Italy is the home of calcio and classy clubs of great tradition – many still playing in ageing communal stadiums from the pre- and immediate post-war eras.

Crowds are down, revenues too. The 1990 World Cup, played out when the ultra movement and all its imaginative terrace pageantry were at their height, seems a very long time ago.

Back then, Milan was the football capital of the world, the Rome derby was a ferocious affair between two high-ranking teams. Sampdoria, Parma and Fiorentina all made European finals.

AC Milan and Internazionale have since been sold to Chinese backers and struggle to fill the San Siro, one of football’s great stadiums and most famous groundshares.

The main success story has been Juventus, record (and current) champions who built their own stadium on the outskirts of their home city of Turin. AS Roma are following their example in Rome. Each of their respective city rivals, Torino and Lazio, remain in arenas originally adapted for Olympic showcases. Average home gates for either in 2016-17 were in the 20,000 range.

A single-stadium groundshare arrangement also applies to two other cities, Genoa and Verona, whose title wins belong to the past.

If any club is going to break the Juventus monopoly, it’s Napoli, whose credible title challenges and reasonably healthy crowd figures now date back several seasons. Visit Udine or Bergamo on a match day and you probably won’t notice anything different. Not so in Naples.

The only other city where a single club is demonstrably worshipped is Florence, enraptured by Fiorentina despite a lack of silverware.

Just as many stadia have barely changed in decades, some attitudes seem stuck in the dark ages. Terrace racism goes on unnoticed and unpunished, a blight on the game. In need of their regular revenue, some clubs do little to rock the boat with their hard-core fans, the ultras.

Given Italy’s huge distances – it’s 1,200km between Turin and Crotone – visiting support is often scant. Only the most loyal make it as far as Cagliari, on the southern coast of Sardinia, closer to Tunisia than to mainland Italy.

**Station to station**

Italy is well served by leading budget airlines easyJet ([www.easyjet.com](http://www.easyjet.com)) and Ryanair ([www.ryanair.com](http://www.ryanair.com)), from the UK and other parts of Europe, and within the country itself. From the UK provinces, flybe ([www.flybe.com](http://www.flybe.com)) and Jet2 ([www.jet2.com](http://www.jet2.com)) also go to major Italian destinations.

British Airways ([www.britishairways.com](http://www.britishairways.com)) flies to some Italian 20 cities. Cash-strapped national carrier
Alitalia (www.alitalia.com/gb_en) has a few routes left. As of 2018, Milan-based Air Italy (www.airitaly.com/en) is picking up the slack.

A cheap, extensive rail system is run by Trenitalia (www.trenitalia.com), competition provided on high-speed intercity lines by Italo (www.italotreno.it/en). There is no national bus carrier, only random regional services.

Italy’s extensive network of motorways (www.autostrade.it/autostrade_en-gis/percorso.do) is interspersed by regular toll gates (www.aiscat.it/inautostrada_en/pedaggio.htm?nome=pedaggio), priced about €9 per 100km. Payment is possible by credit card.

Tables & trophies
The top four finishers of the 20-club Serie A (www.legaseriea.it/en) gain access to the group stage of the Champions League. Fifth means the Europa League group stage, sixth, Europa League second qualifying round. The Italian Cup winners (see below) also qualify for the EL group stage.

Serie B (www.legab.it) consists of 22 teams, and those finishing between third and eighth make the promotion play-offs. The likes of Benevento, Pescara and Cesena have reached Serie A without setting the world alight during the regular season in Serie B.

The three lowest finishers in Serie A drop automatically to Serie B, whose top two clubs go up. The last promotion place is decided by play-offs between the next six finishers, unless the team finishing third has a 14-point margin over the one in fourth. As this is extremely unlikely, play-offs take place, first a one-leg preliminary round, the lower-placed teams away, then semi-finals and final of two legs.

Four teams drop down from Serie B to Serie C, the bottom three automatically. If the team finishing 18th has a minimum four-point lead over the 19th, they stay up. If not, 18th and 19th play off over two legs – or rather playout as Italians term such relegation deciders.

Categorised into three 20-team regional leagues (Girone A, B and C), Serie C is the last professional division – it’s also referred to as Lega Pro (www.lega-pro.com).

Only each regional group winner goes up to Serie B, everyone else down to tenth place reaches the byzantine play-offs. For these, the First Round is one match, any drawn games decided by previous league position. Then come two-leg knock-outs. The winners gain a berth in the Europa League – unless already through to the Champions League. If so, the runners-up do not qualify for Europe.

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Until the quarter-finals, each round is seeded but, unlike in Germany, in favour of the higher-ranked club, which gets home advantage. Ties are decided over one game, extra-time and penalties, apart from the two-legged semi-final.

The final is usually played at Rome’s Stadio Olimpico.

The winners gain a berth in the Europa League – unless already through to the Champions League. If so, the runners-up do not qualify for Europe.
Season’s dealings

Serie A begins in late August and finishes in mid to late May. There’s a two-week break in January.

Sunday is calcio day, though there are usually a couple of games on a Saturday, at 6pm and 8.45pm. Sunday is also staggered, usually with a game at 12.30pm and at least one marquee fixture at 8.45pm, straddling the main kick-off time of 3pm. Kick-off for midweek fixtures is 8.45pm, often with one game at 6pm.

Serie B runs from late August to the third week of May, with play-offs into mid June. Most games are played on Saturday at 3pm, usually with one fixture on Friday evening and one on Monday evening.

Teams taking part in Champions League fixtures the following midweek often play league games on the previous Saturday rather than Sunday.

Milan sports daily Gazzetta dello Sport (www.gazzetta.it) provides a regularly updated schedule for both Serie A (www.gazzetta.it/Calcio/Serie-A) and Serie B (www.gazzetta.it/Calcio/Serie-B).

Entry level

Nearly all clubs distribute online most of them using either listicket (www.listicket.com/ticketing/home.html) or ticketone (www.ticketone.it). Both also have outlets across Italy.

You will need to provide ID details or, if going in person, show your passport.

The same goes for purchases from the biglietteria at the stadium, usually possible on a match day. Given the comparatively low crowds, availability is never too problematic these days. Few club shops distribute tickets.

Re-sale agency viagogo (www.viagogo.it/Biglietti-Sport/Calcio/Serie-A) is also very active in Italy.

The most expensive tickets (around €50-60) will be in the Tribuna Centrale, then Tribuna Laterale or Distinti (around €30-40). The cheapest (around €20) are behind the goals in the Curva, usually indicated Sud or Nord. This will be with the ultras. Away tickets are rarely sold on the day. Prices usually rise by at least 15% for games against the Milan giants or Juventus.

Match-day sales are common, though not for visiting supporters.

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The digital travel guide for football fans, liberoguide.com is the most up-to-date resource, city-by-city, club-by-club, to the game across Europe. Using only original photos and first-hand research, taken and undertaken over five seasons, liberoguide.com has been put together to enhance every football weekend and Euro night experience. From airport to arena, downtown sports bar to hotel, liberoguide.com helps you get the best out of your visit to football’s furthest corners and showcase stadiums.
**Benevento**

East of Naples in rural Campania, Benevento is an old Roman city, home of Benevento Calcio, the tenth incarnation of the city’s main football club.

Based at the Stadio Ciro Vigorito, the Witches made it to Serie A in 2017 then contrived to lose every single game until December. Opened in 1979, Ciro Vigorito honours a deceased benefactor, just as previous ground, the nearby Santa Maria degli Angeli, became the Gennaro Meomartini, after the lawyer who funded its modernisation. Both grounds are south of the river Sabato, a 15-minute walk from the historic town centre.

**Bearings**

The nearest airport is Naples, 93km (58 miles) west of Benevento and 6km (3.5 miles) north-west of Naples itself.

From Arrivals, an Alibus runs every 20-30mins to Napoli Centrale station (€4, journey time 15min). A train to Benevento then takes 1hr 45min, changing at Caserta onto the swish Frecciargento. Online prices are €18. Alternatively, there’s also a direct regional train from Napoli Centrale, also 1hr 45min, single €6.

Benevento station is north-west of the city centre, a 10min walk along viale Principi di Napoli into town. Alternatively, regional train company EAV runs from Napoli Centrale to Benevento Rione Libertà, on the same side of the river as the stadium a 15-20min walk away. Journey time is 90min. A local bus service runs from the main train station through town, but timetables are a complete work of fiction. There’s a taxi firm by the station, phone number +39 0824 50341.

**Bed**

There’s no lodging around the stadium. The nearest hotel, business-friendly UNA Il Molino on via dei Mulini, is decent but isolated.

In the historic centre, Albergo della Corte on vico Papa Vittorio III is a cosy spot with doubles in the €50 range. Alternatively, there’s also a direct regional train from Napoli Centrale, also 1hr 45min, single €6.

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**Beer**

Bars dot the sidestreets off main corso Garibaldi. On via Capitano Pasquale De Julii, Il Tricorno is a classic bar/pizzeria, decked out in Benevento flags. On via Capitano Salvatore Rampone, the Agora is an equally rustic Benevento hang-out. Craft beer, TV sport and food share the limelight at Alter Ego at via Giuseppe Manciotti 16.

Of the pubs, Sherlock on viale dei Rettori has TV football and ales from the Whitstable Bay stable, while near the Teatro Romano, warren-like Good Fellows concentrates more on European beers. Near the station, Tavola Calda Bar Legend offers outdoor seating and TV football.
Setting unwanted records for runs of defeats in Serie A, Benevento Calcio [beneventocalcio.club] have ensured that their first season in Italy’s top flight in 2017-18 will not be followed by a second.

Until a goal from George Pușcaș won the promotion play-off at the Stadio Ciro Vigorito in June 2017, Benevento had only ever experienced lower-flight football since 1929.

