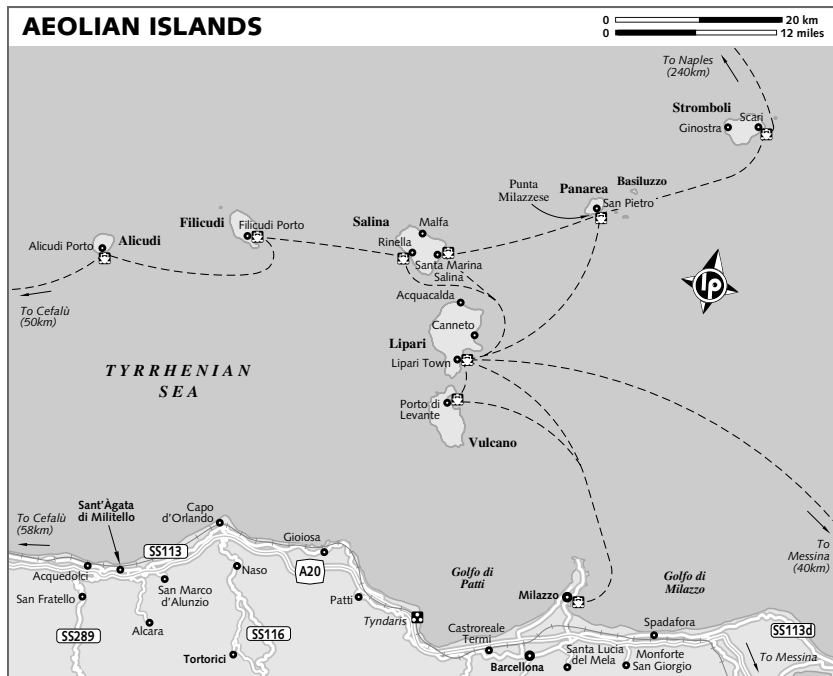
Cobalt-blue sea, wild, windswept mountains swathed in flowers and steaming volcanoes – these go some way to explaining why the Aeolians (Isole Eolie) are the European holy grail for island lovers. Part of a huge volcanic ridge, the seven Aeolian Islands represent the very pinnacle of a 3000m-high outcrop that was formed one million years ago. Created by successive explosions – first Panarea, Filicudi and Alicudi, then Lipari and Salina, and finally the still-boiling Vulcano and Stromboli – the islands exhibit an extraordinary variety of landscape. Hillsides of silver-grey pumice and lush green vineyards give way to jagged veins of black obsidian. A wilderness of flowers and plants enriched by the volcanic soil, as well as an abundance of sea life, make these islands a paradise for naturalists and scuba divers alike. Recognising their unique volcanic characteristics, Unesco declared the islands a World Heritage site in 2000.

The Aeolians' natural beauty and unpredictable nature have tempted and repelled people throughout the centuries. Myths name the island as the home of the god of the winds, Aeolus, and they were also thought to be home to the monster Polyphemus and the god of fire, Vulcan. Modern hedonists, including the international jet set and film stars, arrive in droves in the summer to swim, hike, dive and party in this playground. The best time to come is in May and early June or late September and October; prices soar in July and August, when the population doubles.

HIGHLIGHTS

- Go for a night-time climb on fiery **Stromboli** (p176) – an unforgettable experience for the eyes, legs and lungs
- Visit Lipari's dazzling **Museo Archeologico Eoliano** (p153), with its wealth of artefacts
- Climb to the top of Vulcano's mineral-encrusted **Fossa di Vulcano** (p168) and go for an atmospheric mud bath after dusk to heal those bones
- Take a trip around all of the fascinating villages on **Salina** (p170) and taste the sweet Malvasia wine
- Enjoy the wild natural beauty of Filicudi's huge **Grotta del Bue Marino** (p180)





HISTORY

There are two types of history when it comes to the Aeolian Islands: the mythical (which is very exciting) and the real (almost equally eventful). The mythical story is responsible for many of the islands' names. The Greek keeper of the winds, Aeolus, who famously gave Odysseus a bag of winds (not a wind bag, mind) to take along on his trip, gave the archipelago its name. Aeolus' father-in-law, the mythical King Liparus, gave his name to Lipari, the 'capital' island. Jupiter's son, Vulcan, the god of fire and metalworking, had his workshop on Vulcano island, giving it not only its name, but also its fiery character.

The more plausible version of the past testifies that the first settlers came to the islands to make tools out of obsidian, a hard volcanic glass that provided the mainstay of the islands' economy for more than 5000 years. Obsidian drew Sicily's first-known inhabitants to the Aeolians, the Stentilleni, who settled in the 4th millennium BC.

The first Greek settlers arrived from Segesta and Selinunte in 580 BC, creating an effectively run system of farming, commerce

and ship-looting, which brought much wealth to the islands. The Greeks also used the islands as ports on the east-west trade route between the Aegean and Tyrrhenian seas, and built their acropolis on the promontory where you can still visit the Neolithic and classical ruins.

The Aeolian Islands were a base for the Carthaginians and Greeks in the First Punic War, until they finally fell to Rome between 252 and 251 BC. The Romans impoverished the islands by charging high taxes on exporting obsidian. Population decline continued as the inhabitants fled the increasingly active volcanoes, especially on Lipari. Between Roman rule and the Arab lootings in AD 863, the islands frequently changed hands. The Arab attacks destroyed the islands' homes, enslaved the population and famously scattered the remains of St Bartholomew, the guardian of the Aeolians.

The islands lay unpopulated for over a hundred years, until a group of monks was sent to settle there in 1083. They announced that St Bartholomew's remains had miraculously reappeared, and that this was a sign that the

islands should be repopulated under his protection. But it proved difficult to lure people back to the volatile islands, and rightly so – North African pirates attacked the islands frequently. The notorious pirate Barbarossa (tyrant of all of the Mediterranean) burnt Lipari Town to the ground and took off with its entire population in 1544 (some say he imprisoned as many as 10,000 people). The future of the Aeolians was not looking bright. However, the Viceroy Pedro of Toledo quickly rebuilt the island, setting up plentiful civilian privileges, which helped lure settlers from mainland Italy.

The 19th century saw a further population decline, with many islanders fleeing the poor living conditions and emigrating to Australia. During the same period Lipari's citadel became a prison and continued in this role until Fascist times, when Mussolini's political opponents were incarcerated here. With hardly any population and sparse agriculture, the Aeolians were a sad sight until the 1950s, when their wild beauty grabbed the attention of the tourist industry, propelling them to their present-day guise as one of the most attractive parts of Italy.

GETTING THERE & AWAY

Ferries and hydrofoils leave for the islands on a regular basis in summer from Milazzo and Messina. In Milazzo all the ticket offices are along Via dei Mille, at the port, and in Messina the office is halfway up Via Vittorio Emanuele II. You have to purchase your tickets at the port ticket offices before boarding; telephone bookings are not accepted unless they are done weeks in advance. Hydrofoils are twice as frequent and faster than ferries, although more expensive. Peak season is from June to September and, although ferries and hydrofoils operate year-round, the winter services are much reduced and sometimes cancelled – to the outer islands at any rate – due to heavy seas. All the following prices were one-way high-season fares at the time of writing.

Air

For some brilliant Aeolian-style luxury, book yourself (and four friends) a helicopter transfer with **Air Panarea** (☎ 090 983 44 28; www.airpanarea.com; Via Iditella, Panarea). From Palermo to Lipari it works out about €560 per person.

Air Panarea also operates a scheduled transfer to the Reggio Calabria airport (€176, Monday and Friday) departing from Panarea at 9am and returning at 2pm.

An excursion around the islands, with a tour over Stromboli costing €480 per person (for a group of five), is just about one of the most exciting things you can do.

Boat

Both Ustica Lines and Siremar (for contact details for Lipari see p166, Vulcano p170, Salina p174, Panarea p175, Stromboli p180, Filicudi p181 and Alicudi p182) run hydrofoils to Lipari from Milazzo (€11.30), and then on to the other islands. From 1 June to 30 September hydrofoils depart almost hourly (from around 7am to 8pm) to Lipari, and also stop at Vulcano (€10.50, 45 minutes) and either Santa Marina or Rinella (€12.80, 1½ to two hours) on Salina. Services to the other islands are less frequent unless you change in Lipari: combined there are nine departures daily for Panarea (€13.30, two hours) and Stromboli (€16.20, 2½ hours). There are four daily departures for Alicudi (€21.30, three hours) and Filicudi (€17.50, two hours 20 minutes).

Ustica Lines hydrofoils also connect the islands with Messina (€16.50, 1½ hours from Lipari, five daily) and Reggio di Calabria (€17.50, two hours from Lipari, five daily), as well as Naples (€75, 5½ hours, one daily, summer only) and Palermo (€32, four hours, one daily, summer only).

Siremar runs car ferries from Milazzo to the islands (€7.30, small cars €24.40, two hours, five daily), but they are slower and less regular. **NGI Traghetto** (Map p147; ☎ 090 928 40 91; Via dei Mille 26, Milazzo) also runs a thrice-daily car-ferry service for the same rates.

GETTING AROUND

Boat

Regular hydrofoil and ferry services operate between the islands but they can be disrupted by heavy seas. In Lipari Town nearly all hydrofoil and ferry services arrive at and depart from Marina Lunga (also known as Porto Sottomonastero). Siremar and Ustica Lines have ticket offices in the same cabin opposite the port. Full timetable information is available at all offices. On the other islands, ticket offices are at or close to the docks.

Single fares and approximate sailing times from Lipari are as follows:

Destination	Cost	Duration
Alicudi	€14.10	2hr (hydrofoil)
	€8.95	3¾hr (ferry)
Filicudi	€11.30	1½hr (hydrofoil)
	€6.40	2¾hr (ferry)
Panarea	€6.90	50min (hydrofoil)
	€3.85	2hr (ferry)
Salina	€5.30	35min (Santa Marina, hydrofoil)
	€6.10	45min (Rinella, hydrofoil)
	€3	45min (Santa Marina, ferry)
	€3.40	1½hr (Rinella, ferry)
Stromboli	€13.30	1hr (hydrofoil)
	€7.70	3¾hr (ferry)
Vulcano	€2.50	10min (hydrofoil)
	€1.30	25min (ferry)

Car & Motorcycle

If you are only visiting the islands for a couple of days it'll work out too expensive to take your own car. It's best to garage it in Milazzo for €10 per day (see p148 for details). If you're thinking of taking in the sights for longer than two or three days, taking your own vehicle will work out cheaper than hiring one. You can take cars onto Lipari, Vulcano and Salina, all of which also have scooter- and car-rental outlets (scooter hire per day €12, car hire per day €45). On Panarea, Stromboli and Filicudi you can use the electric-cart taxis to transport luggage. On Alicudi, their methods of transport are lovely and old-fashioned: mules and donkeys.

THE ISLANDS

LIPARI

pop 10,500 / elev 602m

The 'capital' of the islands, Lipari is the most populated and most popular of the Aeolians, not least because it's at the centre of the archipelago. With a good variety of hotels and restaurants it's the best-equipped base for hopping to the rest of the islands. Lipari Town is a delightful maze of pastel-coloured houses but the high level of tourism means that the main street is a little too crowded with beachwear and surf-gear shops. The town's real charm can be found in its back streets and the area around the cathedral.

The town's soaring castle was built as a defence against the attacks of pirates like Barbarossa who were eager to get their hands



on the revenue from the lucrative obsidian and pumice mining. You can see the still-active pumice mines north of Lipari Town, between the popular pebbly beaches of Canneto and Porticello.

The rest of the island hides some good beaches, though you'll have to make an effort to get to some of the more isolated coves.

Orientation

Tourists arrive at one of two ports in Lipari Town: Marina Lunga or Marina Corta. The ports are situated either side of the cliff-top citadel (known as the *castello*). Here you'll find the cathedral and the archaeological museum. The town centre extends between the ports. The main street, Via Vittorio Emanuele, runs roughly north-south to the west of the castle. This area is where you'll find banks, bars, offices and restaurants.

Information BOOKSHOPS

La Stampa (Via Vittorio Emanuele 170) Selection of foreign-language newspapers – usually English, German and French – and some novels.

