

At Piazza  
Mattei



# ROME

*Come for the history, the ruins and monuments, the art, the unmistakable feel, and stylish sensuousness. But come also to experience a glimmer of a homoerotic life that flourished in a pagan West that the millennia haven't fully erased.*

**Michael Thompson**

**R**ome intrigues, and the mystique remains long after a visit. The city's legacies of language, law, architecture, religion, and philosophy are now almost universally diffuse – including our Roman alphabet and the calendar. North Americans are especially touched. Italian emigration through the mid-20th century numbered over 25 million, with many going to the U.S. and Canada. For their descendants – and for anyone who's grown up loving pizza and Fellini – it's a homecoming to arrive at this source of Western culture; a place to ponder from whence we came, and where we're going.

The modern Italian capital still occupies a powerful setting at the center of Mediterranean Europe, with wonderful food, rich art, shopping in style, and countless memorable experiences. These can be as simple but

sublime as the distinctive light playing across ancient stones or the languid stretch of a cat among the ruins, oblivious to the busy modern city above and all the came before. The city delivers on all you've ever heard, but it's hard to say exactly how or why without resorting to cliché.

Perhaps it's the layers of thousands of years of civilizations, with blocks built literally one upon the next, often recycling the substance of the predecessor. This history bequeaths an extraordinary complexity to the landscape, with odd and incongruous joints. Or the cultural textures: legacies of many generations born or arrived at this ancient crossroads and once imperial center, overlaying and combining. There's an unusual, sometimes chaotic, worldly-wise beauty of many facets. Besides the well-known postcard sights to check off on your tourist's agenda, many less famous little treasures await to surprise and delight the casual wanderer off the beaten track.



An ancient game

Romans – sensual and passionate, sometimes raunchy and brash – have style and self-confidence, but abound in contradictions. They're conservative in some ways, exuberantly liberated in others. The Church is still influential, and gay sexuality might be expressed less openly, in more traditional Mediterranean ways than in other large European cities. But in terms of masculine affection, there are few inhibitions. An undercurrent of homoerotic consciousness seems barely but discreetly concealed. The welcome bestowed on visitors can be enthusiastic and generous, and friendships and family devotions are close and effusively public. On the other hand, the people of this cosmopolitan city of many cultures that's absorbed immigrants and expatriates for millennia, now struggle with Italian public concerns (as in other European countries) over some more recent arrivals.

There's unease about human rights abuses stemming from the deportations on one hand, but also some palpable relief from the constant threat of street theft of recent years. As anywhere, sensible precautions with valuables on public transit and in back-room situations, are still the best insurance. Another result has been the disappearance of many of the foreign hustlers and escorts from their former haunts. Locals say that Italians are again filling this breach.

## Getting oriented

As in much of modern Europe, English is widely used on public signs, and understood by many, especially in gay circles, but not as extensively as in more northern countries. If you have little or no Italian, you may find Spanish is frequently understood, as words in the two languages are often similar.

For basic needs including hotel and restaurant expenses, Rome can be more reasonable than many other European cities. Avoid tourist traps around the monuments and transportation hubs and you'll easily find

prices to stretch your budget. Public transport costs one euro for 75 minutes of bus travel, or for one metro ride, and is an inexpensive way to get around town; multi-trip, multi-day passes can further lower the price. After 11:30 p.m. there's a "nocturnal" bus service that runs regularly all night in place of the metro and other major daytime bus routes. Atac is the city's main public transit service. For details in English (or Italian!) see [Atac.roma.it](http://Atac.roma.it). At the website [Metrebus.it](http://Metrebus.it) if you plug in your departure, destination, and times, a map will pop up with the best options for your trip.

Vespa motorbikes can be rented too, for the adventurous and agile.

For more general tourist information go to [Romaturismo.com](http://Romaturismo.com) the official site for the city.

## Accommodations

Rome has many hotels. A cluster of reasonably-priced ones are located in the vicinity of Termini Station. Off-season rates can be surprisingly inexpensive. Book ahead, especially in summer, when demand exceeds supply.