Behind these recent achievements are the Vigorito brothers, Ciro and Oreste, who have also brought the stadium up to scratch. A two-tiered arena set close to the pitch, it has seen capacity rise to 16,867 individual seats.

Four stands are backdropped by the hills of Monteguardia. The main stand is divided into the Tribuna Superiore and Inferiore, with the Distinti opposite. The home end is the Curva Sud, away the Curva Nord, half also allocated to local support.

**Transport**

The stadium is poorly served by public transport. It’s a 20min walk from the centre, or 40min from the main train station.

Alternatively, the regional **EAV** train from Napoli Centrale (90min) goes to Benevento Rione Libertà, on the same side of the river as the stadium, 15–20 minutes away. The train terminates at Benevento Centrale. There are 11 trains a day (not Sundays or holidays), the last one back to Naples from Benevento around 8pm.

**Local buses** are unreliable.

A **taxi** between main station and stadium should cost around €10–€12.

**Tickets**

Even with stadium capacity at 16,000, **availability** is rarely a problem.

Tickets are sold at the **Mirage bar** on downtown piazza Roma. Another outlet is the Tabaccheria Collarile at piazza San Modesto 36, on the same side of the river as the stadium. Both open on Sundays.

At the stadium, the **ticket offices** behind the main stand operate Mon–Fri, 10am-12.30pm & 3pm-6pm, and also on the Sat before a match day.

**Online sales** are through Listicket (listicket.com/ticketing/home.html).

For **match-day sales**, try Mirage first before trekking all the way to the stadium.

**Bars**

The Ponte Santa Maria degli Angeli across the river provides access to two pre-match bars. **Excellent Café** has a shaded terrace by the roundabout. On the corner of via Girolamo Vitelli, **Sweet Café** offers a large tap of Peroni and chairs on the pavement.

Further down via Santa Colomba towards the stadium, **Caffetteria Melgrace** is handy but bland.

At the Esso petrol station by the stadium, the **Ewa Café** sells snacks and alcohol, its terrace facing the main stand.

**ID** is required for all ticket purchases in Italy.

For all information, contact the club at societa@beneventocalcio.club

For most Serie A fixtures, it’s €25 in the Curva Sud or Nord, €30 along the sidelines in the Distinti, and €48–€60 in the Tribuna Inferiore and Superiore. For under-10s, you pay a reduced price of €14–€34.

**Shop**

The **Benevento Calcio Store** (Mon–Sat 9.30am–1.30pm, 4.30pm–8.30pm) is at via del Pomerio 43, behind the Trajan Arch in the centre. Replica shirts, baseball caps, flags and scarves sparkle in bright red and yellow. Stalls are set up at the ground on match days.

The **Benevento station** has excellent trains to and from the stadium.

**Travel information**

- **Train travel**
  - From **Naples** to Benevento Rione Libertà: 90min. 
  - From **Naples Central Station** to Benevento Rione Libertà: 1hr 10min.
  - From **Porto di Salerno** to Benevento Rione Libertà: 1hr 15min.
  - From **Benevento Central Station** to Benevento Rione Libertà: 1hr 10min.

  
  - **Airlines**
    - **Ryanair**
      - To **Bari** (3 daily flights) €28-€60
      - To **Florence** (4 daily flights) €32-€73
      - To **Rome** (6 daily flights) €32-€65
  
  - **Train travel**
    - From **Bari** to Benevento Rione Libertà: 1hr 15min
    - From **Florence** to Benevento Rione Libertà: 2hr 30min
    - From **Rome** to Benevento Rione Libertà: 1hr 15min

  - **Car travel**
    - **Benevento** to **Naples Central Station**: 1hr 40min
    - **Benevento** to **Porto di Salerno**: 1hr 5min
    - **Benevento** to **Benevento Central Station**: 1min

**Amenities**

- **Stadium entrance**
  - **Entrance** to the stadium is between the Curva Sud and the Curva Nord.
  - **Turnstiles** are manned.
  - **VIP** areas are available.

**Ticket**

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For **match-day sales**, try Mirage first before trekking all the way to the stadium.
Bergamo

Home of one of Italy’s most enduring clubs, Atalanta, Bergamo is an affluent city in Lombardy divided into Upper and Lower Towns. Its local economy has benefited from its status as a budget-air hub convenient for nearby Milan. The team owes its origins to wealthy Swiss emigrés who founded a Foot Ball Club Bergamo in 1903 – although Atalanta were actually formed in October 1907.

Their first pitch was in via Maglio del Lotto by the railway lines, the other side of today’s station. After World War I, Atalanta moved out to Daste, towards today’s budget airport of Orio al Serio.

At the time there were two rival teams, Atalanta and Bergamasca, forced to play-off to access the Lombardy division of the Prima Categoria league in 1919. Atlanta won it but by the following February, the two clubs had merged, adopting black and blue as a symbol of the union.

Thus Italian football had another Nerazzurri to complement the ones in Milan.

In 1928, Atalanta moved to a new stadium north-east of town, first named after a Fascist martyr, Mario Brumana, today called the Stadio Atleti Azzurri d’Italia.

Atalanta went on to play more than 50 seasons in Italy’s top flight. Local rivalries around Lombardy include Brescia, AC Milan and Inter.

The club offices and store are located out in Zingonia, south-west of the city.

Relegated from Serie B in 2013, AlbinoLeffe, a merger of Albino and Leffe, also play at the Atleti Azzurri d’Italia.

Bearings
Orio al Serio Airport is 3.5km (2.5 miles) south-east of Bergamo, just outside the city limits. It also serves Milan 45km (28 miles) away. An ATB Airport bus (every 20mins; €2.10/€3 on board, €5 with 24hr city transport) takes 20mins to reach Bergamo train station and then onto the High Town. The same company runs city buses, €1.25 a single ticket, €3.50 a day pass. A taxi (+39 035 451 9090) to town should cost around €15.

Bed
The Bergamo Tourist Office (visitbergamo.net/en) has a hotel-booking service.

Taking advantage of the early-morning budget-air traffic, locals have converted their flats for tourist accommodation, such as Early Leaving Bergamo Airport, the nearest lodging to the stadium. Airport transfer is included in the price.

In the Lower Town, the key place is the evening-only Ritual Pub (via San Francesco D’Assissi 1), off the main drag from the station.

Beer
Upper Town haunts near the funicular stop include Tucans, the Fly Pub and the Birreria Bergamo Alta, with seven beers on tap. Near the Basilica, Pub Sant’Orsola on the street of the same name shows sport a-plenty.

On piazzale Repubblica, the Excelsior San Marco is a traditional four-star while revamped four-star Hotel Piemontese offers a convenient bed opposite the station.

A more conventional B&B is the Accademia, on via Baracca, halfway between town and the stadium, close to the equally affordable Santa Caterina on via Alberico da Rosciane.

A locals’ spot that screens matches.
Atalanta

Competing for more than half-a-century in Serie A and enjoying purple patches in the late 1940s and late 1980s, Atalanta Bergamasca Calcio (www.atalanta.it) have a long tradition but a near-empty trophy cabinet. In 2016-17, La Dea (‘The Goddess’) enjoyed an unexpectedly good season, qualifying for Europe after nearly three decades. Atalanta started out in 1907, merging with Bergamasca in 1920 and adopting the colours of black and blue as a symbol of the new union.

The club moved into a new stadium in 1928, today’s 25,000-capacity Atleti Azzuri d’Italia. Despite gradual modifications – a roof over the East Stand and the disappearance of the running track – the current ground feels somewhat outdated.

Despite talk of a new stadium, the needs of Atalanta – and third-flight groundshare side AlbinoLeffe – are very modest indeed.

Atalanta fans occupy the Curva Nord (Federico Pisani) on via Fossoli/piazzale delle Olimpiadi, and one half of the Curva Sud (sectors S09-S17), while sectors DN4-DN7, DN9 are for away fans, accessed where piazzale Goisis meets via del Lazzaretto. The main stand, Tribuna Centrale, is accessed via piazzale Goisis, while the cheaper Distinti Nord seats are between the Curva Pisani and main stand. The facing Creberg Stand on via Cesare contains both covered and uncovered seats.

Transport

The best option is the pink No.6 bus that not only stops at Stadio but goes around the ground; Nos. 9A and 9B stop at Stadio, on piazzale Goisis. These set off from Porta Nuova, at the far end of the main road (viale Papa Giovanni XXIII) that leads from the station. Turn right at the end for Fermata 101, by via Camozzi 28, beside the UGF Banca. Bus No.3 runs to Stadio from the funicular stop in the Upper Town. No bus runs directly from the train station to the stadium, a walk of at least 30mins.

Shop

Atalanta have no store in town, only at the Orio Center out by the airport. You’ll find it on the first floor – turn left as you exit the elevator.

Bars

The best two bars are on viale Cesare, behind the Tribuna Creberg. In the wonderful Bar Stadio (No.16E), old locals leaf through the day’s sports paper beneath black-and-white images of Atalanta in the post-war era. Across the road, built into a newspaper kiosk, a cabin-like café (No.15) is filled with Atalanta souvenirs.

On piazzale delle Olimpiadi, in the Villa Sport, Garden offers a full menu, including a €25 Bergamasco special.

Tickets

Tickets are distributed at local lotto outlets, including viale Papa Giovanni XXIII No.58 and via Giuseppe Garibaldi, both central. Online sales are taken care of by Listicket.

At the stadium, the ticket offices on piazza Goisis are currently closed – on match days, use the ones on viale Cesare. Remember that you need to show ID in order to purchase.