EMERGENCY

Ambulance (☎ 090 988 52 67)

Emergency Doctor (☎ 090 981 24 27; Via Sant'Anna)

At the hospital (Ospedale Civile di Lipari Centralino).

Police (☎ 090 981 13 33; Via Guglielmo Marconi)

INTERNET ACCESS

Prices start at €3 per half-hour or €6 an hour.

Internet Point (☎ 090 981 34 94; Via Vittorio Emanuele 53; ☎ 10.30am-1.30pm & 6.30-11.30pm Mon-Sat, 6.30-11.30pm Sun)

Net C@fe (☎ 090 981 35 27; Via Garibaldi 61; ☎ 10am-late) Serves snacks and regularly screens football matches.

INTERNET RESOURCES

www.isole-olie.com (in Italian) Full of information about island hotels and offers a secure online booking service.

LEFT LUGGAGE

Siremar Ticket Office (Marina Lunga; per bag per hr €3; ☎ 8am-8pm)

MEDICAL SERVICES

The *farmacie di turno*, a timetable showing which pharmacy is on night duty, is displayed in the window of each pharmacy.

Farmacia Internazionale (☎ 090 981 15 83; Via Vittorio Emanuele 128; ☎ 9am-1pm & 5-9pm Mon-Fri)
Ospedale Civile di Lipari Centralino (☎ 090 988 51 11; Via Sant'Anna) Also operates a first-aid service.

MONEY

Via Vittorio Emanuele is lined with ATMs. Outside banking hours you can change cash at the post office and travel agencies.

POST

Post Office (Via Vittorio Emanuele 207; ☎ 8.30am-6.30pm Mon-Fri, 8.30am-1.20pm Sat)

TOURIST INFORMATION

Main Tourist Office (☎ 090 988 00 95; www.aasteolie.info; Via Vittorio Emanuele 202; ☎ 8.30am-1.30pm & 4.30-8pm Mon-Fri year round, 8.30am-1.30pm Sat & Sun Jul & Aug) This office provides information for all the islands and can assist you with finding accommodation. Pick up a free copy of *Ospitalità in Blu*, which contains details of accommodation and services on all the islands. Off-peak, the office is randomly closed in the afternoon.

Sights

CITADEL (UPPER TOWN)

Following Barbarossa's murderous rampage through the town in 1544, the Spaniards

rebuilt and fortified Lipari. Although the citadel never had to defend the town from further marauders, its fortifications look impregnable and are still relatively intact.

Along the streets of the castle, plaques explain the different strata that excavations have revealed. The neat layers, preserved by the slow accumulation of windblown earth, provide a fantastic timeline that archaeologists use to date finds elsewhere in the Med.

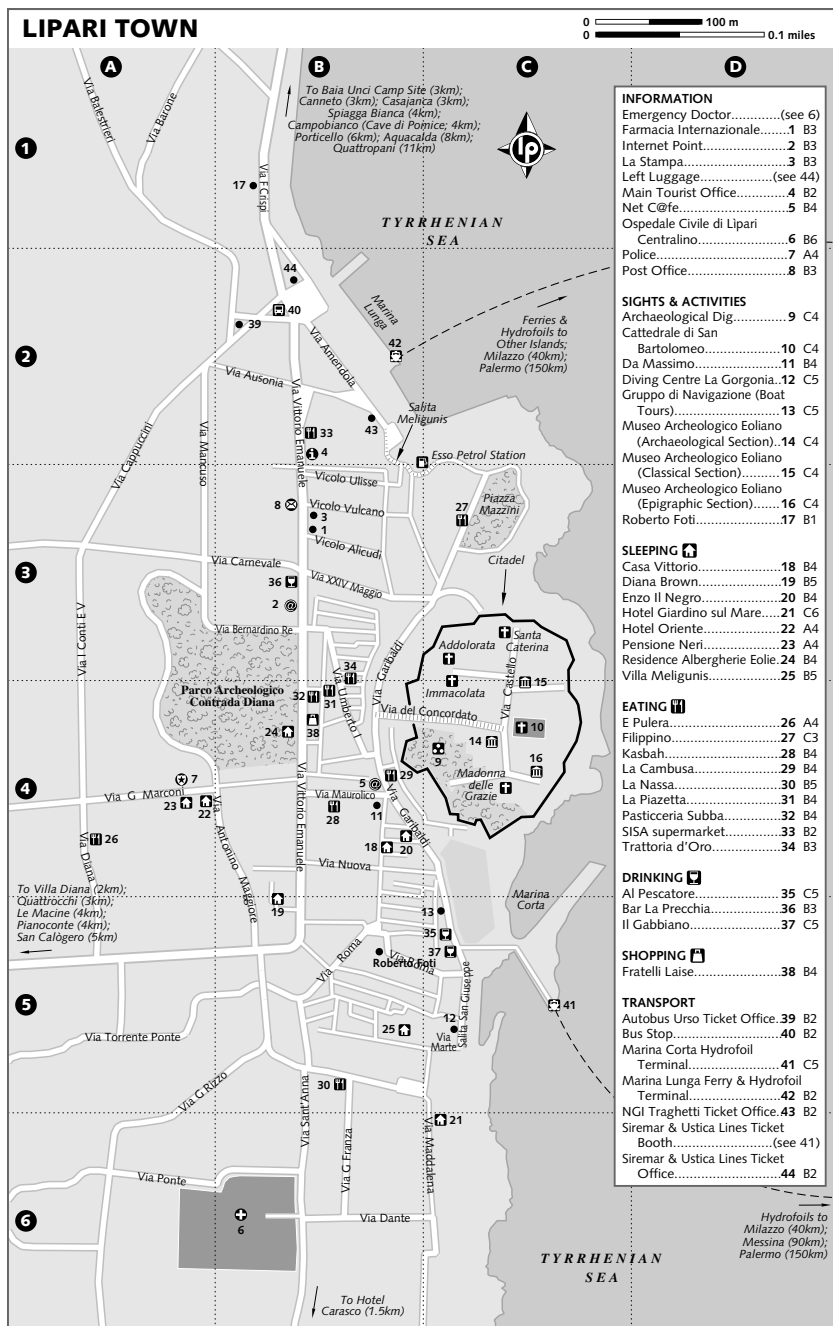
You enter the castle via a set of steps (Via del Concordato) that leads up to the 17th-century **Cattedrale di San Bartolomeo**. It was built to replace the original Norman cathedral, which was destroyed by Barbarossa who, despite his Arab name (Khair-ed-din Barbarossa), was actually an Italian mercenary. The only original element to survive is the 12th-century Benedictine cloister. The interior is hung with chandeliers and features: in the northern transept is a silver statue of St Bartholomew (1728) with his flayed skin tucked under his arm.

Around the cathedral are a couple of other ruined baroque churches, but the real area of interest is the **archaeological dig** in the southern half of the citadel where finds from the Neolithic period to the Roman era have been unearthed. You won't make much sense of what's here without visiting the museum.

Museo Archeologico Eoliano

If you're at all interested in Mediterranean history, the **Museo Archeologico Eoliano** (☎ 090 988 01 74; adult/concession €6/3; ☎ 9am-1.30pm & 3-6pm) is an absolute must, as it contains a collection of finds that is among the most complete in Europe. The **Archaeological Section** (Sezione Archeologica) is divided into two buildings. Just south of the cathedral, the former Palazzo Vescovile (Bishop's Palace) is devoted to artefacts found on Lipari, beginning with the Neolithic and Bronze Ages upstairs and continuing in chronological order to the Roman era downstairs. Amid the plethora of artefacts is some finely sculpted obsidian, telling evidence of the relative sophistication of the island's prehistoric civilisation. Prehistoric finds from the other islands are housed in the small pavilion directly in front of the palace.

On the other side of the cathedral is the **Classical Section** (Sezione Classica). It houses finds from Lipari's 11th-century-BC necropolis. These are beautifully displayed and include a sizable collection of burial urns as well as models of a Bronze Age burial



ground and Lipari's necropolis. Upstairs is an impressive array of decorated vases and the museum's most treasured items: the most complete collection of Greek theatrical masks in the world. There are also a number of statuettes of dancers and actors – the one of *Andromeda con Bambino* (Andromeda with Child) is particularly beautiful – and some elegant jewellery. The next room contains polychromatic vases decorated by an artist simply known as 'Il Pittore Liparoto' (the Lipari Painter; 300–270 BC).

The museum's last part is the **Epigraphic Section** (Sezione Epigrafica), which is housed in a smaller building located south of the Archaeological Section. Here you will find a little garden of engraved stones and a room of Greek and Roman tombs.

AROUND LIPARI TOWN

The only worthwhile sight outside the citadel is the **Parco Archeologico Contrada Diana**, west of Via Vittorio Emanuele, which has revealed part of the original Greek walls (5th and 4th centuries BC) and Roman houses. At the southwestern end of the park is the necropolis, where the tombstones are still visible in the overgrown grass. The park, alas, is rarely open but all of the important finds are in the museum.

AROUND LIPARI ISLAND

Although Lipari Town is so self-contained that you could easily spend your entire holiday there, the rest of the island is worth checking out, especially if you want to find the best swimming spots. The island is small enough that a grand tour of its perimeter should take about an hour by car.

The Observatory

Just south of the town is Lipari's observatory, a small place with a big job – monitoring all the volcanic and seismic activity in the Mediterranean. Follow signs south to the Hotel Carasco and Porto delle Gente, which will lead you out to a promontory formed by Monte Giardina and Monte Guardia. From here a track leads through the vineyards to the **Observatory** (☎ 090 981 10 81; ☎ by appointment) with fantastic views across the water to Vulcano. The route is clearly marked on the *Isole Eolie o Lipari* 1:25,000 map produced by Litografia Artistica Cartografica (available in the Tabacchi Edicola in Milazzo, see p146).

North of Lipari Town

Only 3km north of Lipari Town, at the end of a short tunnel, **Canneto** is a relatively quiet village. The long pebbled beach is also the most accessible beach from Lipari for swimming and you can hire deck chairs, umbrellas, kayaks and canoes (€5 per hour).

About 1km further north of Canneto is **Spiazzia Bianca** (White Beach), the most popular beach on the island. Its name derives from the layers of pumice dust that once covered it. These have been slowly washed away by the rough winter seas, leaving it a darker shade of grey. Another good beach is the one at **Porticello** (north again). Beware, the pebbles are murder on your feet so come equipped with sandals or beach shoes.

Between Spiaggia Bianca and Porticello lie the pumice quarries of **Campobianco**. The slopes of the vast mines run along the side of the road, and pumice is still shipped from the dock below **Monte Pilato** (476m). This unlikely place is one of the better spots to splash into the sea, via one of the pumice chutes that allow you to slide from the hillside above directly into the azure water. Such a scene features in the Taviani brothers' classic film *Kaos*. You can only get to the chutes by boat and most tours will stop here to allow you some time to slide.

Monte Pilato is actually the source of all of the pumice, which exploded from the crater in the last eruption in AD 700. Also around the cone are fields of solidified obsidian known as the **Rocche Rosse** (Red Rocks). You can reach the crater via a path from the northern end of Campobianco (about 1.2km).

Northwest to Quattropani

West of Lipari Town (and accessible by bus from the Marina Lunga), through some lush vegetation, the road climbs for about 3km to the belvedere known as **Quattrocchi** (Four Eyes, although you'll only need two to appreciate the stunning views of Vulcano to the south). Less than 1km north is the small village of **Pianoconte**; a side road before the village proper veers off to the Roman baths of **San Calogero**, famous in antiquity for the thermal spring that flowed at a constant temperature of 60°C. The last stop on the bus route is at **Quattropani**, from where you can walk the 5km north to **Acquacalda** and catch a bus returning to Lipari.