**Ares Rooms** ([Via Domenichino 7; Aresrooms.com](http://ViaDomenichino7.com)) is a gay-friendly hotel with great location, good rates, and a friendly, helpful staff. They offer bright modern accommodations just ten minutes' walk from Termini. It's just five minutes more to walk to several gay establishments in the area. They're also close to the Colosseum and the Forum, and a cluster of good restaurants and useful shops. Flavio or Alessandro will quickly respond to email requests concerning room-availability and they're happy to help with up-to-date advice in Italian, English, or Spanish on local gay, dining, and tourist destinations. Their reception is open 24 hours, so once you're booked in, you can come and go as late as you like.

Other area hotels in the low to medium price range that are comfortable for gay visitors include: **Altavilla** ([Via Principe Amedeo 9; Altavillahotel.it](http://ViaPrincipeAmedeo9.com)), **B&B Best Place** ([Via Turati 13; Bestplace.it](http://ViaTurati13.com)),

**B&B Gaspere** ([via Balilla 16; Bbgaspere.com](http://viaBalilla16.com)), **B&B InAndOut** ([Via Arco del Monte 97; Inandout-rome.it](http://ViaArcoDelMonte97.com)), **B&B Bologna** ([Piazza Bologna 6; Bebbologna.it](http://PiazzaBologna6.com)), **Duca d'Alba** ([Via Leonina 14; Hotelducadalba.com](http://ViaLeonina14.com)), **Scott House** ([Via Gioberti 30; Scotthouse.com](http://ViaGioberti30.com)); and **Villa Appennini** ([Via Appennini 32; Appenninirome.com](http://ViaAppennini32.com)). **Youth Station Hostel** ([Via Livorno 5; Youthstation.it](http://ViaLivorno5.com)) is a typical European hostel with very low rates for beds in shared dorm rooms for the backpacker set.

## Shopping

**Libreria Babele Roma** ([Via dei Banchi Vecchi 116; Libreriababeleroma.it](http://ViaBanchiVecchi116.com)) has been Rome's gay bookstore since 1993. Besides being a place to buy gay books and magazines, DVDs, and CDs it's also a community center of sorts, with guides, maps, events and a comfortable drop-in and hang-out feel to the place. Most titles are in Italian, but other languages, English foremost among them, are represented too. In the case of their photo book selection, it hardly matters either way.

Many local sex and fetish shops stock gay merchandise, but a couple are of more interest than the others: **Alcovo** ([Piazza Sforza Cesarini 27](http://PiazzaSforzaCesarini27.com)) and **Hydra II** ([Via Urbana 139](http://ViaUrbana139.com)) both stock leather and fetish items, and the latter also carries Western, vinyl, and vintage wear.

## Going Out

**Arcigay** ([Arcigay.it](http://Arcigay.it)) is the national organization, based in Bologna, which works on behalf of gay people for changes in Italian society. Visitors will soon notice that most bars, saunas and many other gay businesses in Italy require membership to enter their establishment. Many are associated with Arcigay.

A card bought at these clubs is valid nationwide at all member establishments. The fee helps gay Italians work for a more equitable society, one that's more enjoyable for you to visit. A list of

*Continued on page 24*





Fulvio (top)  
& friends  
at Hangar



Allen, Marco,  
and Maurizio of  
Europa Multiclub



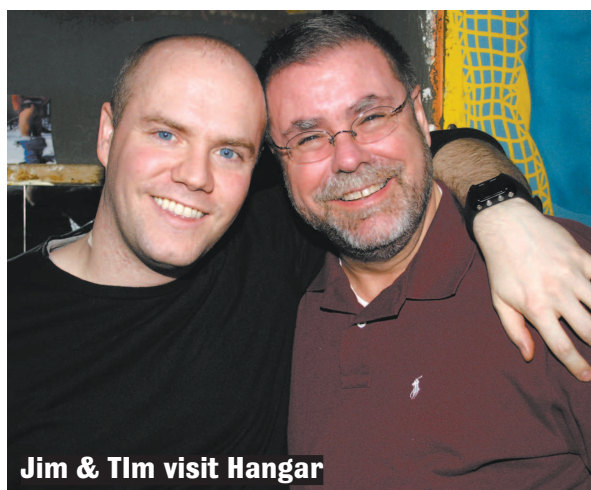
Showtime!