You’ll pay around €50 for the best seats in the Tribuna Centrale, less than €25 for a seat in the opposite Tribuna Creberg and less than €20 for a place on the Curva Sud or Pisani.
Bologna

A one-club city, Bologna has celebrated more titles than Rome, Florence or Naples – but most were pre-war and the last came in 1964.

Bologna FC date back to 1909. The game was first played here by international students, based in the city of Europe’s oldest university. Among their number was Antonio Bernabéu, brother of Santiago who would later transform Real Madrid.

Still under foreign influence, Bologna played a successful Danubian style, winning titles and moving to a new stadium, the Littoriale (later named Dall’Ara), built in 1927. It staged two games for the 1934 World Cup, including a classy duel between the Austrian Wunderteam and Hungary.

Under Hungarian coach Árpád Weisz, Bologna became Italy’s top club in the run-up to war, before Weisz was murdered in Auschwitz. A plaque on stadium wall is dedicated to his memory.

The city’s importance to the Italian game was recognised when Bologna was chosen as a 1990 World Cup venue. This was where David Platt scored his famous last-minute goal against Belgium.

Bologna’s Marconi Airport 6km (3.7miles) north-west of town, connected by regular BLQ shuttle (€6, journey time 20mins) to the train station. The same company runs city buses (€1.30 single from tabacchi/€1.50 on board, €5 giornaliero day pass).

A taxi (+039 051 372 727) to the station should cost €15 plus baggage, €18 at night.

Bologna Welcome has a room-booking service. Opposite the station stand upscale Starhotels Excelsior Bologna and four-star chain Mercure Bologna Centro.

Towards town, NH Bologna De La Gare offers late Sunday check-outs while on via dell’Indipendenza, Hotel Internazionale screens matches in the bar. On the same street, Grand Hotel Majestic Già Baglioni lives up to its billing while Tre Vecchi feels old-school.

Nearby, BrewDog on via San Valentino is the Bologna branch of this global Aberdeen ale chain. On via Paradiso, The Irish Times is the oldest pub in town, and puts up a maxi screen for big matches.

Finally, opposite the station, AB is a simple bar that also sells BFC souvenirs.
Bologna FC

Bologna FC (bolognafc.it/en) are a hallowed name in Italian football whose glory days came before the war. Success has been all too rare since – and relegation all too frequent.

Formed in 1909, Bologna were one of the first clubs to challenge the early Genoa-Milan-Piedmont hegemony.

In 1964, the Rossoblù faced Inter in a title play-off. Days before, the Milanese side had been crowned European champions while Bologna had suffered the loss of long-term president, Renato Dall’Ara – the players couldn’t attend the funeral. Led by captain Giacomo Bulgarelli, Bologna triumphed 2-0.

Bulgarelli also helped the Rossoblù to two Italian cups but Bologna would never again challenge for the title.

The Stadio Renato Dall’Ara was originally named the Littoriale after an elite rank of Roman soldier. A grand arena of classic red brick, it welcomed Mussolini for its opening fixture in 1927. Renamed the Dall’Ara after the club president who died before the 1964 title play-off, the stadium was modernised for the 1990 World Cup with the red brick, portico and Marathon Tower still in place.

The home end, the Curva Bulgarelli, is on via Andrea Costa. Home fans also occupy the Curva San Luca opposite, while away fans are allocated sectors A and B alongside, the Curva Ospiti, accessed on via Menabue. Laterali seats in the Distinti provide a good view. Tribuna Coperta is the covered main stand.

Transport
Bus No.21 runs from the train station (on the right of the forecourt as you exit) to Stadio, a journey of about 15mins and a dozen stops. Bus No.14 also runs along Andrea Costa, from central Rizzoli, while No.20 from Rizzoli calls at the Dello Sport stop by the away end.

Tickets
The club advises to buy tickets in advance, €60 (€70 on the day) for the Tribuna Coperta, €35/€40 in Distinti and €15/€18 in the Curva Bulgarelli. Under-18s are charged half-price.

If Milan, Inter, Juve or Roma are in town, then prices rise considerably.

Bars
On via Andrea Costa, the Pizzeria San Gennaro (No.172) and Ciclope restaurant (No.190) stand either side of the stadium, with the fish-oriented La Langouste (No.210) further along.

Behind the Curva San Luca, Billi Bar 1833 has been serving coffee and cakes since its name suggests. On piazza della Pace, Bar Maratona displays a signed shirt while at via Porrettana 55, Caffetteria San Luca has a back restaurant and football chatter out front.

Tickets go on sale two weeks ahead, online from the club or via vivaticket, either online (bolognafc.vivaticket.it/eng) or from its local outlets, including at Bologna Welcome on piazza Maggiore.

On match days, the ticket offices on via Andrea Costa and piazza della Pace open 3hrs before kick-off.

In all cases, ID must be presented.

Shops
The Bologna FC Official Store (Mon-Sat 10am-7.30pm, match days) at the stadium is on via dello Sport. In town, there’s more Bologna merchandise at the Macron BFC Store (daily 10.30am-7.30pm) in the Galleria Cavour.

Bologna’s current second kit features a red-and-blue sash created from 100 star BFC names.
Cagliari

Capital of Sardinia, Cagliari is the only place to have landed the Italian title off the mainland. In the near 50 years since, flagship club Cagliari have maintained a regular presence in the top flight despite the lack of a regular home ground.

The Sant’Elia stadium, inaugurated for the first match after that 1970 championship win, was the base for England’s group matches for Italia ’90. In 2017, the Sardegna Arena was put up beside it, while a permanent stadium is built instead. The quick-fix Sardegna Arena will be taken down in 2021-22.

Cagliari first played at via Pola, near the railway station. As a port city, the Sardinian capital was open to foreign influence and the first game was played between local students and Genoese sailors in 1902.

With the introduction of non-Sardinian players in the late 1920s, Cagliari made Serie B in 1931 before their golden era of the late 1960s and early 1970s. Although the Rossoblù haven’t come close to a scudetto since, their recent long stint in Serie A has kept a fan base hungry yet loyal.

**Bearings**

Cagliari Elmas Airport is 7km (4 miles) north-west of town, served by a railway link (€1.30, 7min journey time) every 20min to Cagliari station. A taxi (+39 070 400 101) should cost €20.

Public transport consists of the two-line ARST Metrocagliari network (€1.30 single), and bus and trolleybus network run by CTM (€1.30 single, €2 integrato ticket combined with a metro journey). The €3.30 integrato day ticket is valid for metro and bus.

Cagliari station is by the waterfront, close to the centre but a steep walk. Stadio Sant’Elia is further down the waterfront, a bus or taxi journey away.

**Bed**

The Cagliari Tourist Office lists hotels. The nearest lodging to the stadium is Bed & Breakfast Elia’s, bright and contemporary. Also close is the four-star Hotel Panorama, with a pool and aptly panoramic restaurant.

In town, chic T Hotel on via Giudicati offers a spa while the mid-range 4 Mori is convenient for port and station. B&Bs line via Garibaldi, where you find the upscale Cagliari Boutique Rooms.

At the budget end, Hostel Marina off via Manno is set in a former 16th-century monastery.

**Beer**

Sardinian beer Ichnusa is brewed near Cagliari. Sample it around the Old Town, Marina and Poetto Beach.

To catch the match, try the Germanic Bier Keller on viale Trieste. Another option is Old Square, on corso Vittorio Emanuele II, Irish-themed with Sky TV. The Cork is in similar vein, on via Dante Alighieri.

Many brews are provided at Il Merlo Parlante (via Portoscalas 69) and the Beer Garden on via Angioy.

Locals gather at the Antico Caffè on piazza Constituzione. There’s a prime view from hilltop cocktail bar Libarum Nostrum via Santa Croce.

Old Cagliari players frequent fish restaurant La Stella Marina di Montecristo (via Sardegna 140).

In summer, head for Emerson at Poetto or, at Cala Fighera, La Paillote with its own beach. Both are owned by ex-Cagliari star François Modesto.
Cagliari Calcio

Forever linked with the landmark title win of 1970 and the iconic striker who helped achieve it, Luigi Riva, Cagliari (cagliaricalcio.net) are the flagship club of Sardinia.

Founded in 1920, the Rossoblù have spent a third of their history in the top flight, first gaining promotion the very season that Riva came on board, 1963-64. Six years later, Riva’s goals brought the Scudetto to Cagliari.

The title won at the Amsicora, the new champions then moved to the Sant’Elia. Controversial businessman Massimo Cellino acquired the club in 1992. Behind the scenes, chaos reigned. Along with a rapid changing of coaches, Cagliari saw the closure of the Sant’Elia followed by a long-running saga to find a new one.

Now Cagliari are back at the Sant’Elia complex, a rapidly erected Sardegna Arena opened in September 2017 to serve the club until 2021-22 while a new Sant’Elia is constructed alongside.

The new Sant’Elia will hold 21,000. Incoming owner Tommaso Giuliani, a Milanese entrepreneur, oversaw promotion back to Serie A in 2016, then the move into the Sardegna Arena.

Occupying the former car park of the Sant’Elia, the ground is an all-seater holding just over 16,000, 3,000 places covered in the main stand. Two tiers sit behind each goal, the Curva Sud and Curva Nord, away fans allocated a section of the Nord.

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For major fixtures in 2017-18, it’s €30 to sit in the Curva Sud or Nord, €45 in the Distinti Laterale, a sideline seat towards the corner flags. You pay €70 nearer the halfway line in the Distinti Centrale. The best seats are in the Tribuna Centrale, either Blu (€80) or Rosso (€100). Everywhere but either Curva, it’s €15-€20 cheaper for women, under-18s and over-65s, and €15 anywhere for under-12s, availability willing.

For lesser opposition, prices drop down to €12 for a place in the Curva, and €10-€15 cheaper elsewhere.