TOP FIVE DIVING SPOTS AROUND LIPARI

- **Punta Castagna** (difficult, depth 10m to 40m) A spectacular dive with a 10m white pumice platform interrupted by multicoloured channels
- **Secca del Bagno** (difficult, depth 40m to 45m) A breathtaking collection of colourful walls that are swathed with schools of technicolour fish
- **Pietra Menalda** (medium, depth 18m to 40m) See the home of octopuses, eel, groupers and other sea critters on the southern side of the island
- **Pietra del Bagno** (all levels, 20m to 40m) Circumnavigate the Bagno rock, while witnessing colourful rock surfaces and sea life
- **La Parete dei Gabbiani** (medium, 20m to 45m) An almost black 'n' white dive: the black lava rock is streaked with white pumice stone, hiding cracks that are home to lobsters

Just before you reach Lipari Town from the eastern side is the island's best beach, **Spiaggia di Vinci**, a peaceful pebbled cove with wonderful clean waters for swimming in. You'll need to make an effort to get here, so it's not a place for a quick dip. From the main road, watch out for the sign down to the beach. You'll have to leave your car/scooter after some 150m and walk down for about 10 to 15 minutes through an idyllic landscape of long grass, flowers and cacti. There's not a peep of traffic or any kind of noise down here; perfect if you want a quiet day on the beach. Alternatively, get a boat to drop you off (and pick you up). There's a little hut that serves food and drinks, or just bring your own picnic.

Activities

Snorkelling and scuba diving are incredibly popular, given the crystal-clear waters. For information on courses or to rent equipment, contact **Diving Center La Gorgonia** (☎ 090 981 26 16; www.lagorgoniadiving.it; Salita San Giuseppe, Marina Corta; single dive/basic beginner's course €32/60; mask & fin per day €10). If taking your first scuba course you will need a medical certificate from your doctor to say you are in good health.

Tours

Gruppo di Navigazione (☎ 090 982 22 37; www.navigazioni.regina.com; Via Garibaldi; Stromboli by night €35, Alicudi & Filicudi €40; ☎ tours Mar-Oct) conducts boat tours of and to all the islands, including one to Stromboli to see the Sciarra del Fuoco (Trail of Fire).

You can take excursions from **Da Massimo** (☎ 090 981 17 14, 3332986624; www.damassimo.it; Via Maurolico 2; Stromboli by night €35, Alicudi & Filicudi €45, Panarea €30; ☎ tours Mar-Oct). It also hires boats and dinghies. Another outlet is **Roberto Foti** (☎ 090

981 13 70; www.robortofoti.it in Italian; Via Francesco Crispi 31; motorised rubber dinghy 3-/6-seater per day €70/120).

Sleeping

Lipari provides plenty of options for a comfortable stay. However, prices increase on average by 30% in July and August and you may have to commit to a multiday stay and/or half board. The low (October to March) and high (July and August) season prices for a double room are given here as they vary so wildly.

In peak season, if all else fails, the staff at the tourist office will billet new arrivals in private homes on the island. The touts (who swarm around the port when you arrive) usually also have decent rooms in private houses. To rent an apartment contact the tourist office for a list of establishments.

BUDGET

The *affittacamere* (rooms for rent) operators renting furnished rooms are a good deal (you usually have use of a kitchen).

Baia Unci (☎ 090 981 19 09; www.baiaunci.com; Marina Garibaldi 2, Località Canneto; per person €7-12, per tent €7-13.50; ☎ 15 Mar-15 Oct) The island's only camp site is at Canneto, about 3km north of Lipari Town and accessible by bus from the Esso service station at Marina Lunga. It has sites underneath shady eucalyptus trees (although the road runs nearby) and there is a self-service restaurant. Reserve for August.

Casa Vittorio (☎ 090 981 15 23; www.casavittorio.it in Italian; Vico Sparviero 15; r per person €18-40) These basic furnished rooms are in a tiny alley off Via Garibaldi near Marina Corta. You'll find the owner at Via Garibaldi 78, on the way from

(Continued from page 156)

Marina Corta to the town centre. Some rooms sleep up to five people and there is a communal kitchen and two terraces with views.

our pick **Diana Brown** (☎ 090 981 25 84; www.diana.brown.it; Vico Himeria 3; s €30-80, d €40-100; ☎) Diana Brown's spotless, bright and comfortable rooms (some with small kitchens) are the best budget choice on the island. The B&B is tucked behind Via Vittorio Emanuele in a small alleyway. South Africa-born Diana is a fount of local information. She also does laundry (for longer stays) and operates a book exchange.

MIDRANGE

Enzo Il Negro (☎ 090 981 31 63; www.enzoilnegro.altervista.org; Via Garibaldi 29; s €40-60, d €60-130; ☎) Enzo Il Negro has clean, comfortable rooms with traditional tiled floors, good bathrooms and little fridges. All rooms have a balcony, but it's the roof terrace that's the spectacular feature – overlook the little marina while you have breakfast.

Hotel Oriente (☎ 090 981 14 93; www.hotelorientelipari.com; Via G Marconi 35; s €40-80, d €60-130; ☎) An eccentric joint, full of funny, bizarre and often scary bric-a-brac that crowds the reception. The rooms are minimal in terms of décor, but each has a little porch in the lush garden that's bursting with jasmine and hibiscus bushes. There are large rooms for families too.

our pick **Casajanca** (☎ 090 988 02 22; www.casajanca.it; Marina Garibaldi 115, Località Canneto; d €60-200; ☎) You'll struggle to find a more charming hotel on the whole of Lipari. Once the home of Aeolian poet Ruccio Carbone, it has only 10 rooms, all of which are decorated in an impeccably stylish mix of antiques and French countryside style. The dappled courtyard is a relaxing place to enjoy breakfast and it hides a natural thermal water pool that's perfect for winter stays. Run by Silvia and Massimo, Casajanca is located just behind the waterfront at Canneto.

Pensione Neri (☎ 090 981 14 13; www.pensioneneri.it; Via G Marconi 43; d €70-130; ☎) Although a touch expensive, this patrician pink villa is conveniently located right in the historic centre. It also has views over the archaeological park from its balconies. The interior is decorated in typical Aeolian style and feels like someone's home.

Villa Diana (☎ 090 981 14 03; www.villadiana.com; Via Tufo 1; s €40-75, d €75-130; ☎) An old Aeolian house, bought by the Swiss artist Edwin Hunziker in

the 1950s, was renovated into this lovely hotel. It stands above Lipari Town in a garden of citrus and olive trees and there are lovely views from its terrace. The artist's family still owns and runs it in the same bohemian spirit.

Residence Alberghiere Eolie (☎ 090 981 70 47; www.residenceeolie.it; Corso Vittorio Emanuele 101; s €65-90, d €90-150; ☎) Brilliantly located off the main street with an attractive terracotta courtyard, the rooms here are spacious (though lacking in character a little) and with views of the archaeological park. There are apartments too (per person €40 to €70) and a solarium on the rooftop terrace. The service is friendly and helpful.

Hotel Carasco (☎ 090 981 16 05; www.carasco.it; Porto Delle Genti; s €60-136, d €80-220; ☎ Apr-Oct; ☎) The Carasco's a real mixed bag. It has an undeniably wonderful location, right on a cliff edge, a large pool and its own private jetty. But it is inconveniently located for the town and restaurants and could do with a facelift.

TOP END

Villa Meligunis (☎ 090 981 24 26; www.villameligunis.it; Via Marte 7; s €110-240, d €150-300; ☎) A converted 18th-century villa, the Meligunis is Lipari's top hotel, offering luxurious accommodation, great facilities and a scenic rooftop terrace. Diving and water sports can also be arranged at reception.

Hotel Giardino sul Mare (☎ 090 981 10 04; www.giardinosulmare.it; Via Maddalena 65; d €196-300; ☎ Mar-Nov; ☎) An attractive small hotel with chichi décor – cane furniture and the like. The poolside terrace, situated on a cliff edge, is fabulous. The hotel is family-run and has a friendly atmosphere.

Eating

The waters of the archipelago abound with fish, including tuna, mullet, cuttlefish and sole, all of which end up on restaurant tables at the end of the day. Try *pasta all'eoliana*, a simple blend of the island's excellent capers with olive oil and basil. Swordfish is a particular favourite and you can also find 'black' risotto (rice stained with the dye of ink fish).

The local wine is malvasia, which has a DOC (*denominazione di origine controllata*) accreditation and a sweet taste of honey (see p51).

Many restaurants close at the end of October for the winter season.

(Continued on page 165)

RESTAURANTS

La Piazzetta (☎ 090 981 25 22; off Via Vittorio Emanuele behind Pasticceria Subba; pizza €4-7; ☹️ closed for lunch Sep-Jun) A popular pizzeria restaurant that has served the likes of Audrey Hepburn. Great location and lively atmosphere.

La Cambusa (☎ 349 476 60 61; Via Garibaldi 72; meals €20-25) A tiny one-room restaurant with good, unpretentious cooking that strives for a homemade feeling. Although it specialises in fish it also does mean pasta and lasagne.

La Nassa (☎ 090 981 13 19; Via G Franza; meals €25-30; ☹️ closed Mon Nov-Mar) Genuine Aeolian cuisine is served in this family-run trattoria away from the main drag. Favourites include fish such as *cernia*, *sarago* and *denticia*, or try the Aeolian sausages, which are a house speciality.

Trattoria d'Oro (☎ 090 981 13 04; Via Umberto I 28-32; meals €25-30; ☹️ closed Sun Nov-Mar) This is a good small restaurant with fresh seafood dishes. Popular with the locals.

Le Macine (☎ 090 982 23 87; Pianoconte; meals €35-40) This Slow Food-awarded restaurant is located outside Lipari just as you enter Pianoconte. Creative Aeolian cooking includes fish in *ghiotta* sauce: a blend of olive oil, capers, tomatoes, garlic and basil. Lobster-filled ravioli or the fresh grilled swordfish are great too. The presentation is nicely low-key, but the portions could be bigger.

our pick Kasbah (☎ 090 981 10 75; Via Maurolico 25; pizzas €8, meals €35-40; ☹️ 7pm-3am Mar-Oct) The Kasbah is a sleek place with a North African décor and a fantastic back garden where candlelit dinners take place under canopies. The food is excellent – this place does some of the best pizzas in Sicily (try the *tre formaggi* – mild cheeses with basil and fresh tomatoes) and delicacies such as *linguine con bottarga* (linguine with dried pressed fish roe), almonds and fennel.

Filippino (☎ 090 981 10 02; Piazza Municipio; meals €45-50; ☹️ closed Mon Oct-Mar) Occupying a big chunk of Piazza Municipio, this is Lipari's most classy restaurant. The menu is based on old-fashioned Sicilian cooking and is full of surprising tastes. Dress appropriately and book ahead.

E Pulera (☎ 090 981 11 58; Via Diana, Filippino; meals €45-50; ☹️ evenings only Jun-Sep) You can dine in the middle of a garden at Filippino's popular summer restaurant.

CAFÉS

Pasticceria Subba (☎ 090 981 13 52; Via Vittorio Emanuele 92) Open since 1930, this is a historic café where you can enjoy a delicious selection of mouthwatering Sicilian pastries and cakes.

SELF-CATERING

People with access to a kitchen can shop for supplies at the grocery shops and **SISA supermarket** (Via Vittorio Emanuele).

Drinking

Most of the town's nightlife is concentrated in and around the Marina Corta, where there are a handful of bars with outdoor seating. Try **Il Gabbiano** (☎ 090 981 14 71; Marina Corta) and **Al Pescatore** (☎ 090 981 15 37; Marina Corta) – both are popular places for people-watching.

If you fancy a late-night drink or want to be in the right place for crowd gazing during *passaggiata* (evening stroll), **Bar La Precchia** (☎ 090 981 13 03; Via Vittorio Emanuele 191) is a local favourite. It has an enormous menu of drinks, from *café frappe* and fruit milkshakes to cocktails and wine. In summer it's open until 3am and often has live music.

Shopping

Lipari is full of shops, particularly jewellery shops selling (sadly) truckloads of precious coral alongside all manner of obsidian and turquoise trinkets. There are also a number of great gourmet delicatessens: a couple as you walk up Via Garibaldi from Marina Corta, and the tempting **Fratelli Laise** (☎ 090 981 27 31; Via Vittorio Emanuele 118), which sells fresh fruit and veg and a whole range of wines, sweets, *anis* (aniseed) biscuits, pâtés, capers and oil.

Getting There & Away

The main port is Marina Lunga where you will find the main **Siremar** (☎ 090 981 13 12) and **Ustica Lines** (☎ 090 981 24 48) ticket offices. There is also another ticket booth at the Marina Corta hydrofoil terminal. NGI Traghetti is located at Marina Lunga.

For details of ferry and hydrofoil departures for Milazzo and the other islands, see p151 and p151.