Roman night out



Thursday  
at Hangar



Jim & Tlm visit Hangar



Ragazzi  
di Roma





At Muccassassina



Amici di Roma



At Muccassassina



At Hangar



Come out!



At Muccassassina



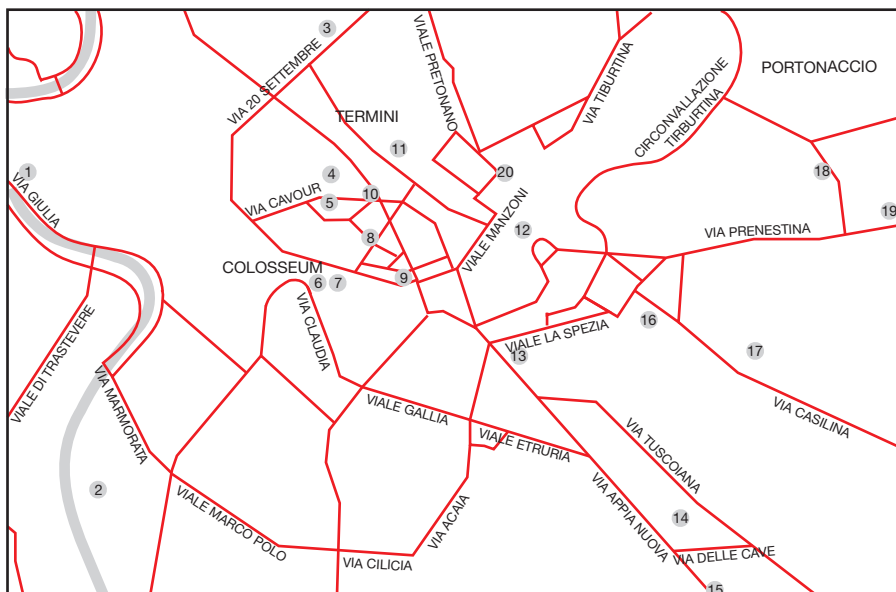
At Muccassassina



# ROME

- 2) **Alibi**  
44 Via di Monte Testaccio
- 8) **Apollion Sauna**  
59/A Via Mecenate
- 10) **Ares Rooms**  
7 Via Domenichino
- 6) **Coming Out**  
8 Via di San Giovanni in Laterano
- 19) **Diavolo Dentro**  
23 Largo Itiri
- 3) **Europa Multiclub Sauna/Gym**  
40 Via Aureliana
- 14) **Frequency Club**  
34 Via Enea
- 17) **Frutta e Verdura (Afterhours Dance)**  
68/70 Via Placido Zurla
- 5) **Hangar Bar**  
69 Via In Selci
- 4) **Hydra II**  
139 Via Urbana
- 7) **Ice Cream Bears**  
120 Via di San Giovanni in Laterano
- 1) **Libreria Babele**  
116 Via dei Banchi vecchi
- 12) **Max's Bar/Disco**  
7/a Via Achille Grandi
- 9) **Mediterraneo Sauna**  
3 Via Pasquale Villari
- 18) **Muccassassina, Friday @ Qube**  
212 Via di Portonaccio
- 16) **Omogenic (Disco)**  
42 Via Casilina Vecchia
- 15) **Rios Sauna**  
10 Via dei Colli Albani

- 13) **Skyline Club**  
36 Via Pontremoli
- 11) **Sphinx Leather Bar**  
40 Piazza Manfredo Fanti
- 20) **Tumbler (Pub)**  
22 Via degli Equi





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[www.gaysauna.it](http://www.gaysauna.it)



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*Continued from page 20*

places that belong is on-line at their website along with other useful information.