Bars
Over the Canale Palma by the Hotel Panorama, the Café Etnico (via Rockfeller 39) is a convivial spot serving light snacks, a 15min walk via pedestrian walkway from the stadium, itself set in a desolate, bar-free wasteland. Away from Sant’Elia but on a spit of land close to the former stadium of Is Arenas, La Marinella is a quality, calcio-centric, seaview restaurant popular with locals on Serie A Sundays.

Transport
Bus No.6 runs from central via Dante, viale Regina Margherita and via Bonaria closeish to the station to the Sant’Elia/ Sardegna Arena. From focal piazza Giovanni XXIII near the Opera House, you can also take bus No.3, journey time around 15-20min.

A taxi from Cagliari station shouldn’t take more than ten minutes, the fare around €12.

Tickets & shop
The club has two outlets, the main one at largo Carlo Felice 76, the Cagliari 1920 Store (daily 9am-8.30pm), close to the Old Square pub in town. There’s a smaller shop [daily 9am-1pm, 4pm-8pm] in the piazza L’Unione Sarda mall by Santa Gilla station, one stop/1.5km north of Cagliari main train station. Tickets (ID required) are sold as well as red-and-blue merchandise.

There are also online sales through Listicket (www.listicket.it).
Crotone

**Crotone** is way down in the toe of Italy. Once part of Ancient Greece, and home to FC Crotone, it is closer to Corfu than to the nearest major Italian city of Naples.

The **Stadio Ezio Scida** is near Crotone bus and train stations, overshadowed by a hospital. During the promotion season of 2015-16, supporters checked in as patients to see the match below.

Crotone itself has a bar quarter ranged around a lively beach. First based here at the seafront, the club moved to its current ground in 1946.

Fortunes changed when the Vrenna brothers, Raffaele and Gianni, took over the club. With more backing and influence, Crotone sealed promotion to Serie A in 2016. The surprise defeat of Lazio provided unexpected salvation at the end of 2016-17 – the same may be needed in 2018.

**Bearings**

Crotone’s **Sant’Anna Airport** closed in 2016 but should reopen later in 2018. It is located 15km (9.5 miles) south of town.

There are more flights to **Lamezia**, 105km (65 miles) west of Crotone. Crotone-based **Autolinee Romano** runs a bus service (not Sun) at 6am (direct) and mid-afternoon [via Catanzaro] from the airport, journey times to Crotone 2hr 15min/3hr. There are more services between the airport and **Catanzaro**, again not Sundays.

The **bus terminal** is on via di Vittorio near the stadium. **Romano** also operates local services, tickets €1.50.

From **Napoli Centrale**, it’s a 5hr-6hr journey to Crotone by train, via Lamezia Terme and often at Catanzaro Lido. **Online**, a single ticket is around €30-€40. The **train station** is near the bus terminus and stadium, 15-20min from the city centre.

**Taxi Crotone** (+39 328 432 7731) is central and offers airport transfers with Lamezia, around €100.

**Bed**

The nearest lodging to the stadium is modest **B&B La Pietra Preziosa** on via Bologna by the hospital. Half-guesthouse, **Il Tulipano** (via dei Iapigi, off via dei Greci, +39 329 047 9193) is by the entrance for the Marrelli Hospital, the stadium an easy stroll away.

By the bus station, the **B&B Margherita** is well located for the stadium.

On via Vittoria, the **Concordia** is an old-school mid-range Italian hotel while **B&B Vittoria** on via Luigi Settino is comfortable.

On the seafront, four-star **Palazzo Foti** feels grand. Further along, nisi provides upscale B&B accommodation.

**Beer**

Seafront **viale Cristoforo Colombo** buzzes with busy bars. Main pub **The Bounty** packs on big-match nights. **Alcatraz No Way Out** next door is a bar/club for a younger crowd.

On Colombo, **La Casa Cantoniera** is a busy restaurant with TV football prominent. Opposite, **Archito pizzeria** also shows the game. **La Gassa d’Amante** next door attracts a party crowd. **Cos’è Pazz** offers pizzas galore and calcio. In between, the **Columbus Natural Bar** provides organic food and football.

On the beach, **Lúys** is a DJ spot while **Exodus** serves bathers in summer. Tastefully retro **Mara** is a must. **Panzibar** lends a Latin touch.

In town, the biggest screen for football is at sleek **Bar Manhattan**, on via Tedeschi.
Now in Serie A for two seasons running, FC Crotone (fccrotone.it) have climbed higher than any side representing this seaside town in Calabria.

Having performed the great escape to stay up in 2017, the Pythagoreans now need to find a few more angles to achieve similar in 2018.

Before Crotone’s promotion in 2016, Crotone was very much a soccer backwater. In 1946, the Stadio Ezio Scida was completed, named after a team captain who had lost his life in a transport accident. After decades of lower-flight football, the ground was adapted for Serie A use. Increasing capacity to 13,500, since raised to an all-seated 16,000, the revamp saw the Curva Nord fenced-off for away fans.

Part of the main stand, Tribuna Principale, is covered – the rest is open to the elements.

The home end furthest from the main road, the temporary-looking two-tier Curva Sud, is named after Giorgio Manzulli, a Crotone fan who died in tragic circumstances.

Opposite the main stand is the Tribuna Distinti.

Transport
From Crotone train station, walk down viale Stazione until you reach a small roundabout, the junction with via di Vittorio, site of the main bus station. Those arriving by train should turn right into via di Vittorio, those by bus, turn left out of the terminus and straight down. You’ll see the stadium over the road to your left. From town, the stadium is a 15min walk.

Tickets
Despite a modest capacity of 16,000 games rarely sell out, not even for top opposition. The average attendance for the Serie A season of 2017-18 is below 10,000.

Advance sales are distributed online by Listicket.

On match days, a ticket office operates near the stadium on via di Vittorio, by Krotonlandia just inside the Parco delle Mimose. For online and direct purchases you will need to supply ID.

The cheapest seats are in the home Curva Sud, €25, rising to €35 and €45 in the Distinti. For games with Juve, Inter, Milan or Roma.

Shop
Stalls around the stadium proffer red-and-blue flags and scarves. For a wider selection of merchandise, near the ground at corso Giuseppe Mazzini 49, Corky Sport/Zeus stocks Crotone shirts and tracksuit tops. It closes on Sundays, even match days.

Bars
Drinking spots surround the stadium. The best is by the ticket office, just inside the entrance to Krotonlandia on via di Vittorio. A kiosk operates outside while the Bar delle Mimose displays Crotone shirts and has a gazebo where a TV shows Serie A news all afternoon.

On main via Giovanni Paolo II, modest Tropical Bar by via dei Romani displays its Crotone colours – a pleasant back terrace overlooks the stadium.

Still on via Giovanni Paolo II, by the roundabout, the American Bar is a standard Italian spot for coffee and sticky cakes.

On the other side of the ground by the hospital, Il Gattopardo is a regulars' bar where via Bologna and via XXV Aprile meet. Venture down via Bologna for pocket-sized Aladin, and, usually more lively and calcio-focused, Bar La Capasa.

LIBERO
Ferrara

Ferrara is a UNESCO World Heritage Site a half-hour train ride from Bologna. Tourists stroll its picturesque historic centre, around moated medieval Castello Estense.

Successive promotions thrust local club SPAL Ferrara into Serie A in 2017, a first since 1968.

Their stadium, a classic Stadio Comunale hemmed in by green-shuttered housing, opened in 1928.

In recent years, the club merged with nearby Giacomense to become SPAL 2013, at the initiative of incoming owners, laminate magnates the Colombarinis.

Recent success has seen a rapid rebuilding and expanding of the Comunale, now called Stadio Paolo Mazza, with more work to follow in 2018.

Bearings

The nearest airport is Bologna Guglielmo Marconi is 51km (32 miles) south-west. The Bus & Fly service sets off from Arrivals every 2.5-3hrs, heading for Ferrara station near the stadium and viale Cavour by the Castello Estense in the city centre. Journey time is 60min, single €16.

An Aerobus also runs every 11min from the airport to Bologna station (25min), tickets €6.

From there, the fastest train to Ferrara (€4.75) is every 1-2hrs and takes 30min. The slower service, same price, takes 45-50min.

From Ferrara station, the stadium is a 5-7min walk, the city centre 15min away. Local buses are run by ami Ferrara.

Tickets are €1.30, a giornaliero day pass €3.50, from newspaper kiosks.

Radio Taxi Ferrara (+39 0532 900 900) is a reliable local service.

Bed

The nearest lodging to the stadium is the Hotel Orologio, a four-star close to the canal, with a spa, bar and restaurant.

On main viale Cavour, functional four-star Hotel Astra is still within easy reach.

Closer to town, Hotel Touring has SKY Italia in each room, a spa and quality breakfasts. Half- or full-board deals available.

On the main square, Annunziata is sleek and chic. Nearby, equally classy Hotel Ferrara fills a former 15th-century tavern.

Around the castle moat, the Hotel de Prati has been in the hospitality trade for nearly a century but doesn’t feel dated or jaded.

Also on this side of the Castello, the Hotel Europa dates back to 1861 when it hosted royalty.

For something cheaper, the Albergo San Romano comprises 15 comfortable rooms between the castle and the canal.

Beer

On via San Romano in the centre, Birra Frara purveys its own artisanal beers. The wonderful Antico Cafè, at via Bersaglieri del Po 25E, also offers lesser-known brews. This cosy, bare-brick hidey-hole shows its SPAL support with flags and team photos.

Anglophile corner bar Il Molo on via Contrari establishes pub credentials with football scarves and TV sport.