Getting Around

BUS

Autobus Urso Guglielmo (☎ 090 981 12 62, 090 981 10 26; Via Cappuccini 9) runs an efficient and frequent service around the island, departing from just

near the Esso service station at Marina Lunga. You can pick up timetables from the office. There are frequent departures for Canneto (€1.30, 30 minutes, nine daily), Acquacalda, Porticello and Quattrocchi. During July and August the service increases. If you plan on using the bus a lot buy a booklet of tickets (six/10 for €6/9.80) to use when you like.

The company also offers tours of the island (€3.70, one hour, departures 9.30am, 11.30am and 5pm from 1 July to 30 September), which are a good way of seeing the sights if your time is limited.

CAR & MOTORCYCLE

Roberto Foti (☎ 090 981 23 52; www.robortofoti.it; Via F Crispi 31; scooters per day €15-30, Fiat Panda/Uno per 24hr €45/55) rents out scooters and cars. Otherwise, there are half a dozen rental outfits by the port.

VULCANO

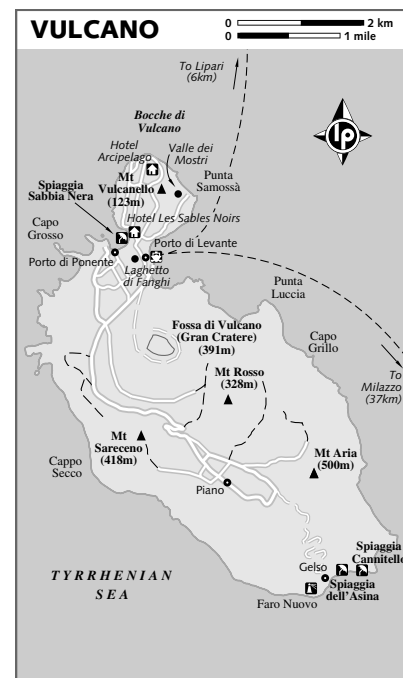
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Only 1km south of Lipari, across the Bocche di Vulcano, sits the steaming crater of Fossa di Vulcano (or Gran Cratere, 'Large Crater') on Vulcano island. Worshipped by the Italian jet set for its therapeutic mud baths and hot springs, this little island is a great place to spend a day or two, enjoying the sulphur baths, taking a boat around the wild coast, and climbing up to the sleeping crater to see the steaming yellow sulphuric rocks. It's not a place to come and enjoy traditional sights – Vulcano is all about taking the time to relax and enjoy the tranquil beaches at Gelso and Cannitello.

Orientation

Boats dock at the Porto di Levante. To the right, as you face the island, is the small Vulcanello peninsula. To reach the mud baths turn right and walk right along the *lungomare* (seafront promenade); the pools are at the end, hidden behind a small hillock. All facilities are concentrated between the Porto di Levante and the Porto di Ponente, where you will find the Spiaggia Sabbia Nera (Black Sand Beach), a nice long stretch of black sand.

Of Vulcano's three volcanoes, the oldest lies on the island's southern tip and was already extinct in ancient times, although the fumarole constantly emits a wisp of sulphurous gases.



Information

EMERGENCY

Emergency Doctor (☎ 090 985 22 20; Via Lentia)
Police (☎ 090 985 21 10)

MEDICAL SERVICES

Bonarrigo Pharmacy (☎ 090 985 22 44; Via Favoloro 1)

MONEY

Banco di Sicilia (☎ 090 985 23 35; port area; ☹️ 8.30am-1.30pm & 2.45-3.45pm Mon-Fri Jun-Sep only) Has an ATM.

Thermessa Agency (☎ 090 985 22 30; Via Provinciale) Changes money and sells tickets for Ustica Lines hydrofoils.

POST

Post Office (☎ 090 985 30 02; Contrada Piano)

TOURIST INFORMATION

Tourist Office (☎ 090 985 20 28; Via Provinciale 41; ☹️ 8am-2pm Jun-Oct) A domelike building on the main street, 50m back from the dock. It provides information on rented rooms.

A SMELLY PIT OR NATURE'S HEALING SPA?

The *fanghi* is a large natural pool of thick, warm, sulphurous mud water that has long been considered an excellent treatment for all kinds of rheumatic pains and skin diseases. It's also incredibly smelly in certain places, sending people running and thinking of rotten eggs. Those with sulphite allergies are at risk here, so if you know you suffer, stay away.

If you're on good terms with life's essential element and don't mind smelling funny for a few days, rolling around in the mud can be a tantalising experience. Dip into the warm, pale green water, and mind you don't step on any of the hot air vents that spring from the ground on the way into the pool – they can scald your feet, so take flip-flops.

Once you have had time to relax in the muddy water, get some soft clay from the bottom of the pool and apply it to your skin (body and face). Don't let any of the mud get in your eyes as the sulphur is acidic and can be damaging to the retina (keep your hair mud-free too). Wait for the clay mask to dry, wash it off in the pool, and run to the natural spa around the corner, where there are hot, bubbling springs in a small natural sea-water pool. You're advised to spend another five to 10 minutes lolling about. Finally, take a shower (get a token in advance, for €1) and make sure not to use your favourite fluffy towel – if you're staying in a hotel, the staff can usually provide you with 'special' *fanghi* towels. The same goes for your swimsuit – wear something that you don't mind destroying because once the smell gets in it's near impossible to get rid of.

Remember to remove watches and jewellery with stones, as the mud will ruin them. Experts have advised that prolonged immersion can be bad for you on account of the pool's slight radioactivity. You should not stay in for more than 10 or 15 minutes and pregnant women should avoid it altogether.

Have fun!

Sights & Activities

PORTO DI LEVANTE & AROUND

Once you've disembarked, head over to the **Laghetto di Fanghi** (admission €2, groups of 10 €1; ☞ 7am-11pm) mud baths. They're right (north) of the dock at the bottom of a *faraglione* (a long stone finger jutting up into the sky).

Just next to the baths is the cone of Vulcanello, where you can see the **Valle dei Mostri** (Valley of the Monsters), a group of wind-eroded dark rocks that have formed grotesque shapes.

FOSSA DI VULCANO

The island's other main attraction is climbing Fossa di Vulcano (391m). The walk up to the crater is self-evident. Follow the intermittent signs for 'Al Cratere' (or ask for directions), which take you south out of the port area along Via Provinciale. About 500m further, a track slopes off to the left (not well signposted; look out for a gravel track) which leads up to the crater. Before you start the ascent you'll have to buy a ticket (€3) and take note of the official plaque (in four languages), which announces the dangers of the crater. If you proceed (which everyone does) you won't have any problem with officialdom but you do need to be aware that this is a 'sleeping' volcano.

It's about one hour's scramble to the lowest point of the crater's edge (290m). The going is a bit tough in the first part of the climb, where the ground is covered with black sandy soil, so it feels as if you're walking uphill on a sandy beach. The sand turns clay-like further up, with the final part of the path becoming quite rocky. There's a bit of dust blowing around, so it's a good idea to have a tissue handy. The way is also very exposed, so make sure you wear strong, closed shoes, apply sunscreen and bring plenty of water, though there is a small café halfway up the path, which sells water, juice, ice cream and coffee. When you've reached the top, you can lean over a ledge and look into the main crater. The bottom of the volcano is clearly visible less than 50m below. A steep trail descends (it takes three minutes to reach the bottom) and many go down for a walk along the hard crater floor.

For stunning 360-degree views of all the islands lined up to the north, walk clockwise around the crest of the crater. Along the path you will pass fumaroles that constantly vent gases. Don't walk too close to them as the temperature of the escaping gas can be searing.

Though it's not really necessary since the climb is not very tough, you can hire a guide. Contact the **Gruppo Nazionale Vulcanologia** (☞ 090

985 25 28) or **Gruppo Trekking Vulcano** (☞ 339 418 58 75). The latter organises daily hikes up the volcano as well as other treks, including an ascent of Stromboli (€50) and snorkelling outings. It has a stand by the restaurant Da Maurizio (see p170).

PORTO DI PONENTE & AROUND

On the far side of the peninsula from Porto di Levante at **Porto di Ponente** is the **Spiazzia Sabbia Nera** (Black Sand Beach), a smooth, sandy beach, with stunning *faraglioni* jutting into the sky. Paddleboats are usually available for hire on the beach (€8 for one hour).

PIANO & CAPO GRILLO

Piano is the plain where most of Vulcano's population lives, and from there you can get to Capo Grillo, where there are breathtaking views of the coast and out to sea. **Scaffadi** has seven buses from Porto di Levante to Piano and Capo Grillo between 8am and 6pm Monday to Saturday (two on Sunday and public holidays).

GELSO

On the island's southern coast is Gelso, a gorgeous little port with a couple of black-sand beaches that are never crowded. There's a little eatery here (see p170) and if you fall in love with the isolation, peace and quiet, you can rent an apartment (see p170). Most people come here for the day only, in order to enjoy the splendid beaches. There are two excellent tranquil beaches near Gelso, approached by signposted steep dirt tracks (pedestrians only) that branch off before the town. The first crescent sweep of black sand and inviting waters is **Spiazzia dell'Asina** (Donkey Beach); the second, which is surrounded by lush, almost tropical greenery, is **Spiazzia Cannitello**. Both have a rudimentary bar/café, where you can also hire sun lounges (€8) and umbrellas (€5). Keep in mind that both these beaches are loved for their tranquillity and take a bit of time getting to and from the main port.

To get to Gelso and the beaches by public transport is pretty limiting, so hiring a scooter is a much better idea. The **Vulcania Tour bus** (€1.95; ☞ departs Porto di Levante 10.15am, 11.35am & 4.30pm, 15 Jun-15 Sep) transports passengers up and down the steep curves (20 minutes). If you are going to either of the beaches, ask the driver to let you off at the dirt track. Buses from Gelso leave at 11am, 12.10pm and 5pm, picking up

passengers from the pier. Boat tours of the island also call in here and are happy to take passengers on a tour, but disembark at Gelso for €10. A taxi from Porto Levante costs a whopping €30.

Tours

Gente di Mare (☞ 3334577446; Via Comunale Levante; boat trip per person €15)

Gioielli del Mare (☞ 090 985 21 70; Porto di Levante; 2hr tour per person €15) The proprietor of this outfit organises bus tours around the island in his red transit Ford. Make a booking and wait for a group of 10 people to form.

Pino & Giuseppe (☞ 090 985 24 19; Via Comunale Levante; boat trip per person €15) In front of the tobacconist.

Sleeping

Vulcano's hotels are mostly on the large side, and it's worth staying here mainly if you want to take advantage of the mud baths or the quiet beaches at Gelso. The best hotels are situated around the Spiaggia Sabbia Nera.

Camping Togo Togo (☞ 090 985 21 28; www.campingtogo.it; Porto Ponente; per person/site €10/15; ☞ Apr-Sep) This decent camp site at the end of the Spiaggia Sabbia Nera is shaded with eucalyptus trees and has a tranquil atmosphere. There's a cinema, solarium, bar and pizzeria for supplies and entertainment.

Hotel Torre (☞ 090 985 23 42; Via Favoloro 1; d €40-80; ☞) This good-value hotel has large rooms that all come with a kitchen and a terrace. Its proximity to the beach at Laghetto di Fanghi may prove too potent for some.

Hotel Arcipelago (☞ 090 985 20 02; Vulcanello; s €58-102, d €116-204; ☞ Mar-Oct; ☞) This is one of the smaller big hotels, 2km from the village on Vulcanello. Bright, breezy rooms have views over the gardens and sea. Those on the seaward side have good views of all seven islands.

Eolian Hotel (☞ 090 985 21 51; www.eolianhotel.com; Via Porto di Ponente; s €62-88, d €124-176; ☞ Mar-Oct; ☞) The Eolian offers small bungalows dotted throughout a landscaped garden. The rooms are fine but not fantastic; the real draw is the excellent facilities, including tennis, water sports, boat trips and even a private sulphurous pool.

Hotel Les Sables Noirs (☞ 090 985 24 54; www.framon-hotels.com; Porto di Ponente; s €110-140, d €152-256; ☞ Apr-Oct; ☞) The best hotel on the island, with a beach-front location overlooking the Spiaggia Sabbia Nera. The large pool is surrounded by gardens and palms and the

rooms have flower-bedecked balconies. The restaurant's panoramic terrace is fantastic at sunset.