**Europa Multi Club** (Via Aureliana 40; Gaysaune.it) is the biggest and most popular of Rome's bathhouses with a great diversity of visitors. Amenities here are some of the finest among gay saunas anywhere, with a mega-size Turkish bath, Finnish sauna, whirlpool, and solarium. They offer massage and internet, and a well-equipped gym, plus snacks and drinks at the EMC Cafe. Their many cabins offer plenty of nooks to get better acquainted with new friends and big-screen erotic videos get you in the mood. Check their website for parties and shows and info on their surprisingly substantial lottery prizes: admission enters you for a chance at winning. Marco and his staff are really helpful, friendly, and always working hard to be sure you have a great time in a clean, warm and comfortable facility. The club's layout is

unusually attractive and colorfully illuminated, with easy access to all the features. Open daily from 1 p.m. to midnight, they stay open through the whole weekend without closing. This makes EMC a favorite stay-over for young men who prefer it to a hotel, so the place gets attractively busy.

Two other longtime local tubs are just off Via Merulana as you walk south from the Termini area: **Apollion** (Via Mecenate 59/A) and **Mediterraneo Sauna** (Pasquale Villari 3). Each has steam, dry sauna, massage, darkrooms, and its own loyal group of regulars. **Rios Sauna Club** (Via dei Colli Albani 10) is a new local full-service sauna, seven stops down the metro from Termini, and **Terme di Roma** (Via Persio 4) is another older sauna, still a locals' favorite, out a bit further from the center.

Just to the south of the Colosseum there are two convenient gay refreshment spots, to relax after all the walking you'll be doing, both open in the afternoons. **Coming Out** (Via di San

Giovanni in Laterano 8) is a bar and restaurant for gay men and women open daily from 11 a.m. to 2 a.m. with a full bar and Italian restaurant that won't break the budget. It's a mix of locals and tourists here, and they get busiest on weekend evenings. On Tuesdays Francesco's Messenger Night will help you meet people, and on Wednesdays they have karaoke. Pick up the local gay mags here and try their cocktail special any evening. **Ice Cream Bears** (Via di San Giovanni in Laterano 120) is just down the street, with sweets and beverages, and a cabinet full of rich gelato flavors to sample, served up by some friendly local bears.

**Hangar** (Via in Selci 69) which started as a casual get-together for gay friends twenty-something years ago, has proved to be one of Rome's most enduring gay institutions. John and partner Gianni (Johnny) are open every night except Tuesday from 10:30 p.m. until 2 a.m., hosting Rome's most international gathering place for gay men. It's one of the easiest





places to strike up a conversation in the city, and the perfect first stop for English-speaking visitors to get easily oriented. Owner John originally hails from the US, but he knows gay Rome like few others, and he's happy to help and advise from where he sits at the entrance. It's a very male atmosphere, but quite varied in ages and types, and the action gets very friendly in the back darkrooms for guys looking for some touch. Also they have a smoker's bar here. Nude stripper performances around midnight are a long-time Thursday night tradition at Hangar.

**Sphinx** (Piazza Manfredo Fanti 40) is another men's bar near Termini station that draws both leather guys and bears, but on Thursdays there's no dress code. A fetish party takes place here every second Saturday sponsored by the Leather Club Roma. See Lcroma.com for details.

**Tumbler** (Via degli Equi 22) is a gay-friendly pub on the other side of Termini Station and **Garbo** (Vicolo di Santa Margherita 1A) and **Giardino dei Ciliegi** (Via dei Fienaroli 4) are drag and transsexual favored. **La Taverna di Edoardo II** (Vicola Margana 14), formerly a bar and now a restaurant, is still popular with a gay crowd.

Getting down to business, Rome boasts several man to man bars-cum-sex-clubs.

**Skyline Club** (Via Pontremoli 36), near San Giovanni metro, has two darkrooms, porn videos, and pulls a generally younger crowd that likes the high energy music they play. Third Saturdays here are devoted to bears.

**Frequency** (Via Enea 34), three metro stops further down Via Appia Nuova, (just beyond Furio Camillo), is a bar open nightly except Tuesdays, with a weekend sex club featuring porn videos and darkrooms that attract slightly older guys. There are Thursday-night naked parties, Friday blackouts, and the option to go naked or wear underwear on Sundays, plus special Saturday events.

At **Diavolo Dentro** (Largo Itri 23) they have darkrooms and cabins, a

labyrinth and sling, food and drinks, shows and hardcore movies. Open weekends-only they have Friday sex parties, Saturday naked and underwear, and Sunday underwear parties.