Beneath the Castle, Birraria Giori dates back to 1881, a bar/brewery set in a pretty gazebo, outside tables set on historic cobblestones. Opposite, the Caffe Divino specialises in rarer ales and fine wines.

Main Street sits on viale Cavour, with Paulaner and Sardinian Ichnusa on draught, and football screened.

Near the canal on via Darsena, L’Archibugio sets up a big screen outside on popular Serie A afternoons. Nearby, atmospheric waterside Sebastian Pub offers decent beer, quality pizzas and TV football aboard a vintage German sea trawler hauled all the way to Ferrara.
Promoted to Serie A in 2017, SPAL Ferrara are a grand old name in the Italian game though with little silverware to show for it. Based at the fifth-oldest ground still operating in top-class Italian football, SPAL hark back to a long-lost era of communal stadiums in Italian town centres, hemmed in by residential buildings.

The Comunale was later renamed Stadio Paolo Mazza after the sporting director during the club’s golden era.

In the wilderness for half a century, from 2016 SPAL managed to achieve two promotions in as many seasons, necessitating the expansion of the Stadio Mazza from 7,000 to 13,000. As workmen laboured to get the Stadio ready for August 2017, SPAL played their first home game at Bologna, a 3-2 win over Udinese crowned by a 94th-minute goal from Bologna loanee Luca Rizzo.

Having modified their ground to accommodate 1,600 away fans in a temporary metal structure along via Montegrappa, SPAL returned home. The Gradinata Nord on via Cassoli was rebuilt to contain 3,800 seats and a TV screen. Home fans still gather in the Curva Ovest on via Ortigara. VIPs are housed in the main Tribuna Sud on corso Piave. Both these stands are roofed.

In December 2017, a loan of €1.8 million was announced for further stadium expansion to 16,000 seats.

Tickets
Tickets are put on general sale online through VivaTicket ten days in advance.

VivaTicket also distributes through Coop stores, tobacconists and bars in Ferrara. If tickets are left over on match day, they are distributed through the Biglietteria Centrale on corso Piave, which opens for two hours from mid-morning. ID must be provided.

For top opposition, advance admission is €35 in the home Curva Ovest and away Curva Est, €50–€75 along the sidelines in the Gradinata Laterale and Centrale. Prices increase by €5 on match days.

For less attractive visiting sides, prices reduce to €23 in the Curva Ovest, and €32–€50 on the sidelines, again with a €5 levy on match days.

Ladies, over 65s and under 16s are charged around €10 in all sectors.

Shops
The main SPAL Store is at via Voltapaletto 17 (Tue-Sat 9.30am-1pm, 3.30pm-7.30pm) near the cathedral. A match-day outlet also operates at corso Piave 28, behind the Tribuna Sud.

Replica shirts come in three varieties, starting with light blue and white stripes.

Bars
Home fans gather at the Bar Piave (corso Piave 77), between stadium and station, with quality beers and burgers, and occasional DJs.

Closer to the stadium, the Bar Fortezza on the sidestreet of the same name has that match-day essential, a gazebo, but is otherwise standard-issue.

Best spot by the stadium is wonderful La Coccinella, where via Ortigara meets Cassoli. Decked out in blue and white, it runs a decent kitchen with a daily menu but is otherwise ideal for affordable pre-match drinks.
Florence

If Genoa or Turin is the cradle of the modern Italian game, then Florence, home of Fiorentina, is its historic source. Calcio Fiorentino, an early form of football/rugby, was played across 16th-century Italy. Piazza Santa Croce, where the game is still staged every June, was its Wembley.

Calcio is the Italian name for modern-day football, but Florence lacked the industrial drive of Turin for the sport to develop.

It wasn’t until 1926 that Fiorentina were formed, at the instigation of Marquis Luigi Ridolfi, the first president. He was also head of the local Fascist Federation, seeking to propagate sporting excellence.

The embodiment of Ridolfi’s dream was the groundbreaking modernist stadium built by Pier Luigi Nervi. Still used by Fiorentina today, the later renamed Stadio Artemio Franchi retains its 1932 look thanks to a kind refit for Italia ‘90. Ridolfi was also behind the Coverciano national training centre east of Campo di Marte. The Museo del Calcio there is worth a visit.

A World Cup venue in 1934, the Comunale witnessed Fiorentina win the title in 1956 and again in 1969. The current Fiorentina usually finish there or thereabouts – more often, thereabouts.

Bearings

Underused Florence Airport is 8km (5 miles) north-west of town. Vueling has direct budget connections with Luton and Gatwick. A Volainbus (€6, €10 return, €1.20 extra for a day ticket) leaves every 30mins for Florence bus terminus via the main train station of Santa Maria Novella (journey time 20-25mins). Ataf also runs city transport of buses and trams (single €1.20, €2 on board, 24hr €5).

A taxi (+39 055 4390) from airport to town (15mins) should cost €20-€25.

Busier Pisa is 82km (50.5 miles) from Florence. A taxi (+39 050 541 600) to Pisa station is €10. An hourly bus (online €14) from Pisa airport to Santa Maria Novella takes 70min.

Bed

The nearest hotels to the stadium are the two-star Ungherese on via Amici and the grandiose Palazzo Lombardo on viale dei Mille.

Near Santa Maria Novella, lodgings run from two-star Hotel Berna to top-notch Grand Hotel Baglioni Firenze. The Roma is also convenient, the Lombardia slightly cheaper. The sumptuous B4 Astoria Firenze on via del Giglio is where Milton composed parts of ‘Paradise Lost’.

The riverside Balestri on piazza Mentana is a nice mid-range choice while the two-star Santa Croce on via Dè Bentaccordi is also near the Arno.

Beer

Expat magnet Florence is dotted with pubs. The first to set up, near Santa Maria Novella station, was the Fiddler’s Elbow, with big-screen football and happy-hour beers. Nearby is the similarly sport-centric Lion’s Jock. Finnegan on via San Gallo is proudly Irish-owned.

The Old Stove on via Pellicceria covers all bases for pints and Prem coverage. The Tartan Jock on corso dei Tintori offers TV soccer as does the James Joyce (Lugarno Cellini 1) on the opposite riverbank. Perhaps the best is lived-in Uncle Jimmy’s on via dei Pescioni, with a big screen.

Of the Italian bars, busy FRienDS at borgo San Jacopo 51 is set between No.27 and No.29.
Champions only twice, Fiorentina [en. violachannel.tv] have an importance in the Italian game beyond the extent of their silverware. Flagship club of Florence, the Viola have a huge fan base, and a bitter rivalry with Juventus.

The Italian title of 1982 escaped Viola clutches thanks to a dubious penalty in Juve’s favour. Fiorentina later sold their star talent, Roberto Baggio, to the Turin giants.

When film producer Mario Cecchi Gori became president, headline names arrived, in particular Gabriel Batistuta, ‘Batigol’, the fans’ idol.

Huge wage bills led to bankruptcy. President Diego Della Valle formed a new club forced to play its way out of the fourth flight. They became ACF Fiorentina, and returned to Serie A in 2004.

A superb example of pre-war stadium architecture, the Stadio Artemio Franchi was devised by star architect Pier Luigi Nervi with the 1934 World Cup in mind.

Refurbishments for the 1990 World Cup included a new lower tier and a sprucing up of Nervi’s concrete.

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Viola fans occupy both ends, the north Curva Fiesole considered the home one. Opposite is the Railway End, the Curva Ferrovia, with away fans in the settore ospiti (051-3, accessed through gates 13 and 14) at the Ferrovia end of the Marathona, the stand dominated by the tower of the same name. The lower tiers of each sideline, Parterre di Maratona and Parterre Tribuna, suit neutrals.

**Transport**

A train leaves Santa Maria Novella station for Campo di Marte every 15mins (€1.50), 5mins/1 stop away. It usually sets off from outer platform 18. At Campo di Marte, take the walkway towards the floodlights. This is the Ridolfi athletics stadium – the Stadio Artemio Franchi is behind.

**Tickets**

The Fiorentina ticket office [Mon-Fri 9.30am-1pm, 2.30pm-6.30pm, from 9.30am match-day weekends] near the stadium at via Settesanti 28r/corner via Dupré offers advance and match-day sales.

Other outlets include the age-old kiosk in the city centre, il chiosco degli sportivi [Tue-Sat 10am-2pm, 3.30pm-7.30pm, cash only], where via degli Anselmi meets via Pellicceria.

Online sales are distributed through Ticket One.

ID is required in all cases.

For the most games, you pay €20 in the Curva Fiesole/Ferrovia, €40 in the Maratona, and €50-€55 in the Maratona Centrale, Tribuna Parterre and Tribuna Laterale. Prices rise for marquee opponents.

**Shops**

At Fiorentina Point [viale Manfredo Fant 85A] by the stadium, you can find original red-and-white Fiorentina shirts, laptop bags and Fiorentina earrings.

The Fiorentina Store Duomo [daily 10am-8pm] in town (borgo San Lorenzo 9R) has a smaller selection.

**Bars**

On viale Fant by the stadium, the Bar Marisa [corner via Carnesecchi] displays Batigol-era photos over the bar.

The splash from ‘Stadio’ after the ’56 title win stands out amid the four walls of Fiorentina history in the Pizzeria Da Graziano Stadio [Fanti No.3er].

By the rugby ground on viale Paoli, Rugbier is a Bierstube, with Riegele lager from Augsburg and Bavarian specials.
Genoa

Genoa, the cradle of the modern Italian game, is home to Serie A and city rivals Genoa and Sampdoria.

The Derby della Lanterna between them is named after the historic lighthouse once overseen by the uncle of Christopher Columbus. The fixture is played at the ground shared by the two clubs, the Luigi Ferraris Stadium.