Nando e Carla Marraro (☎ 339 711 77 95; Gelso; 2-bed apt per week Jun & Jul, Sep €600, Aug €1400; ☹ Jun-Sep) Gelso's only accommodation is a modern apartment that can sleep from four to six people, overlooking the little port from its gorgeous terrace. Owned by a lovely couple, it's a heavenly location and fantastic value for a group in the low-season months. Booking in advance is essential.

Eating & Drinking

Vulcano's eating scene is pretty poor, though there are a couple of good picks.

our pick Ritrovo Remigio (Porto di Levante; cannolo €1.80) This place sells the best *cannoli* ever. Fresh, with the perfect contrast of soft ricotta and crispy biscuit, it'll send you *cannoli* crazy. Don't leave Vulcano without getting at least one. It's right by the port, as you get off the ferry.

Cantine Stevenson (☎ 090 985 32 47; Via Porto di Levante; pizza €6-8) Like some ill-advised transplant of Scottish décor onto a Sicilian island, Cantine Stevenson is, visually, sorely out of place. But take a tippie in James Stevenson's wine cellars and you'll be thanking the Scotsman who bought most of Vulcano in the 19th century with a view to exploiting its natural resources. He also planted the first vineyards.

our pick Trattoria Maniaci Pina (☎ 090 985 22 42; Gelso; meals €20-22; ☹ closed Nov-Easter) Gelso's only trattoria is as traditional as they get, with blue chequered tablecloths and wooden tables. The food is delicious and simple, with a couple of daily changing *primi* and *secondi*. It has the best atmosphere of any restaurant on the island.

Da Maurizio (☎ 090 985 24 26; Via Porto di Levante; tourist menu €15.50, meals €30-35; ☹ closed Nov-Easter) This pleasant restaurant in an attractive garden has a good reputation on the island. Try the excellent cuttlefish pasta.

Da Vincenzino (☎ 090 985 20 16; Via Porto di Levante 125; meals €30-35; ☹ closed Nov-Apr) Just near Da Maurizio, this place is close to the port and OK for lunch or dinner. The service is friendly and the portions generous.

Caffè Piazzetta (☎ 090 985 32 67; Piazzetta Faraglione; ice cream from €1.50) This large outdoor café is convenient for a drink or gelato. In the summer, music booms out from the sound system

and in July and August there is live music in the evenings.

Getting There & Away

Vulcano is an intermediate stop between Milazzo and Lipari and a good number of vessels go both ways throughout the day. See p151 for details.

Getting Around

You can hire boats on the island. One company that offers this service is **Centro Nautico Baia di Levante** (☎ 090 982 21 97, 3393372795; zodiac 4-8-person per day €60/80). You will find it in a shed on the beach to the left of the hydrofoil dock.

Scooters, bikes and small motorised cars can be rented from **Da Paolo** (☎ 090 985 21 12) or **Sprint** (☎ 090 985 22 08) at the intersection of Via Provinciale and Via Porto di Levante. Scooters cost around €25 per day although this varies with season and demand. Cars cost around €50 per day.

See p169 for details of travel on Scaffadi buses. Call ☎ 3396005750 (24 hours) if you need a taxi.

SALINA

pop 2300 / elev 962m

It's striking how, despite their proximity, each of the Aeolian Islands is so different from the others. This little island is unique: its twin craters (Monte dei Porri and Monte Fossa delle Felci) are lushly wooded, with wild flowers, thick yellow gorse bushes and serried ranks of vines carpeting the island in vibrant colours and cool greens. Its high coastal cliffs plunge into dramatic beaches and its stylish and quiet towns are a world away from the tourist bustle of Lipari. And it's not only that Salina is different from the rest of the islands, it's incredibly diverse on its own (and for its size). Santa Marina Salina, the island's main port and town, is worlds away from Lingua, its closest neighbour. If you take the winding road around the island to Malfa or Rinella you'll find another two villages that have their own atmosphere and style.

Although it owes its modern name to the *saline* (saltworks) of Lingua, Salina is defined and shaped by the two volcanoes that gave it its ancient Greek name of Dydime, meaning 'double'. Despite being extinct since antiquity, previous eruptions combined with plenty of water (Salina is the only island that has natural springs) have rendered the island the most



fertile in the archipelago. The famous Aeolian *capperi* (capers) grow plentiful here, as do the grapes used to make malvasia wine.

Orientation

Boats dock at Santa Marina Salina, where you will find most accommodation, or at Rinella, a fishing hamlet on the southwest coast. The other main villages on the island are Malfa, on the northern coast, and Leni, slightly inland from Rinella.

The road south from Santa Marina Salina port leads to Lingua (see right), and the buses for the rest of the island depart from the bus stop at the corner of the main square.

Information

In summer tourist booths operate at Rinella, Malfa and Santa Marina Salina; the rest of the year, contact the Lipari bureau. You will find public phones at the island's ports.

Banco Antoveneta – Malfa (Via Provinciale 2; ☎ 8.40am-1.20pm Mon-Sat).

Banco Antoveneta – Santa Marina Salina (Via Lungomare Notar Giuffrè; ☎ 8.40am-1.20pm Mon-Sat) To the right along the *lungomare*; has an ATM.

Emergency Doctor (☎ 090 984 40 05)

Farmacia Cucinotta (☎ 090 980 90 53; Via Libertà, Santa Marina Salina)

Police (☎ 090 984 30 19)

Post Office (☎ 090 984 30 28; Via Risorgimento, Santa Marina Salina) Can also change money.

Salina Computers (Via Risorgimento, Santa Marina Salina; per hr €6; ☎ 10am-2.30pm & 6-8.30pm Mon-Sat, 6-8.30pm Sun) Half a dozen computers and a fast connection.

Sights

SANTA MARINA SALINA

Santa Marina Salina is Salina's main port and town. The town is bisected by the main street, Via Risorgimento, which is lined by gorgeous Aeolian houses – varicoloured cubes with round windows – design shops, some cafés and a few *alimentari* (grocery shops). It runs parallel to the *lungomare*, off Piazza Santa Marina and the port. If you turn right from the docking area and head along the *lungomare*, you can swim off the large-pebble beach (though the pebbles are somewhat stabbing). Santa Marina is a great base from which to explore the rest of island.

MADONNA DEL TERZITO & MONTE FOSSA DELLE FELCI

If you're feeling energetic, climb the **Fossa delle Felci** (962m) volcano and visit the nature reserve. The **Santuario della Madonna del Terzito** (Sanctuary of the Madonna of Terzito) is at Valdichiesa, in the valley separating the two volcanoes. It is a place of pilgrimage, particularly around the Feast of the Assumption on 15 August. From the church you can follow the track (signposted) all the way to the peak (about two hours).

Along the way you'll see plenty of colourful flora, including wild violets, asparagus and a plant known locally as *cipudazza* (Latin *Urginea maritima*), which was sold to the Calabrians to make soap but used locally as mouse poison! Once you've reached the top (the last 100m are particularly tough), you have unparalleled views of the entire archipelago. You can get to the sanctuary by taking a bus from Santa Marina Salina to Rinella or Leni, and asking the driver to let you off at the sanctuary.

LINGUA

Only a 3km walk along the main road or a bus ride from Santa Marina Salina, Lingua is a romantic seaside village with some hotels – one notably luxurious – a few trattorie and a small beach. Its *lungomare* street, Via Manzoni, runs from the end of Via Umberto, which takes you into the village. Lingua's houses are Aeolian cubes, painted with whitewash and light sky-blues, with bunches of fresh tomatoes and drying herbs hanging outside. There's a salt lagoon near the lighthouse and the beach, and it is this that gave Salina its name. It's a beautiful sight at dusk.

A TASTE OF HONEY

Salina's fortune is its freshwater springs. It is the only Aeolian island with natural water sources, the result of which is the startling greenery. The islanders have put this to good use, producing their own style of wine, malvasia. It is thought that the Greeks brought the grapes to the islands in 588 BC, and the name is certainly derived from Monenvasia, a Greek city.

The wine is still produced according to traditional techniques using the malvasia grape and the now-rare red Corinthian grape. The harvest generally occurs in the second week of September when the grapes are picked and laid out to dry on woven cane mats. The drying process is crucial; the grapes must dry out enough to concentrate the sweet flavour but not too much, which would caramelise them.

The result is a dark golden or light amber wine which tastes, some say, of honey. It is usually drunk in very small glasses and goes well with cheese, sweet biscuits and almond pastries.

To experience a working vineyard you can stay at the luxurious **Capo Faro** (☎ 090 984 43 30; www.capofaro.it; Via Faro 3, Malfa; d €190-290; 🏠), a small resort of Aeolian-style cottages on the 13-acre Tasca d'Almerita vineyard. Aside from its beautiful location and elegant rooms, you can sample the home-brew and explore the vineyards.

You can also head from Lingua by path up to Monte Fossa delle Felci (follow the signs for Brigantino). Corn and barley are the main crops around Brigantino, but as soon as you start climbing (take the path to the right), you'll see plenty of olive trees that eventually give way to vineyards. A century ago the hill-tops were covered in vines, but local industry has suffered greatly at the hands of competition from the Sicilian mainland, leaving only a few cultivators of the famed malvasia wine.

MALFA

If you're after a relaxing time in stylish, elegant and/or luxurious hotels, where you can read, get pampered and have a swim, Malfa is the place for you. Totally different from Santa Marina, Lingua and Rinella, Malfa is built on a cliff that overlooks the crashing waves, and its atmosphere is quiet and reserved. The main road snakes down into town and the wonderful hotels are scattered along its narrow streets. Malfa is the largest town on the island and has a small shingle beach, backed by destroyed fisherfolk's houses. It never gets really crowded.

The **Museo dell'Emigrazione Eoliana** (Emigration Museum; ☎ 090 984 43 72; admission free; 🕒 9am-1pm Mon-Fri Jun-Sep) in Palazzo Marchetti gives visitors an idea of the scale and effect of emigration from the Aeolian Islands.

If you come to Malfa by bus, you'll be dropped off at the top of the town, by the church, but the bus coming back will pick you up just below Hotel Punta Scario (see opposite).

POLLARA & RINELLA

Don't miss a trip to the beach at Pollara, the setting for much of the film *Il Postino*. The climb down is quite tricky but the beach itself with its backdrop of volcanic cliffs is absolutely unbeatable (visit in the afternoon as the beach is in shadow in the morning). If you're coming here by bus, get off at the stop before Pollara village, where the steps take you down to the beach. Otherwise it's quite a hike from Pollara village.

The road to Rinella spirals all the way down to the tiny port. From there, a small black-sand grin of a beach extends to the side, and above the beach the miniature village clambers up the same hills you just descended. The village is a picture of beauty, with salmon pinks, pearly whites and sea-blue houses huddled together. Rinella is a popular underwater spearfishing spot (for information ask at the tourist booths). If the sandy beach gets too cramped, you can always go to the rocky spot near the Campeggio Tre Pini camp site or walk past the camp site for 20 minutes along the paved sea-view path to the other big (large-pebble) beach. You can use the bus to get here, or take one of the hydrofoils from Santa Marina Salina.

Activities

Eolie Adventure (☎ 090 984 41 34, 3334699530; www.eolieadventure.com; information stand at Santa Marina harbour during summer; hike per person 1-day €20, 3-day to Filicudi incl tent & sleeping bag €75) organises excellent nature hikes on Salina as well as the other islands. If you feel adventurous you can take

the wonderful hike to Filicudi, which involves crossing a lava trail.

Sleeping & Eating

SANTA MARINA SALINA

Salina remains relatively undisturbed by mass tourism, generally offering only upmarket accommodation in a few small hotels. The majority of restaurants are located in these hotels although it is possible to eat in them if you are not a guest by making a reservation.

Hotel Bellavista (☎ 090 984 30 09; Via Risorgimento 8; s €70-110, d €90-190; 🕒 Apr-Sep; 🏠) This hotel has panoramic views of the sea and three-star facilities.