**K-Men's Club** (Via Amato Amati 8) is a men's cruising and sex bar with shows, open daily except Mondays.

**Delgrado** (Via Ignazio Dante 20) mixes men, women, and transsexuals in their darkroom bar, and they have dancing too. Open Fridays and Saturdays only.

For dancing, Rome has a highly energetic line-up, with many big circuit parties popping up, but also some regular weekly venues. Most have one or two nights when they're gay, or busy, but one opens every night except Wednesday: **Max's Bar** (Via Achille Grandi 7/A), a small but popular dance club with a crowd of mostly younger guys.

The big gay weekly event takes place each Friday night with **Muccassassina** at the **Qube Club** (Via Portonaccio 212). They party late into the night here, with three levels of dancing, drag and other live shows, performances, go-go boys plus top-rated local and international DJs. As with many of the big gay dance clubs, it's mixed with straight couples too, but the crowd remains mostly male and youthfully energetic. Among the young the sexual dividing lines are more blurred these days, and besides the straights here can get pretty kinky too. Also the staff is quite laissez-faire by American standards in letting people have their fun.

**Omogenic** is another Friday night gay dance, held at **Circolo degli Artisti** (Via Casilina Vecchia 42). In summer months they spill out from their big room dance club, to an outdoor area that includes a cinema, bar, and cafe.

Other regular nights include Saturday's **Gorgeous** at the **Alpheus Club** (Via del Commercio 36) and **D'Bump at Alien** (Via Velletri 13). **Tommy** is another Saturday dance event, held at **Alibi** (Via di Monte Testaccio 40-44), with a big dance floor and summer roof patio. **Gloss** is the name of Thursday

and Sunday gay dances at Alibi. **Frutta e Verdura** (Via Placido Zurla 68/70) has after-hours dancing. See Pushclub.it for upcoming Push Club circuit party events.

## And don't forget...

For several summers, from June to September in Giardino Delle Cascate, **Gay Village** (Gayvillage.it) has been a series of city-sponsored outdoor concerts, comedy and music shows, theater, a film festival, plus sports and literary events. For upcoming plans see their website.

Local gay give-away magazines are colorful and zesty, well-designed and informative, with national coverage and up-to-date listings. As gay bars come and go with some frequency in Italy, they're an important resource. Written in Italian, but with a lot of English scattered throughout, it isn't hard to figure out what's happening. Look for **Pride Magazine** (Prideonline.it), **Lui** (Luimagazine.it), **Gay Clubbing** (Gayclubbing.it), and **Aut**.

Giovanni Dall'Orto formerly of (important but now defunct) *Babilonia* magazine, now holds roost at *Pride Magazine*, and has an informative website at Giovannidallorto.com, on Italian gay culture and politics. Fluent in English and French and native in Italian, he's a great resource for outsiders to learn more about Italy.

Other on-line resources include: Gayroma.it, Mariomieli.org, Roman eagles.it, Italianitourism.com, Cinema-gay.it, Culturagay.it, and Pierreci.it.

In case you feel overwhelmed, various tours and travel services exist to shepherd you around in your native tongue. Rome with Pride (Romawithpride.com), a gay guide service, can be of assistance.

Bears are well-organized in Rome – see Bearsweek.com and other sites such as Bearsinrome.it and Orsiazonzo.it.

Almost all the businesses mentioned here have websites. You can click through to them from our site at Guidemag.com. ▼

# Millennia of Male Beauty

*A guide to Rome's homoerotic treasures*

Rome is a wonder of archaeological and artistic heritages. Some might visit St. Peter's for one kind of spiritual inspiration. But gay travelers are likely to feel different connections and resonances. What remains of pre-Christian Rome is a window onto older concepts of sexuality, and an alternative aesthetic. The relation of the Church to that prior legacy is complex and conflicted.

A visit to almost any Italian museum reveals that the ancients didn't equate nudity with a lack of modesty. Gods, emperors, athletes, warriors, and noblemen could embody ideals of human perfection without the artifice of garments. As had the Greeks, from whom they inherited so much, ancient Romans revealed man without reserve. Manifestations of this comfort with the male form are found in marble all around the city.