The Genoa Cricket and Athletic Club were formed in 1893 by and for British expatriates. A certain James Spensley opened its football section and initiated the inaugural Italian Championship between Genoa and Turin. Spensley kept goal as Genoa won six of the first seven titles. Two of their competitors in the burgeoning top flight were Andrea Doria and Sampierdarenese, also local.

Originally based in Campasso on the city’s western outskirts, the Genoa club moved to Marassi, on the east bank of the Bisagno river, where a ground was opened in 1911.

A regular stage for Italian internationals, it was renamed the Luigi Ferraris after a legendary Genoa player who perished in World War I. Andrea Doria played alongside, occasionally meeting Sampierdarenese in the Ligurian leagues.

Merged, then separated, then merged again as Sampdoria in 1946, this new club moved in to share the Luigi Ferraris with Genoa.

**Bearings**

Genoa’s Cristoforo Colombo airport is 7.5km (five miles) west of town, linked by Volabus (every 30-45mins, journey time 30-45mins) that calls at both main stations, Principe and Brignole, straddling the old town centre. Tickets (£6 on board, £5 online) include one onward journey. Tickets for the bus network and one-line metro connecting the two stations are £1.50, or £4.50 for a 24hr pass. Brignole station is almost walking distance from the stadium.

A taxi (+39 010 5966) from the airport has a fixed rate of €7/€8 per person, with three people travelling.

**Bed**

On piazza Verdi by Brignole Station, you’ll find four-star Hotel Moderno Verdi and renovated three-star Hotel Brignole. A cheaper option, on nearby via Vincenzo, is basic I Capricci.

Nearer to the stadium on via Borgo degli Incrociati is stylish B&B il Borgo di Genova.

The many lodgings near Principe Station range from the historic, five-star Grand Hotel Savoia Genova to the family-run two-star Hotel Balbi. The nearby Hotel della Posta is similarly affordable. Even cheaper is the Bernhoeft (via Balbi 15, +39 010 247 2166), a basic bargain-basement find.

In the same family, style and location as the Savoia is the equally classic Hotel Continental, while more modest three-star Vittoria is tucked away in its own little square.

**Beer**

Genoa nightlife is concentrated in little downtown hubs such as piazza delle Erbe, site of beer temple 28 Erbe, and nearby piazza San Bernardo, site of contemporary Bar MoReTTi.

Near San Bernardo, Mangiabuono (vico Vegetti 3r) is a pesto-with-everything eatery run by a rugby-mad Anglophile.

Also recommended are the Bavarian Hofbräuhaus on via Boccardo and the friendly Fabrique bar with its Samp and Inter paraphernalia by the docks.

Pubs include the time-warp Britannia (vico Casana 76, signposted on via Roma) and the Tartan Pub (via Invrea 13).
The Luigi Ferraris, known by its original name of the Marassi, is a grand old man of Italian football. This 36,600-capacity red-brick landmark by the dried-up Bisagno river is one of Europe’s most enduring football arenas.

Occupied by Genoa since its opening in 1911 and shared by Sampdoria since 1946, the Marassi is where Italy have played many an international, before and after the war. It also saw action in two World Cups, the Spain-Brazil fixture of 1934 and four games for Italia ‘90. Here Costa Rica beat Scotland, and David O’Leary scored the winning penalty for Ireland over Romania in a shoot-out.

With one wooden grandstand opened in 1915 and a complete ground of 51,000 capacity created by 1934, the then Comunale began to look something like a modern-day stadium after a two-tiered stand was built in 1951.

With the stadium squeezed between the river, a prison and tight residential streets, further development wasn’t considered until the World Cup of 1990.

The Marassi’s present-day look dates from this 1989 revamp: the four solid corner towers in distinctive red, a higher pitch and a new upper tier.

Genoa occupy the Gradinata Nord, Sampdoria the Gradinata Sud, both sets of fans fill most of the ground except, of course, for the derby. In all cases but the derby, away fans are allocated one end of the main Tribuna nearest the Gradinata Nord, sectors OL3, TL5 and PLS. Access is through Ingresso 6 on via Monnet nearest the river.

Transport
Brignole station is a 15-20min walk up along the Bisagno – head up via Canevarì via the underpass, the other side of the station to the main forecourt. Several buses run via Brignole up the east bank of the Bisagno to the Monnet-Stadio stop, and back via Brignole from the Bobbio 5/Stadio stop. On match days, circular buses KM and SM via Brignole run from waterfront piazzale Kennedy and Principe station respectively.

Tickets
Genoa and Sampdoria have their own ticketing arrangements and distribute online through Listicket. On match days, the botteghini stadio on via Monnet nearest the river.

Shops
Genoa and Sampdoria have their own outlets. Near the stadium at via Casata Centuriona 4, the store Off Side proffers merchandise from both sides.

Bars
By the river on via del Piano, the Bar del Tifoso (No.18) is a tiny spot for pre-match revelry.

Turning right into via Centuriona, the Bar Vittorio (No.7r) is a handy pitstop before you reach corso di Stefanis behind the stadium, where Pizzeria Derby (no.79) offers squares of pizza slathered in pesto and Edilio (No.104) is a decent-quality restaurant specialising in fish.

Grandiose Villa Piantelli (No.8), once occupied by aristocratic Genoese families, is now a now multi-purpose cultural centre, tucked away in a hidden courtyard backed up to the stadium. The first-floor bar is decorated with pre-war photographs of Genoa and its football culture.

Most days of the week and before Genoa games, the Little Club Genoa 1962 on via Claravezza is also open.

Genoa transport
Stadio Luigi Ferraris
Shops
Stadio Luigi Ferraris
Genoa transport
Stadio Luigi Ferraris
ITALY 2017-18 Stadio Luigi Ferraris
www.liberoguide.com/stadio-luigi-ferraris
Genoa

Italy’s oldest club, Genoa Cricket & Football Club (genoacfc.it) have a heritage dating back to 1893 – September 7 to be precise, when members of an expat social circle met at via Palestro 10. That evening, mine-owner and British consul Sir Charles Alfred Payton and associates founded the Genoa Cricket & Athletic Club, revised to the Genoa Cricket & Football Club when the influential Dr James Richardson Spensley formed the soccer section four years later. They would adopt the red-and-blue quarters still worn today.

In 1898, Genoa won the first Italian championship in Turin, and then another six before Milan and Juventus came to the fore. It took the arrival of ex-Blackburn winger Willy Garbutt for Genoa’s fortunes to swing back. As manager, the first of many in Italy known as ‘Mister’, Garbutt took Genoa to three more titles, returning to coach the club in the 1940s. Garbutt instigated fitness training, paid transfers and arranged matches with foreign opposition.

With heavyweight Czech striker Tomas Skruhavy, Brazilian Branco and popular libero Gianluca Signorini, Genoa snatched a fourth-place finish in Serie A in 1991 and went on a UEFA Cup run, past Liverpool, before coming up against Ajax in the semi-finals.

Despite the departures of Diego Milito and Thiago Motta, Genoa have maintained a top-flight spot – but too often only just.

A promising campaign under Gian Piero Gasperini saw Genoa finish sixth in 2014-15 – only to miss out on Europe through bureaucratic ineptitude.

Stadium

Genoa have been playing at the same Luigi Ferraris Stadium since 1911, their fans occupying the Gradinata Nord.

Tickets

Genoa distribute tickets from their outlet (Tue-Sun 10am-7pm) at via al Porto Antico 4 by the port. Online, it’s through agency Listicket, which also has outlets around Genoa, including at corso Buenos Aires 67 and via Paolo Giacometti 60, both in the Brignole/stadium area.

On match days, the botteghini stadio on via Monnet opens 3-4hrs before kick-off. In all cases, you need to provide ID to buy a ticket.

Prices are set at €20 in the Gradinata Sud, the Nord generally filled with Genoa ultras. It’s about €30 in the Distinti, and €40–€80 in the main stand, the Tribuna.

Shop & Museum

The shop stocks T-shirts bearing the club’s vintage badge, fishing hats, bottle openers, sunglasses and crash helmets, as well as kits of storied red and blue.

Across ten rooms and two floors, the museum covers 125 years of club history, from ‘Mister’ Willy Garbutt to the present day. Divided into sections (‘Games, shirts and players’, ‘Supporters’), this well conceived attraction also features a display of trophies and some 200 videos.

Bar

Behind the Gradinata Nord on via Claravezza, the Little Club Genoa 1962 is a small bar decked out in souvenirs from the Pope’s visit and the Anfield victory of 1992. It’s open most weekday lunchtimes and before Genoa games next door.
Sampdoria

Forever linked to the great side of the early 1990s that won the league and made three European finals, Sampdoria (sampdoria.it/en) are the result of a post-war merger between Andrea Doria and Sampierdarenese.

Both clubs dated back to the 1890s, often playing in rival championships, until a forced merger by the Fascist authorities in 1927 formed the united, and quickly disastrous, La Dominante Genova. Soon after, each reverted back to being a separate entity before another merger in 1946 created Unione Calcio Sampdoria. With it came a new shirt (and, subsequently, a new nickname, I Bluercchiati, 'The Blue-Ringed'), the blue of Andrea Doria combined with the white, red and black rings of Sampierdarenese.

Sampdoria also agreed a groundshare with Genoa at the Luigi Ferraris Stadium, one that remains in place today.

Sampdoria were transformed by oil magnate Paolo Mantovani, who made a handful of wise investments in the 1980s. With stars Gianluca Vialli and Roberto Mancini up front, Srečko Katanec and Attilio Lombardo in midfield, Pietro Vierchowod in defence and Gianluca Pagliuca in goal, Samp went on to win their only scudetto in 1991 – in a league also featuring Maradona's Napoli and Baresi's Milan. A year later, Samp made it to the final of the European Cup at Wembley, only to lose to Barcelona thanks to a memorable Ronald Koeman strike in extra-time.