Hotel Mercanti di Mare (☎ 090 984 35 36; www.hotelmercantidimare.it; Piazza Santa Marina 9; d €100-180; 🏠) A new outfit that follows the stylish line of Salina's hotels, this is a gorgeous white cubic building, decorated in the typical Aeolian style of curving walls and minimalist décor. The rooms have good wrought-iron beds and some have views of the sea. The lovely terrace is perfect for relaxing in the evening.

Pensione Mamma Santina (☎ 090 984 30 54; www.mammasantina.it; Via Sanità 40; d €110-210; 🏠 🍷) A family atmosphere, colourful rooms with tiled floors and great views make Mamma Santina one of the favourites. Head for Via Risorgimento (the narrow main street) and walk north for a few hundred metres. Its highly regarded restaurant has been featured in *Cucina Italiana*.

Though the choice of restaurants is limited, the food is great.

ourpick Cucinotta Rita (☎ 090 984 35 23; Via Risorgimento 6; meals €25) Salina's best restaurant is this small place at the end of Via Risorgimento. Sit at one of the elegantly set tables alfresco, while the attentive waiters serve fantastic food such as stuffed squid, grilled swordfish sprinkled with parsley, and hearty chocolate cake desserts. You can also pop in here for breakfast – the croissants are freshly baked.

Portobello (☎ 090 984 31 25; Via Bianchi 1; Santa Marina; meals €25-30; 🕒 Tue-Sun) Sit on the terrace overlooking the sea and tuck into the *spaghetti al fuoco* (fiery spaghetti) in this excellent restaurant.

LINGUA

A Cannata (☎ 090 984 31 61; www.acannata.it; Via Umberto 1; r per person €50) Situated on a wild, green bluff, A Cannata has 10 simple rooms and some apartments in a nearby house. Its restaurant

has a Slow Food recommendation and focuses on fish and seafood, with a simple, down-to-earth approach (meals €25 to €30). You'd be advised to book in advance in summer.

ourpick La Salina Borgo di Mare (☎ 090 984 24 41; www.lasalinahotel.com; Via Manzoni; s €120-200, d €150-200; 🏠) A stunning new hotel built in the converted old saltworks complex, Borgo di Mare is divided into five low, cubic Aeolian buildings, all of which are connected by little paths in the fragrant gardens full of jasmine and hibiscus. The hotel is quiet and relaxing and the houses – whose traditional Aeolian style has been carefully preserved – are painted in light pastel colours. The rooms are luxurious and stylish, each with its own little terrace. It's right next to the large pebble beach – sunset swims are essential if you stay here.

Da Alfredo in Cucina (☎ 090 984 33 07; Via Pantano; meals €25-30) A new outfit run by the son of Alfredo, Lingua's masterly *granita* maker (of 'Da Alfredo' on Via Manzoni, around the corner). This is a simple and elegant restaurant with a large terrace where each table is lit by an individual overhanging light. It overlooks the salt lagoon and is tucked away from the bustle of the other restaurants and cafés. A wonderful addition to the village.

MALFA

ourpick Hotel Santa Isabel (☎ 090 984 40 18; www.santaisabel.it; Via Scalò 12; d €90-235; 🕒 Apr-Oct; 🏠) A white complex consisting of ten furnished apartments with one and two bedrooms, mezzanine sleeping areas and kitchenettes. The interiors are a blinding white with vibrant bedspreads and large black-and-white film stills covering a wall in each. The cliff-top position is best appreciated from the bar, where many nonguests come for aperitivi in the early evening.

Hotel Punta Scario (☎ 090 984 41 39; www.punta.scario.it; Via Scalò 8; d €100-150; 🏠) Another gorgeous Malfa hotel, the Punta Scario is simple, good-looking and with great views of the sea and Stromboli from its massive rooftop terrace.

ourpick Hotel Signum (☎ 090 984 42 22; www.hotelsignum.it; Via Scalò 15; d €110-240; 🏠 🍷) Surrounded by vineyards overlooking the sea, the Signum is the best hotel on Salina. The building is a series of interlinking Aeolian houses and the interior is decorated with antiques. The rooms cluster around the stunning swimming pool with its invisible edge and views straight out to smoking Stromboli.

RINELLA

Campeggio Tre Pini (☎ 090 980 91 55; www.trepini.com in Italian; Frazione Rinella-Leni; per tent/person €7.70/8; ☔ May-Sep) The island's only camp site has good amenities and the terraced sites overlook the sea. You can get here by ferry or hydrofoil (walk up and left from the port for about 100m), or by regular buses from Santa Marina. Reservations recommended in July and August.

Hotel L'Ariana (☎ 090 980 90 75; www.hotelariana.it; Via Rotabile 11; d €80-210) A patrician villa overlooking the sea at Rinella is the setting for this lovely little hotel. Its huge terrace is the place to be for malvasia-sipping sundowners as the sun sets on this side of the island. L'Ariana has a bar and restaurant and good deals on half/full board in summer.

Getting There & Away

Hydrofoils and ferries service Santa Marina Salina and Rinella. There are at least eight hydrofoil connections per day between Santa Marina Salina and the other islands and four daily from Rinella from 1 June to 30 September, including to/from Panarea (€6, 25 minutes, five daily) and Stromboli (€11.80, one hour, five daily). Service is reduced at other times.

Siremar (Santa Marina Salina ☎ 090 984 30 04; Rinella ☎ 090 980 91 70) has ticket booths at the harbours as does **Ustica Lines** (Santa Marina Salina ☎ 090 984 30 78; Rinella ☎ 090 980 92 33). For information on arrivals and departures from Milazzo, see p148.

Getting Around

Regular **Citis** (☎ 090 984 41 50) buses run from Santa Marina Salina to Lingua (€1.30), Malfa (€1.30), Rinella (€1.85), Pollara (€1.30), Valdichiesa and Leni (€1.85). Timetables are posted at the ports and around the island. If you're going to Rinella or Pollara from Santa Marina Salina, you'll have to change at Malfa, where the buses convene and take passengers on their particular routes.

Motorcycles and scooters can be hired from **Antonio Bongiorno** (☎ 090 984 34 09; Via Risorgimento 240, Santa Marina Salina; per day around €25). If you feel like hiring a scooter in Rinella (given the steepness of the road from here to the rest of the island, it's a good idea), check out **Eolian Service** (☎ 090 980 92 03; per day from €18) at the port.

Ask at the tourist office for hydrofoils between Santa Marina Salina and Rinella. Boats

are available for hire from June to August at **Nautica Levante** (☎ 090 984 30 83; Via Risorgimento, Santa Marina).

PANAREA

pop 320 / elev 421m

Tiny Panarea is 3km long and 2km wide and feels more like a Greek island with its adobe-style whitewashed houses. Exclusive and expensive, it is popular with the international jet set who come here for one reason only – Hotel Raya. In summer luxury yachts fill the tiny harbour while flocks of day-trippers dock at San Pietro.

Orientation & Information

The island's population lives almost exclusively on the eastern side of the island, in one of the three former hamlets of Ditella, San Pietro and Drauto, although you'll hardly notice the difference between them as they have all merged into one strip of tangled lanes and pretty seafront houses. Addresses here are approximate as the intimacy of the place makes them unnecessary – everyone knows everyone else by name, and even the *forestieri* (outsiders) are known by their place of origin. ('Oh, you mean that fellow from Turin who owns the fancy villa up past Piero's?')

All boats dock at San Pietro, where you'll also find most of the accommodation (very expensive in high season), plus an ATM and public phones.

There is a pharmacy, **Sparadino** (☎ 090 98 31 48; Via Iditella), and in a medical emergency call ☎ 090 98 30 40. You can only call the **police** (☎ 090 98 31 81) between June and September. A good online resource is www.amapanarea.it (in Italian).

Sights & Activities**AROUND THE ISLAND**

Head south to Punta Milazzese, about a 30-minute walk past a couple of beaches, to see the **Bronze Age village**, made up of 23 huts, which was discovered in 1948. It is reckoned that the headland here was inhabited as far back as the 14th century BC, while pottery found at the site shows distinctly Minoan influences, lending credence to the theory that there were ties between the islanders and the Cretans. The artefacts found here are on display in the Museo Archeologico Eoliano on Lipari (p153).

From the Punta Milazzese a set of steps leads down to the **Cala Junco**, a beautiful little cove where the swimming is excellent and the water a deep aquamarine. The island's other beach is to the north of Ditella, at the end of a track – just follow the signposts for **Spiaggia Fumarola**. The 'Stone Beach' here is isolated and a perfect place for a quiet swim, except in July and August, of course, when the ringing of mobile phones is incessant.

OFFSHORE

Panarea's own little archipelago consists of five tiny islets off the eastern shore, which can only be reached by boat (see opposite). The largest island, **Basiluzzo**, is also the furthest away and is given over to the cultivation of capers. At the back of the island, visible from land, is the impressive wreck of a Roman ship.

Nearest to Panarea is **Dattilo**, which has a pretty little beach called **Le Guglie**. Of the three islands south of Dattilo, you should make for **Lisca Bianca**, the one furthest away, where you can indulge in your own little spot of wreck-hunting if you're equipped with scuba gear. Contact **Amphibia** (☎ 090 98 33 11; Via Iditella, San Pietro, Panarea) to hire gear. Crossing the narrow channel from the islet of **Bottaro** (actually nothing more than a protruding rock) to Lisca Bianca, you will notice there is a small white beach on Lisca Bianca's southern side. Proceed left past the beach and continue around the sharp point of the island. Here, at a depth of perhaps 40m or 50m, you will find the wreck of an old English ship that sank in the 19th century. The last islet, **Lisca Nera**, lies south of Dattilo.

Sleeping & Eating

Finding accommodation on Panarea can be an expensive nightmare in July and August. Out of high season everything quietsens considerably and the prices drop dramatically.

Hotel La Piazza (☎ 090 98 31 54; www.hotelpiazza.it; Via San Pietro; s €115-265, d €155-325; ☔ ☎) Draped in bougainvillea and situated on the eastern side of the island, La Piazza offers exclusive and tranquil accommodation. Cool and elegant rooms, all with spectacular views of Caletta Bay, are full of rattan furnishings. There's also a gorgeous swimming pool terrace and an excellent restaurant.

Pensione Rodà (☎ 090 98 32 12; Via San Pietro; d €180-290) The first boarding house on the island opened just after WWII. The Rodà is located in

the centre of the island amid a pleasant garden setting and has a welcoming atmosphere.

Lisca Bianca (☎ 090 98 30 04; www.liscabianca.it; Via Lani 1; d with/without sea view €310/280; ☔ Apr-Oct) One of the loveliest places to stay on Panarea, Lisca Bianca's prices drop by over 50% in the low season. With whitewashed walls, sea views, a terrace and a great Arabia-themed bar, you may find it hard to leave.

Hotel Raya (☎ 090 98 30 13; www.hotelraya.it; Via San Pietro; d €320-480; ☔ ☎) This is *the* hotel on Panarea. A complex of whitewashed villas climbing up the seashore, the Raya is pure understated luxury. Each room has its own sunbathing terrace with views of Stromboli. In the evening diners eat by the intimate light of oil lamps and tables are in such demand that you need to reserve them (meals €35 to €40). Its disco (open July to August) is known all over the islands.

Trattoria da Pina (☎ 090 98 30 32; Via San Pietro; meals €30; ☔ 12.30-3.30pm & 8.30-11pm Tue-Sat) Just up from the harbour, tables spill out onto a large covered terrace at this family-run restaurant. It attracts a good crowd in season and is definitely worth a try.

Da Francesco (☎ 090 98 30 23; Via San Pietro; meals €30-35) A good-value terrace restaurant overlooking the dock. Try the speciality *spaghetti con le cozze* (spaghetti with mussels). In summer they also rent out some inexpensive rooms (doubles €120).

Getting There & Away

In summer hydrofoils and ferries link the island with Stromboli (€7.50, 30 minutes, five daily) to the northeast, and Salina (and on to Lipari and Milazzo) and Filicudi (€18.10, 1½ hours, one daily) to the west. Both **Siremar** (☎ 090 98 30 07) and **Ustica Lines** (☎ 090 98 30 09) have offices along the harbour on Via San Pietro.

Getting Around

Cars are not allowed on Panarea, but you don't need them as the island is small enough to get around on foot. The preferred mode of transport is golf carts (the island's taxis). You can pick one up at the port, or call **Paolo & Angela** (☎ 3333138610; one-way fare per person €4, rental per day Sep-Jul/Aug about €26/36; ☔ 24hr).