The Vatican Museum (Viale Vaticano 13), paradoxically, is home to one of the world's most amazing collections of nude male beauty, diverse as to time and place. The Church wasn't always so tolerant. Fourth-century Christian emperors looked the other way when roving mobs led by monks looted and destroyed temples, particularly in the countryside, and countless statues of incredible beauty were shattered. More than a millennium later, with the old pagan religions safely dead, a more confident Church (following the fashions of the political elite) commissioned new works inspired by these same artifacts.

During the remarkable 15th century, the finest artists of their time were employed by patrons such as the Medici family of Florence, who also contributed four popes. As the West emerged from the "dark ages" it looked back to the old Roman empire as a cultural beacon. Much as local gods and sacred places of conquered peoples had been incorporated into Roman pagan religions, so too the temples, institutions, holidays and aspects of the Roman gods had been quickly assimilated into the new Christian milieu. Eventually much of pagan art

was also accommodated. The sexual proclivities of some church superiors seem often to have made them sympathetic at crucial times in this transition.

The Vatican complex includes the Museo Pio Clementino with its 54 galleries, and the tour here ends with Michelangelo's masterpiece at the Sistine Chapel. Postures and knowing looks so faithfully captured by the master artist betray his affection for the street youth and urchins who portray the angels and saints, intact with the grit and grime they brought with them as models (and likely bedmates). Through him they transcend humble origins, and bridge the millennia, recalling fragments of an older world we can no longer fully comprehend, when the divine could guilelessly assume mortal flesh.

Spare some time also for other halls, including Museo Chiaramonti, Museo Gregoriano Etrusco, and Museo Egiziano, with their ancient Roman, Greek, Etruscan and Egyptian materials. Get a head start from the Vatican Museum's website ([Mv.vatican.va](http://Mv.vatican.va)), which offers extensive virtual tours.

Other worthwhile destinations include the Borghese Gallery (Piazzale del Museo Borghese 5; [Galleriaborghese.it](http://Galleriaborghese.it)), with examples from the works of Caravaggio, Bernini, Canova, Rubens, Raphael, Titian, and many others from the collection of Cardinal Scipione; and the Capitoline Museums (Piazza del Campidoglio 1, atop Capitoline Hill; [Museicapitolini.org](http://Museicapitolini.org)) which ranges over ancient art and architecture.

In Rome, you don't have to stay indoors to savor magnificent art. The Fontana delle Tartarughe in the Piazza Mattei depicts four youths, one at each corner, each astride a porpoise with turtles above. The fountain dates from 1588, and was restored and modified in 1658. You'll find this tiny square

just off Via Arenula, near the tranquil courtyard of the Palazzo Mattei di Giove, which is adorned with antique statues, busts, and bas-reliefs, and home to the Italian Center for American Studies.

The Villa of Hadrian (Via di Villa Adriana 204) was the emperor's retreat to the northeast of the city, now in Tivoli. that includes the greatest Roman example of an Alexandrian garden. The Spanish-born Hadrian was also responsible for the building of the Pantheon and the wall that bears his name that protected Roman Britain from parts north. Hadrian was the lover of Antinous, whom he made a god after the youth's death. Antinous represents a Roman ideal of youthful beauty, and his visage survives in countless busts and coins as perhaps the most common among extant portrayals of any face from the ancient world.

But many ancient cults left few relics and scant information. It would be fascinating to know more. In Greece and Rome, sex could be sacred, and bodies were regarded more holistically, before concepts such as sin and pornography profaned them with divisions of good and evil.

About Mithraism, for instance, little is known except that it was popular with soldiers, exclusively male, celebrated underground, and involved intense initiations. The cult of Apollo was close to official ideals of the Roman state, but it was complemented by now-lost rites and rituals honoring Bacchus and Dionysus.

Such mysteries and ecstasies could be celebrated in temples and public festivals. Some famous marbles and paintings, if wrought today, would verge on the illegal. One wouldn't want to gloss over some brutal aspects of Roman society, but their civilization had characteristics we might envy.