Cup wins and European runs kept coming, but the era would be best remembered for the sudden death of Mantovani and the high-scoring tactics of Luciano Spalletti – tactics that ultimately led to relegation.

Derby wins under Marco Giampaolo endeared the coach to supporters but further European appearances seem a long way away. Off the pitch, the club has passed to film producer Massimo Ferrero, whose Roma credentials have little convinced Samp fans of his suitability for the role as owner and president.

Tickets
General sale starts a week before the game. Sampdoria distribute tickets through Sampdoria Service Center (Mon 9.30am-1pm, Tue-Fri 10am-6.30pm, Sat 9.30am-1pm, Sun 10am-1pm) at via Cesarea 97r, near piazza del Cavalletto behind Brignole station. Hours vary for home and away games.

The club also distributes online through Listicket with outlets at corso Buenos Aires 67 and via Paolo Giacometti 60, both in the Brignole/stadium area.

On match days, the botteghini stadio on via Monnet opens 3-4hrs before kick-off.

In all cases, you need to provide ID to buy a ticket.

With the Gradinata Sud occupied by season-ticket holders, prices for a modest Serie A game are around €20 in the Gradinata Nord, €25 in Distinti and €30-€60 in the main Tribuna. For derbies and top opposition, prices will rise by about €5-€10.

Shops
There are two main Sampdoria Points, one behind the Gradinata Sud at the stadium (via Casata Centurion 20A), one at central via Cesarea 107r. Current away kit is the classic Samp rings on white, the third choice plain navy blue.
**Milan**

Fashion centre Milan has always been a glamorous football metropolis. Built on its two great clubs – AC Milan and Internazionale – the capital of Lombardy has been at the forefront of the Italian game for a century or more.

The venue they have shared for half that time is one of the world’s great football arenas, the San Siro.

Behind the scenes, Chinese money is taking over these venerable institutions. Average attendances are up, from 40,000-plus in 2016-17 to 50,000-plus in 2017-18.

The San Siro replaced the venerable Arena Civica, opened in 1807, later named after revered football writer Gianna Brera. In the 1960s, the San Siro, AC Milan and Inter were in their pomp. The Inter icon was Sandro Mazzola, Milan's Gianna Rivera, and high society gathered for the big matches. This was echoed 25 years later, with key Dutch stars winning European Cups for Berlusconi’s Milan, and Lothar Matthäus turning out for title-winning Inter. Milan was the centre of the football universe, confirmed by its hosting of the curtain-raiser for Italia '90.

Whether Chinese-run Milan can regain these glory days is another matter.

**Bearings**

Milan has two airports. Malpensa is 48km (30 miles) north-west of town, a 45-minute journey to Centrale (€10) main train station on the half-hourly Malpensa Express. Linate is 8km (five miles) south-east of town, connected to M1 San Babila by regular city bus 73 or X73 (€1.50, tickets from the Hudson News kiosk at the airport), journey time about 30 minutes.

Many budgets use Bergamo’s Orio al Serio 45km (28 miles) from Milan, connected with Milan Centrale by bus every 30-60 mins, journey time 50 mins. Tickets are €10, €5 online.

Milan’s city transport comprises three metro lines, buses, trams and trolleybuses. A single ticket is €1.50, a daily [biglietto giornaliero] €4.50.

Around the city centre, RadioTaxi 02-6969 (+39 02 6969) is as good as any.

**Bed**

Hotels near the San Siro also serve the nearby trade fairs. The closest is B&B Hotel Milano San Siro, a hostel-hotel hybrid, overlooking the stadium on via Achille. Also nearby and equally spanking new is the Meliá Milano, a high-design Spanish chain equipped with its own spa.

Long in place and also convenient are the four-star Montebianco and two three-stars close to each other, the [Hotel Oro Blu Milano](https://www.hotel-oroblumilano.it/) and Hotel Lido. Near Gerusalemme metro station, UNA Scandinavia is swish and business-friendly.

By Stazione Centrale is a cluster of convenient mid-range lodgings, two in the Starhotels chain, Anderson Milan and E.c.h.o.

**Beer**

Highly recommended is the 442 Sports Pub at via Procaccini 61, with an interior of themed tabletops, football scarves and TV screens. Also close to Gerusalemme metro, the Offside Sports Pub is worth a visit, with a wall of pennants, a large screen and terrace.

Walking distance from Duomo, the Football English Pub is hidden away on narrow via Valpetrosa, off via Torino. Amid the football paraphernalia are Hurst-era West Ham programmes and classic Panini stickers of old AC and Inter stars.

Close to Repubblica, The Friends is one of the better of the many other pubs in town. [3]
The San Siro (www.sansiro.net) is home to AC Milan and Internazionale, city rivals who have shared the stadium for 70 years. Milan president Piero Pirelli commissioned this iconic football arena in 1925 – no running track and with four stands making a rectangular shape around the pitch. Despite three major overhauls, the San Siro has not lost its shape, its style or its staying power.

Pirelli’s San Siro was laid out like traditional grounds in England – perhaps the influence of Pirelli’s formative years in contact with the English founders of his Milan club in the early 1900s. After the war, Inter moving in to groundshare and the San Siro came back in style. In 1955, the stadium was revamped, given another tier and its distinctive candy-twist appearance around the outside.

For the 1990 World Cup, a plexiglass roof with distinctive red girders was added, as well as a third ring. An all-seated capacity of 80,000 – and an official name of the Stadio Giuseppe Meazza – remain to this day.

Fans hang over the pitch in steep-sided tiers – you can smell the turf near the touchline. This intimacy provides one of Europe’s liveliest atmospheres, with Milan in the Curva Sud, Inter in the Curva Nord.

**Transport**

San Siro metro is on the M5 line, direct from Garibaldi, one change from Centrale. The station is by the stadium.

**Bars**

On the Hippodrome side of the ground are two lively kiosks: Chiringuito Milano, offering chupitos and cocktails; and Ortobello, decorated with old records. Each has the feel of a pop-up bar, with sparky staff and clientele.

By the stadium, Baretto 1957 Milano displays the red star of Heineken and fills quickly on match days. A short walk from San Siro metro, on via Federico Tesio, the Old Tenconi Pub is a fine choice, with several tap beers. Next door, La Barchetta is a classic Italian restaurant – booking advised.

**Tickets**

The biglietteria nord ticket offices face gate 1. The circular building housing the biglietteria sud is by gate 14. There’s another biglietteria by gate 7. To buy tickets, you must show ID. Inter and Milan also have their own separate ticket arrangements.

The San Siro comprises three rings, 1 anello closest to the pitch and therefore priciest, 3 anello highest up and cheapest. Each sides is colour-coded, blue (blu, AC) and green (verde, Inter) behind each goal, red (rosso) and orange (arancio) along the sidelines. There, a decent seat in the second row is about €40–€50.

**Shops**

The San Siro Store (9.45am–6.30pm, match days 2hrs before kick-off, 1hr after final whistle) is accessed through gate 14. Merchandise of both clubs complements San Siro’s own brand, MSS.

**Tour & Museum**

Tours in English and Italian (inc Museum €17, 6-17s €12, free under 6s) run every 30 mins (daily 9.30am–5pm, till 6pm in summer, variations on match days) from gate 8, where you’ll find the San Siro Museum (€7, 6-17s €5, under 6 free), with shirts down the ages, trophies and player models.
AC Milan

Prestigious AC Milan (www.acmilan.com/en) re-entered the international arena in 2017-18. After years of mediocrity and managerial changes, and one of the most protracted buy-outs in football history, the Rossoneri have a new owner/chairman in Chinese entrepreneur Li Yonghong, and a new coach in Gennaro Gattuso. Average home gates have even broken 50,000.

But this is all relative. Milan dominated the Italian game from the late 1980s onwards, lifting six titles in just over a decade, as well as five of their overall haul of seven European Cups/Champions Leagues. Until the Spanish giants upped the ante, no-one was bigger than Milan. The stadium the club built in 1926, the San Siro, is and remains one of the finest arenas in the world, intimate yet capable of holding 80,000. The club they have shared it with since 1947, Internazionale, form half of a city rivalry like no other. See San Siro.

But Milan’s last title was won in 2011. Plagued by severe debt, the club was eventually offloaded by long-term owner and sugar daddy Silvio Berlusconi, whose own political career had hit the skids. Star players were sold, gates dropped and Milan became mired in mid-table.

The Rossoneri, however, remain a class act – as illustrated by the sleek Casa Milan club HQ, with museum, shop and ticket office, at Portello.

Tickets
Three weeks before match day, tickets go on general sale. Through the club, this is either online (https://tickets.acmilan.com) or in person at the Casa Milan (daily 10am-8pm). Branches of TicketOne agencies also distribute, including Box Office Duomo at piazza Duomo 1 and Teatro Nuovo on piazza San Babila in Milan.

On match days, leftover tickets go on sale at the San Siro biglietterie 3hrs before kick-off (see San Siro, also for pricing). With 80,000 capacity and average gates of 50,000, availability shouldn’t be a problem, except for derby games with Inter.

In all cases, ID is required. For further information, send an email to eticketing@acmilan.com.

Casa Milan
The Casa Milan is an all-in-one complex containing a store, museum, gallery and restaurant. Accessed through the lobby, the Mondo Milan Museum (daily 10am-7pm, €15/free under-7s) is a disappointing display of trophies and videos – if you’re going to visit one football museum, go to the one at the San Siro.

Round the other side of the building, the Cucina Milanello (Mon-Fri 8am-8.30pm, Sat, Sun 10am-8.30pm) comprises two dull rooms dotted with TV screens and perspex chairs in club colours and a limited menu at three mealtimes, breakfast included. No memorabilia, no classic archive photos, no buzz around the bar.