To explore the islands, coves and beaches you'll need to hire a boat. **Tesoriero Roberto** (☎ 090 98 30 33; Via San Pietro) does all kinds of boat rentals, from rubber dinghies to wooden

longboats with outboard motors. Expect to pay around €52 for half a day.

STROMBOLI

pop 400 / elev 924m

Seeing Stromboli from a distance strangely conforms to one's childhood ideas of a volcano: a cone-shaped thing with smoke coming out of the top. This is the furthest and most isolated of the Aeolian Islands, but also the most captivating, largely because it is the only place in Europe to have a permanently active volcano. Its relative isolation is a large part of its appeal to Italy's (and Europe's) social elite who come to holiday on Stromboli (Dolce & Gabbana have a holiday home here). The island is a unique picture among the Aeolians – the black soil, black beaches (some very good, with excellent sand) and the black, towering volcano are in contrast to the gleaming white houses, all of which are breathtakingly beautiful and shrouded in Mediterranean gardens.

Stromboli's sense of isolation isn't just a matter of romantic illusions, it is in fact an island whose infrastructure is as fragile as ever. The town doesn't have 'proper' electricity – it's powered by massive generators – hence no streetlights at night, except in a couple of main streets and the church square (bring a torch). The same goes for the island's water situation – potable water is brought in from the mainland, so water saving is essential. And should the weather roughen up and the sea go a bit wild, no boats, ferries or hydrofoils head over to Stromboli. There are no roads across the island, so the tiny village of Ginostra (of around 30 houses) is only accessible by sea. It's that kind of place. Pure magic.

And we haven't mentioned that lively volcano yet. Its most recent eruption, in February 2007, was quite harmless as eruptions go, but it reminds the locals and visitors alike that living under this fiery giant is not a laughing matter. Yet, despite the fact that the volcano can potentially endanger lives, it's been providing a livelihood for the local mountaineers, climbing guides and trekking agents who take dozens of visitors up to the crater every night of the week.

Orientation

Boats arrive at Porto Scari/San Vincenzo, downhill from the Stromboli 'town' (formed by the villages of San Bartolo, San Vincenzo and Scari). Accommodation is a short walk



up the Scalo Scari to Via Roma or, if you plan to head straight for the crater, follow the road along the waterfront (see opposite for details).

Information

BOOKSHOPS

La Libreria sull'Isola (☎ 090 986 57 55; Via Vittorio Emanuele; ☎ 10.30am-1pm & 5.30-7pm Mon-Fri, 5.30-7pm Sat) A lovely little bookshop with some literary, foreign-language offerings and open-air film screenings (tickets €5) in its little garden.

EMERGENCY

Emergency Doctor (☎ 090 98 60 97; Via Vittorio Emanuele)

Police (☎ 090 98 60 21; Via Roma) On the left as you walk up Via Roma.

INTERNET ACCESS

La Libreria sull'Isola (☎ 090 986 57 55; Via Vittorio Emanuele; ☎ 10.30am-1pm & 5.30-7pm Mon-Fri, 5.30-7pm Sat; per hr €6) Two computers with a fast connection and printing and CD-burning facilities.

Totem Trekking (Piazza San Vincenzo 4; per hr €6; ☎ 10am-1pm & 4-8pm) Climbing shop that will let you use its painfully slow computer.

MEDICAL SERVICES

Farmacia Simone (☎ 090 98 60 79; Via Roma)

MONEY

You'll find an ATM on Via Roma, on the approach to Piazza San Vincenzo from the port.

Le Isole e Terme d'Italia (☎ 090 98 62 74; Via Roma) This travel agency near the port has exchange facilities.

POST

Post Office (☎ 090 98 60 27; Via Roma; ☎ 8.20am-1.20pm Mon-Sat)

TOURIST INFORMATION

Volcanological Information Centre (Porto Scari; ☎ 10.30am-1pm & 5-7.30pm) This very interesting information centre dedicated to the volcano is 150m to the right of the port. A video (in Italian) is usually shown in the afternoon. It is well worth a visit.

Sights & Activities

There is little to see here other than a couple of churches. Just outside the town (follow Via Roma, which then becomes Via Vittorio Emanuele), a couple of doors down on the right from **Chiesa di San Vincenzo** but before the Barbablù hotel, is a **pink-red house** where Ingrid Bergman and Roberto Rossellini lived during the filming of *Stromboli* in 1949. Film buffs will be familiar with the scandal provoked by their liaison – Rossellini was a married man – which was the talk of the film world for a long time thereafter.

Stromboli's **beaches** are the best on all the islands – the massive stretch of black sand beneath the main hotels is ideal, while there are little sandy coves to be discovered further along the northern coast.

THE VOLCANO

The Stromboli crater was formed only 40,000 years ago and, like a champagne bottle, it is full of gases, which is why it almost constantly launches showers of incandescent lava into the air. Technical volcano language, taking this kind of activity as a model, has come to include the term *attività Stromboliana* (Strombolian activity).

The most recent eruptions took place on 27 February 2007, opening two new craters on the summit. No real damage was endured in the last eruption, and the lava descended the western flank of the volcano. The lava flow is confined to the Sciarà del Fuoco (Trail of Fire), leaving Stromboli town to the east and Ginostra to the south quite safe. Before that, the eruptions in April 2003 showered the town of Ginostra with rocks, and the December 2002 eruption produced a mini tsunami, causing damage to Stromboli

town, injuring six people and closing the island to visitors for a few months.

Some 5000 people lived on the island until the massive eruption of 1930, when most took fright and left. Permanent residents now number about 400.

Recent crater activity has made it illegal to attempt to climb the volcano without a guide, and local authorities have limited the number of people allowed to go up in a day. You must book in advance (a day before is usually fine, but allowing a couple is advisable in August), and the limit is 20 people per guide.

It is once again possible to go all the way up to the crater, after the post 2002/03 eruption period limited climbs to 400m. You'll meet your guide between 4.30 and 5.30pm, depending on the time of the year, and start your trek up, reaching the peak just in time for sunset. The sight of the sun dipping into the sea, with the flaming gut of the volcano in front of you, is magnificent. You're allowed to spend about 40 minutes on the top (usually resting, eating and drinking), before starting the descent. It is estimated to take about two hours to get down to Piazza San Vincenzo, normally arriving around 10.30pm. The climb is not massively demanding, though you'll have to have a reasonable level of fitness to keep up and find it enjoyable (and get there for the sunset!).

To undertake the climb you will need proper walking shoes and clothing for cold wet weather, a change of T-shirt, a torch and a good supply of water and some food. Worry not if you haven't got any of those and still want to climb. **Totem Trekking** (☎ 090 986 57 52; Piazza San Vincenzo 4; climb kit €14.50) hires out all the necessary equipment (which is well maintained), and thanks to the limited climbing numbers, there's plenty to go around. You'll need to go up with your spectacles on and not contact lenses, especially for the way down when lots of dust gets blown around.

If you don't fancy going all the way, you can go up to 400m, from where you get fabulous views of the **Sciarà del Fuoco** and the explosions at the crater. You're allowed to go to the Sciarà on your own, but do bring a torch if you're walking at night. The explosions usually occur every 20 minutes or so and are preceded by a loud belly-roar as gases force the magma into the air. It is incredibly exciting. On a still night the livid red Sciarà and exploding cone are dramatically visible.

DID YOU KNOW?

- Stromboli is the youngest volcano in the Aeolian archipelago.
- There are usually two major explosions per year.
- The island has been inhabited since Neolithic times but the volcano has never destroyed Stromboli town.
- Stromboli was used to control important trade routes in the Tyrrhenian Sea, as it overlooks the other Aeolian Islands, the Italian mainland and the Straits of Messina. Because of this and its exploding crater, it was known as the 'Lighthouse of the Mediterranean'.
- The pinnacle of rock known as Strombolicchio, which can be seen just off the coast near Ficogrande, is the remnants of the original volcano that collapsed into the sea. Strombolicchio is what is left of the central cylinder (the neck) of the volcano, in which the lava solidified.
- The word 'sciara' comes from the Arabic *sharia* (meaning 'street'), thus the Sciara del Fuoco is a 'Street of Fire'.
- The Sciara del Fuoco depression descends 700m below sea level, although the debris from the volcano descends to a depth of 2200m.
- The 2003 state of emergency was caused by an underwater landslide on the Sciara del Fuoco that caused a 7m-high tidal wave to land on Stromboli town, damaging many houses (none of the older houses, built at a height of 10m, were affected).
- The landslide caused the crater to collapse and blocked the normal activity of the volcano. The subsequent build-up of gases and magma finally exploded in July 2003 like a small bomb.
- The 2003 eruptions increased the crater size from 35m to 125m.
- The 2007 eruption opened two new craters on the summit.

The still less ambitious can follow the road leading right along the waterfront to the **Osservatorio di Punta Labronzo** (the observatory, follow the signs), which has good views of the volcano. The ascent to the summit starts here.

For up-to-date information on volcanic activity, check www.volcanolive.com.

Guides

Magmatrek (☎ 090 986 57 68; www.magmatrek.it; Via Vittorio Emanuele; excursion per person €28) can put together any number of tailor-made treks for individual groups. Experienced guides, speaking English, German and French, will take groups of up to 20 people to the crater. You need to book the day before you want to do the climb.

Down the steps from Piazzale San Vincenzo is **AGAI** (Associazione Guide Alpine Italiane; ☎ 090 98 62 63; Via Pola 1; ☎ Apr-Oct), the volcano's own information office. Guides take groups of up to 20 people to the crater. Contact the office to make a booking a day before you want to climb.

BOAT TOURS & DIVING

Although **La Sirenetta Diving Center** (☎ 090 98 60 25; La Sirenetta Hotel, Via Marina 33) offers diving courses, alternatively you can make your way to the beach of rocks and black volcanic sand at Ficogrande to swim and sunbathe.

If you want a more gentle view of the volcano from the safety of a boat, contact **Società Navigazione Pippo** (☎ 090 98 61 35; Via Roma 47) or **Antonio Cacetta** (☎ 090 98 60 23; Vico Salina 10, near Porto Scari). Both companies take visitors for a 2½-hour gander at the Sciara del Fuoco from the sea (€15 per person). Both leave at 10pm of other tours; a circuit around the island (€20, five hours) takes in some swimming at Strombolicchio.

Sleeping

Most accommodation on Stromboli is pricey, but there are also some good budget and mid-range alternatives.

Casa La Pergola (☎ 090 98 61 27; www.casalapergola.it; Via Roma; d & tr per person from €25) A great budget place operated by an older couple who also run a greengrocer, La Pergola is in a fantastic

central location. The newer rooms are simple, while the older ones feature scary Catholic figurines and ancient wardrobes. There's also a good shared terrace. No breakfast.

Casa del Sole (☎ 090 98 60 17; Via Soldato Cincotta; dm/d per person €25/30) Off the road to the volcano, before you reach Ficogrande, Casa del Sole offers five cottages that are used as dorms, sleeping four to six people. There's also a few new en-suite doubles and triples. Surrounded by bougainvillea and broom, this is a wonderfully peaceful place, though it's a bit of a (dark) walk at night from the centre.

La Lampara (☎ 090 98 64 09; Via Vittorio Emanuele 27; d & tr per person from €35) A new B&B with reasonable rooms, a lovely roof terrace for breakfast, and a surly, 'do not disturb between 1.30pm and 4.30pm' landlady.

Pedra Residence (☎ 090 98 64 13; www.pedraresidence.it; Via Nunziante; d €80-120, apt €180-300; ☎) A new complex with great self-catering rooms (breakfast included in the price) that have big bathrooms, well-equipped kitchenettes, heavy wooden furniture and a slightly 'eastern' design. An expansive communal terrace fronts the rooms.

Hotel Sirenetta (☎ 090 98 60 25; www.sirenetta.it; Via Marina 33; s €90-140, d €100-150; ☎ Apr-Oct; ☎) This hotel is perfectly sited on the beach at Ficogrande in front of Strombolicchio. Although the décor is rather dated – think floor-to-ceiling posters of sunsets – the rooms are comfortable and the hotel is well known as a diving centre.

our pick La Locanda del Barbablù (☎ 090 98 61 18; www.barbablu.it; Via Vittorio Emanuele 17-19; d €120-210; ☎ Mar-Oct) This dusky-pink Aeolian house is an inn in the true sense of the word. It is not only one of the best restaurants on the island, but also has some fabulously eccentric rooms with silk coverlets, painted ceilings, water glasses on silver trays and antique tiles. Eat on the terrace looking out at the volcano.