The dissonances are instructive. Stone endures only a little longer than flesh in terms of the ages, but unless intentionally broken, long survives film negatives or digital files. One trusts these ancient artworks will outlast our own age to inspire unimaginable futures. ▼



**Antinous everywhere!**



Dusk in the  
Eternal City

Roman antiquity

# NAPLES, SICILY, AND MORE

*Southern Italy balances between homoerotics old and new*

Going south from Rome the sexual conservatism that distinguishes the capital from cities to the north becomes even more pronounced. Many northern artists – German Baron Von Gloeden among them – came here a century ago for the social toleration and to photograph Sicilian youths in classic poses. More recently in the 1970s, the Milan photographer Tony Patrioli did similar work in the area (published in America by Alyson Press as *Mediterraneo*, and now out of print).

But things have changed. Gay northern tourists no longer go much to Taormina. The young men of the region don't do this sort of thing anymore, Patrioli said in an interview ten years ago; it's considered too "gay" to pose in the nude for homosexual men these days. Often considered a thinly veiled invitation to sex, photos are an embarrassment now. The men and their families that had welcomed him in the past became indifferent or hostile once modern lines of sexual identity were defined and universally recognized.

An old fault line in the gay/homosexual milieu is more obvious here. Open gay relationships, domesticity, and equality with heterosexuals vie with an older model: *sotto voce* homo-

sexual adventures, the thrill of the chase (making it with that sexy "straight" guy), and keeping it all to yourself (or a close friend) while going along with conventional norms, even wedlock. Men traditionally lived with family until marriage here, and, with the high cost of housing, even after. Sex in the bushes or discreet relations with "protégés" while the wife takes care of the household seemed a far simpler solution to satisfying one's urges than bringing home an avowed lover – for everyone concerned. These issues are still being worked out, and some people just move north.

So while establishments openly catering to gay people are far fewer and much more discreet than their northern counterparts (particularly in the charming but sometimes chaotic city of Naples), there's still the old-fashioned casual, anonymous sex going on in cruising haunts. Deep in local consciousness, sex among men has long been considered a harmless fact of life without fundamental significance; neither taken too seriously, nor obviously displayed. It's less a matter of identity and thus more broadly accepted as part of human nature – but one best kept on the down-low. That's true today, ironically, even more than before.

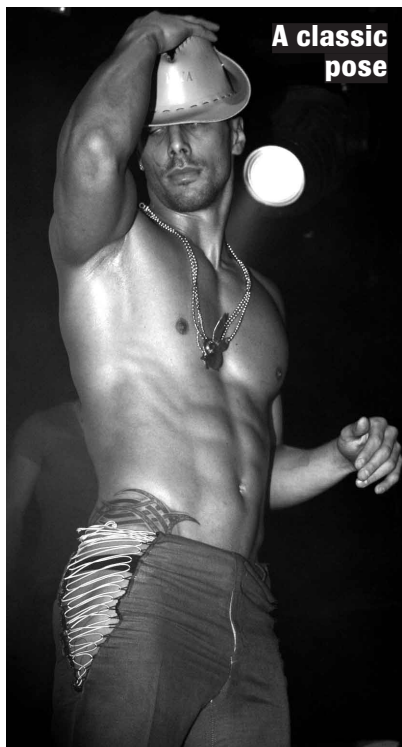
Social mores change, but nature endures. The region is breathtakingly beautiful. From the top of Vesuvius the view of Naples below, and the Isle of Capri just off the coast, alone make the trip worthwhile. The active volcano could suddenly wipe it all off the map, but three million people live their lives here without obvious concern, despite the sulfurous steam venting from underground here and there. For visitors it just adds another unique detail to an already exotic terrain. Just to the south the picturesque coastal town of Sorrento and the ruins of Pompeii ([PompeiiSites.org](http://PompeiiSites.org)) provide additional incentives to visit the area. If going to Capri, see [Caprionline.com](http://Caprionline.com) for some basic info.

## NAPLES

Much of the gay activity of Naples is centered around Piazza Bellini, an elegant square lined with sidewalk cafes and full of students from the nearby university. Here you'll find the gay-friendly **Caffé Letterario Intra Moenia** (Piazza Bellini 70), a hangout for local artists, writers, and academics. Piazza Garibaldi and Bosco di Capodimonte are more at-your-own-risk cruising options. Via Toledo and Via Chiaia are streets with lots of shops to check out.