Eating

Ritrovo Ingrid (☎ 090 98 63 85; Piazza San Vincenzo; pastries & cakes from €1, pizza €8; ☎ 8am-midnight, 8am-3am Jul & Aug) Situated at the high point of Piazza San Vincenzo (also the location of the Chiesa di San Vincenzo, p177) with scenic views all around from its terrace, Ritrovo Ingrid is the heart of Stromboli. Trekkers come here for sundowners and pizza as well as the day's gossip, and it's the best place for breakfast.

La Lampara (☎ 090 98 64 09; Via Vittorio Emanuele 27; pizza €8-10; ☎ 6pm-late) A noisy, vine-draped terrace with great pizzas and some decent seafood baked in aluminium foil for extra succulence. This place is much loved by families for its relaxed atmosphere. You will find it beyond Barbablù.

L'Osservatorio (Observatory; ☎ 090 98 63 60; meals around €25) About 20 minutes' walk up the lower slope of the volcano, this is where you get the unique opportunity to watch the volcano's activity as you eat. The food is traditional pasta, fish and seafood, and there is some good pizza too.

Punta Lena (☎ 090 98 62 04; Via Marina 8; meals €25-30) Punta Lena, on the *lungomare* walking away from the northern port towards the volcano, has a terrace overlooking the sea and Strombolicchio. Great fish and lots of lovely grilled vegetables.

our pick Ai Gechi (☎ 090 98 62 13; Vico Salina 12, Porto Scari; meals €30-35; ☎ 6.30-11pm, Tue-Sun) An excellent place that's a deserved favourite with the locals, Ai Gechi is a tastefully outfitted Aeolian house whose terrace serves as the dining area. Ship lamps light the tables, and the friendly barefoot waitstaff give you the lowdown on the day's menu. The food is traditional with a slightly modern twist. As you walk up from the port you will see a sign pointing down a small lane to your left. The restaurant is right at the end of the lane.

La Tartana (☎ 090 98 60 25; Via Marina; à la carte meals €35) It's hard to tell how to recommend La Tartana: as a bar, semi-disco or restaurant. It's all of those, plus it has great sea views from its terrace. During the day it has a good buffet lunch of fish and vegetables (€30 per kilo) that shouldn't cost you over €15. The evening affair is a different ball game, with an upmarket menu and crowd. *Aperitivi*, cocktails and a bit of dancing happen after dusk on the bar terrace.

La Locanda del Barbablù (☎ 090 98 61 18; www.barbablu.it; Via Vittorio Emanuele 17; tasting menu per person €45; ☎ 7-11.30pm) By far the island's fanciest restaurant, serving only a tasting menu (no à la carte) that changes according to the chef's desires. You will have to book if you want to dine here.

The terrace restaurant at Hotel Sirenetta (see left) is another good choice with beautiful views.

There are a couple of bars at the port, where you can get light snacks, and there is a

supermarket on Via Roma. For night fun, La Tartana is your best bet.

Getting There & Around

It takes four hours by ferry to reach the island from Lipari or 1½ to two hours by hydrofoil. Ticket offices for **Ustica Lines** (☎ 090 98 60 03) and **Siremar** (☎ 090 98 60 16) are at the port. In winter or in bad weather the service is often disrupted or cancelled altogether.

Sirocco (☎ 3355219446) runs an electric cart service that is useful to transport luggage when you arrive (if you don't have a backpack). However, it randomly charges you between €5 and €10 per trip. It is possible to hire scooters from **Motonautica Mandarano** (☎ 090 98 62 12; Via Marina; per day €20). From the port follow the road to your left; you will find it after about 300m.

FILICUDI

pop 300 / elev 774m

Filicudi is arguably the wildest and the prettiest of the Aeolian Islands, with crystal-clear waters and deep grottoes. Disembarking at Filicudi's port gives no real indication of what a beautiful island it is. The area is a huddle of concrete houses and one large resort hotel. Most of the island's limited facilities are here, including a general store.

Information

Emergency Doctor (☎ 090 988 99 13)

Pharmacy (☎ 090 988 90 77)

Police (☎ 090 988 99 42; Contrada Pecorini)

Post Office (☎ 090 988 90 53; Contrada Pecorini;

☎ 9am-1pm Mon-Fri)

Sights & Activities

Once you've moved on from the port, the disappointment will definitely fade. The main road goes south towards Capo Graziano and the **prehistoric village** (🕒 24hr), discovered in 1952, a smattering of Bronze Age huts that predate Panarea's Punta Milazzese by a few hundred years. From the village you can descend to Filicudi's only real **beach**, a stony affair that offers the easiest swimming on the island – if you want to take a dip elsewhere, you'll have to clamber down some jagged rocks or rent a boat.

At the port, via a set of steep steps, you'll find the path to the centre of the island. After about 10 minutes (just past La Canna and Villa La Rosa), the road forks. You can go

north (right) to **Valdichiesa**, a little village with a pretty church on a hillside terrace. Above the village is the peak of the **Fossa dei Felci** (774m), which you can climb – just keep walking in the general direction of the peak.

Alternatively, you can take the road that leads south (left) at the fork and make your way down via the donkey path to the little hamlet of **Pecorini**, which is nothing more than a cluster of one-storey houses huddled around a church. There are a couple of restaurants here (see below) and you can swim in the water.

The best way of visiting the island is by boat. There's usually someone around the port who rents boats out for around €20 per person during the high season for a two-hour trip. If you can't find anyone to help you at the port, call **Giuseppe Taranto** (☎ 090 988 90 11, 3683461315).

On the uninhabited western side of the island is the natural arch of the **Punta del Perciato** (Perciato Point) and the nearby **Grotta del Bue Marino** (Cave of the Monk Seal). This cavity is 37m long by 30m wide, and named after the seals that once lived here. You won't see any now, though, as the last one was harpooned in the 1960s, but you will see one of the most luminous light shows caused by the sunlight's reflection in the clear turquoise waters. To the northwest is the **Scoglio della Canna** (Cane Reef), a long, thin stack of rock 71m high that is perhaps the Aeolians' most impressive *faraglioni*.

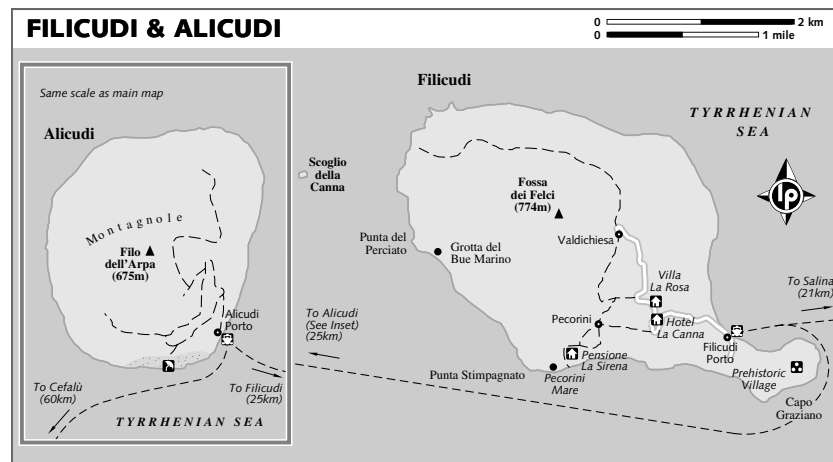
Sleeping & Eating

All the following hotels and *pensioni* have good restaurants attached. Mains generally cost between €9 and €15.

Hotel Phenicusa (☎ 090 988 99 46; www.hotelphenicusa.com; Via Porto; r per person hill/sea views from €34/42; 🕒 May-Sep) This boxy modern hotel dominates the port and provides pleasant enough accommodation and friendly staff.

Hotel La Canna (☎ 090 988 99 56; www.lacannahotel.it; Via Rosa 43; d €64-140; 🕒 🍷 🍷) After an exhausting uphill walk (you can be picked up from the port) the Hotel La Canna appears like a private paradise. Minimalist white rooms, magnificent panoramic views and some wonderful homemade cooking make this a highly recommended hotel. Reservations are advised.

Villa La Rosa (☎ 090 988 99 65; www.villalarosa.it in Italian; Via Rosa; d €100-160) Just beyond Hotel La Canna at the junction of Via Rosa is Villa La Rosa, a private residence that rents out



lovely rooms, all with bathroom and terrace. Adelaide Rando's food is also very good. If you're desperate for some – nay, any – type of nightlife, then the disco here is the only place to boogie.

Another good *pensione-cum-trattoria* is **Pensione La Sirena** (☎ 090 988 99 97; www.pensione-la-sirena.it; Via Pecorini Mare; d €130-180) towards the sea just outside Pecorini.

Getting There & Away

Filicudi can be tricky to reach for short visits. The intermittent ferry and hydrofoil service is virtually nonexistent in winter, and in summer can be cancelled due to rough seas. **Siremar** (☎ 090 988 99 60) and **Ustica Lines** (☎ 090 988 99 84) both have ticket offices on Via Porto, which runs along the port. At the height of summer Filicudi is served by three hydrofoils and one ferry daily. See p151 for details.

ALICUDI

pop 100 / elev 675m

When the French novelist Alexandre Dumas visited Alicudi during the 19th century, he wrote to his wife: 'It is hard to find a sadder, more dismal and desolate place than this unfortunate island... a corner of the earth forgotten by creation and which has remained unchanged since the days of chaos.' The barren nature of the northeast of Alicudi clearly was not to Mr Dumas' liking or taste, and in some respects he wasn't far wrong. However, if you're looking to get away from it all and revel in some sun, sea and solitude,

Alicudi is the best place for it. The flood of summer tourists that visit the Aeolian Islands is reduced to a mere trickle on Alicudi.

The island is as isolated a place as you'll find in the entire Mediterranean basin, with minimal facilities (one hotel and one restaurant) and no marked roads. For a time it served as the Italian equivalent of Devil's Island, with Mafia prisoners being sent here to serve lengthy prison sentences. Today it is home to a handful of farmers and fishers who only saw the arrival of electricity and TV in the 1990s. There are a couple of grocery shops, and a **post office** (☎ 090 988 99 11) by the port keeps erratic hours. The doctor can be contacted on ☎ 090 988 99 13.

Sights & Activities

The central peak of the **Filo dell'Arpa** (String of the Harp; 675m) is climbable; it's a hardy, two-hour trek up a pretty rocky path. At the top you can view the crater of the extinct **Montagnole volcano** and the **Timpone delle Femmine**, huge fissures where women are said to have taken refuge during pirate raids. Be sure to wear sturdy shoes and bring plenty of water as there is absolutely no shade along the way. There is not much else to do save potter around and find a peaceful place to sunbathe – the best spots are to the south of the port, where you will have to clamber over boulders to reach the sea. As you would expect, the waters are crystal clear and there's nothing to disturb you save the occasional hum of a fishing boat.

Sleeping & Eating

Ericusa Hotel (☎ 090 988 99 02; www.alicudihotel.it; Via Regina Elena; d €130-170; 🗓 Jun-Sep) This pleasant hotel has 12 rooms and a good restaurant where you'll eat well, although the menu is a bit of a mystery as it depends on provisions brought from the mainland.

For longer stays consider renting the gorgeous **Casa Ibisus** (www.alicudi.net in Italian; weekly rate €1000-1400), a typical Aeolian house in a paradisaical setting. It sleeps up to four. Rentals run from Saturday and bookings are via the website.

The only restaurant on Alicudi is **Airone** (☎ 090 988 99 22; meals €25-30).

Getting There & Away

Alicudi is the most difficult Aeolian Island to reach. Both **Siremar** (☎ 090 988 97 95) and **Ustica Lines** (☎ 090 988 99 12) are on Via Regina Elena, which runs parallel to the port. At the height of summer, Alicudi is served by three hydrofoils and one ferry daily (see p151). A summer-only service also runs from Cefalù (see p138 for details).