At Frequency, Rome



A classic pose



Benvenuto!

A men's gay sex club from Milan opened a similar club in Naples recently, giving people a safer venue for their fun. **Depot Napoli** (Via della Veterinaria 72) is a leather-and-fetish cruising club that's open every day but Monday from 10 p.m. until 3 a.m., till 6 a.m. Friday and Saturday. There's a variety of events here, including blackout and naked parties, and events celebrating fisting, foot and sneakers fetishes, and underwear, as well as bisexual functions. Leather nights require dress-code attire in leather, denim, or rubber (or just be naked if you prefer). Their website gives all the details (click through our site at Guidemag.com).

**Blu Angel Sauna** (Centro Direzionale Isola A/7) is the other gay reliable mainstay in Naples with a bar, and all the usual sauna facilities, open every day.

## SICILY

For bars, dance clubs, and saunas, the cities of Palermo and Catania now have more going on than the old gay destination of scenic, tranquil Taormina, once popular with so many screen legends the likes of Dietrich, Crawford, Hayworth, Garbo, and Taylor. Tennessee Williams, Truman Capote, and Cary Grant also came. Even now in Taormina you'll find a few bars and restaurants that are still "arty" and gay-friendly.

**Isoco Guesthouse** (Via Salita Branco 2; Isoco.it) is a small Taormina guesthouse that caters to gay visitors. They offer great sea views, internet access, kitchenette options, and a small paradise of a garden with hot tub. The owner, "Taorminese," is happy to help with tips and guides to the area, among them Le Rocce (the cliffs), a gay section of local beach.

Catania is a large city that's more tolerant of outright gay expressions of affection than the surrounding countryside. **Open Mind** (Openmind.too.it) is a gay community switchboard here with a helpful website. At Gaysicilia.eu you'll find other local info.

**Pegaso's Circus** (Viale Kennedy 80)

is Catania's biggest gay complex, with a disco, two bars, a darkroom and labyrinth, as well as shows, events, special parties, and lots of action. **The Neva Caffè** (Piazza S. Francesco D'Assisi 4/5) nearby was a part of the Pegaso group, but stand by: they're in flux.

**Terme Achille Sauna** (Via Tezzano 13) is the other big gay attraction in Catania, with a bar, cabins, darkroom, massage, internet access, Turkish bath, and of course, the sauna. **Codice Rosso** (Via Conte Ruggero, 48) is a local men's cruise bar. They open Thursdays through Sundays from 9 p.m. until 2 a.m. (4 a.m. Friday and Saturday) with naked and blackout parties.

Some local hotel options include: **Crispi Rooms** (Via F. Crispi 15; Crispi-rooms.com), a midrange hotel at the center of historic Catania and near the central train station; **BAD Bed & Breakfast Catania** (Via Cristoforo Colombo 24; Badcatania.it), a small gay-friendly option; and **Hotel Villa Romeo** (Via Platamone 8; Hotelvillaromeo.it), a more upscale three-star Catania hotel with the gay-friendly in-house Havana Pub. Other options can be found online at **Bed & Breakfast Sicilia** (Bed-and-breakfast-sicilia.it).

In Palermo there's a local gay bar that welcomes most everyone – **Exit Drinks** (Piazza San Francesco di Paola). Local bears have taken to coming here recently. Other bear haunts and information on events can be found at the website for **Orsi Siculi** (Orsisiculi.it), the area association of "orsi italiani."

**Paparazzi** (Via delle Industrie 45) is a local Palermo disco with a mixed crowd. Outside Palermo there's a nude sunbathing spot at the gay-frequented beach at Barcarello.

Finally, **Atelier Sul Mare** (Via Cesare Battisti 4; Ateliersulmare.it) is an unusual combination of hotel and museum, located between Messina and Palermo on the sea at Castel di Tusa near Cefalù. Thirteen of their 40 rooms were designed and decorated by contributions from 18 acclaimed artists. In the halls the wall stones are naturally sculptured and their terraces are full of flowers. ▼