Next door are the modern Milan Store (daily 10am-8pm) and ticket office (see Tickets left), and a gallery area for Giovanni Cerri’s striking portraits of Milan legends.

To reach the Casa Milan, take the M5 metro line to Portello – it’s four stops from the San Siro. It’s a 10min walk from the station.

The Milan Megastore (Galleria San Carlo, corso Vittoria Emanuele, daily 10am-8pm) is the club’s city outlet, near M1 San Babila towards Duomo.
In line for a Champions League place for the first time since 2011, Internazionale ([www.inter.it](http://www.inter.it)) are clambering back onto the international stage thanks to investment from the Far East.

Backed by €270 million of Chinese money from Suning Holdings, and by Indonesian media mogul Erick Thohir, now club chairman, Inter are no longer dependent on former owner Massimo Moratti, the last of an old-school dynasty, who poured €1 billion of his own money into the club in the 1990s and 2000s.

Formed in 1908, Internazionale have spent their entire history in Serie A, winning it 18 times. The Nerazzurri have enjoyed several periods of dominance, most notably the Grande Inter side of the mid 1960s and the five-time title winners between 2006 and 2010. Each of these teams, under Helenio Herrera and José Mourinho, won the European Cup/Champions League.

Ground-sharing the San Siro with AC after the war, and backed by oil millionaire Angelo Moratti, Inter matched Milan for silverware. With mercurial manager Helenio Herrera installing a strict catenaccio system and midfield icon Sandro Mazzola pulling the strings, Inter won consecutive European Cups in the mid-1960s but gained a grim reputation for influencing referees behind the scenes.

The club’s lack of involvement in the refereeing scandal of 2006 saw the Serie A title revert to them by default. A year later they won it outright – although with Juventus demoted to Serie B.

Incoming coach José Mourinho gained a title in his first season then, remarkably, won a historic treble in 2010. With Juventus resurgent, managers of the quality of Claudio Ranieri and Roberto Mancini failed to make headway.

Now under Luciano Spalletti, whose figurehead captain Mauro Icardi scored a hat-trick in the Milan derby, Inter today attract 60,000 crowds, eager to see a top-four Serie A finish.

### Stadium

Inter moved into the San Siro in 1947. Their fans traditionally occupy the Curva Nord. For transport and bar details, see San Siro.

### Tickets & shop

Tickets and merchandise are available at the Inter Store Milano (daily 10am-8pm) at Galleria Passarella 2, near San Babila metro.

The ticket office inside has shorter working hours of Thur-Sat 10am-7.30pm.

Inter also distribute at the San Siro ticket office (Mon-Fri 9.30am-12.45pm, 2.15pm-5.45pm) near gate 14. Vivaticket sell advance tickets at outlets across Italy. In central Milan, these include Feltrinelli Milano.

Online, you can purchase through the club website ([www.inter.it/en](http://www.inter.it/en)) biglietteria.

In all cases, ID is required for match-ticket purchase. For further information, email biglietteria@inter.it.

For major Serie A opposition, you pay €50 for a half-decent seat in the Primo Verde, Secondo Arancio or Primo Blu areas of the stadium. For lesser teams, prices drop to €25 in the Secondo Blu, €40 in the Primo Arancio and €50 for a good seat in the Tribuna Arancio.
If ever there was a one-club city, it’s Naples. Everywhere you look there’s a light-blue shirt. Maradona hasn’t returned, but his former club SSC Napoli are enjoying their best spell since Diego took them to two titles 30 years ago.

Napoli are putting in a serious challenge for the Serie A title in 2017-18. Gli Azzurri have also revived the Italian domestic game, bouncing back from bankruptcy.

The triumph and demise of Diego took the city from communal ecstasy to despair. As everything unravelled and the club became bankrupt, film producer Aurelio De Laurentiis stepped in. The rest has been the stuff of movies, last-gasp promotion and a return to European football. All the script now requires is the Serie A title to set the Stadio San Paolo alight.

Naples Airport is 6km (3.5 miles) north-east of town, connected by the Alibus that runs every 20-30mins to Napoli Centrale station (journey time 15min), terminating at the port. Out of the airport terminal, the bus stop is a signposted 5min walk. Tickets (€4 on board) are valid for 90mins, including an onward journey.

From Napoli Centrale, the stop is across from the main entrance. A taxi (+39 081 8888) should offer a fixed price to town – €16 to the station/centre, €23 to Fuorigrotta in the stadium area.

Napoli Centrale station (journey time 15min), terminating at the port. Out of the airport terminal, the bus stop is a signposted 5min walk. Tickets (€4 on board) are valid for 90mins, including an onward journey.

From Napoli Centrale, the stop is across from the main entrance. A taxi (+39 081 8888) should offer a fixed price to town – €16 to the station/centre, €23 to Fuorigrotta in the stadium area.

Unico Campania issues TIC tickets for the Metropolitana, buses and a confusing array of trains. The Metropolitana is essentially one line, M1. M2 is run by Trenitalia, who provide old trains to Campi Flegrei, home of Napoli. The lines cross at Garibaldi, within the Stazione Centrale complex. Tickets and day passes are available at machines and newspaper kiosks. An Orario (€1.60) is valid for 90mins; the Giornaliero (€4.50) is a day pass.

Bed
The Naples Tourist Office (www.inaples.it) has a database of hotels. The closest to the stadium is grandiose

Don’t miss daytime-only Bar Nilo di Alcide Carmine (via San Biagio dei Librai 130), near piazza San Domenico Maggiore, a shrine to Diego Maradona.
The flagship club of the calcio-crazy city of Naples is enjoying their best spell since the heady days of Diego Maradona 30 years ago. SSC Napoli (www.sscnapoli.it) have become the neutral’s favourite and at the forefront of the mini-revival of Serie A.

A first Scudetto since 1990 wouldn’t go uncelebrated at the Stadio San Paolo, a huge, two-tier bowl of built in an area of extinct volcanoes known as Campi Flegrei.

Holding 85,000, the San Paolo was modified for Italia ’90. A roof was added, lifted over the stands to allow a view of the hills beyond.

Capacity was then reduced to the current 60,000 after a terrible storm in 2001.

Today’s San Paolo comprises two sweeping ends, home Curva A and home Curva B, Napoli ultras in each. Away fans in the Settore Ospiti are squeezed between B with main Tribuna Posillipo. Opposite, the Distinti along the sidelines allows for comfortable gawping at the pageantry at each end.

Transport Campi Flegrei, a 10min walk to the stadium across palm-lined piazzale Tecchio, is directly linked to Garibaldi (Napoli Centrale) six stops away. At Napoli Centrale, head down to the lower level, and platform No.2 for Line 2/ direction Pozzuoli-Bagnoli-Formia (every 10-15mins) at the far end. A newsagent at the top of the lower escalators sells single tickets (€1.30) that you should stamp in the little machine facing the shop. It’s a 15min journey, mainly through tunnels.

Tickets In all cases, show ID to buy tickets. There are now two ticket outlets near the stadium: Blu Point Sport (Mon-Sat 9.30am-1.30pm, 4pm-8pm) beside the Caffetteria degli Azzurri (via Giambattista Marino 15A); and the 1926 Napoli Shop (piazza Gabriele D’Annunzio 32; Mon-Sat 10am-1pm, 4pm-8pm) behind the back of the stadium.

On match days until lunchtime, one of the bunker-like botteghini (usually No.3) opens for sales on the via Tansillo side of the stadium. Tickets are not usually sold from official outlets in the run-up to kick-off.

The club distributes online but only through its Italian-language site. Average prices run from €30 in the Curva A/B to €90 in the Tribuna Posillipo. A spot in the Distinti for €50 allows for comfort and a good view of the action on and off the pitch.

Shops There is one official Napoli outlet (daily 8am-9pm), located at Centrale station. At the stadium, you’ll find Blu Point Sport (Mon-Sat 9.30am-1.30pm, 4pm-8pm) at via Giambattista Marino 15A; and the 1926 Napoli Shop (Mon-Sat 10am-1pm, 4pm-8pm) at piazza D’Annunzio 32, behind the ground.

Bars Kiosks, huts and cabins dot piazzale Tecchio, the most convivial being the sunny terrace Caffé Cumana right by Mostra station.

Cafés are found along via Giambattista Marino and around piazza Gabriele d’Annunzio, where the Caffetteria Monnalisa (No.48) has a back bar plastered in Kodak images of Napoli stars.

For just a calcio-centric corner bar, nearby Bar Azzurro (via Tansillo 52) is decked out in Napoli iconography. Round the corner, the Caffetteria degli Azzurri (via Giambattista Marino 15A) by Blu Point sports a cool back-bar design displaying classic Serie A shirts.
Rome

For the farewell game of Roma icon Francesco Totti in 2017, Rome’s Stadio Olimpico was packed to bursting. Planes flew over the arena with banner messages, city buses indicated their reverence for this one-club captain. No other city can do it like the Eternal City, one of Europe’s great football destinations.

But in many ways, Totti’s farewell only served to show how moribund the rest of the Serie A season had become, the pomp of the 1990s long gone.

Like Milan, Rome is a stadium-share city. Roma represent downtown Testaccio, rivals Lazio the suburbs of Parioli and beyond. The Olimpico is north of the Vatican, near the Tiber.

AS Roma have plans for their own 60,000-capacity stadium in Tor di Valle in south-west Rome, on the site of a racecourse built for the 1960 Olympics.

Bearings
The main airport of Leonardo da Vinci-Fiumicino, 35km (22 miles) south-west of the city centre, is connected by Leonardo Express train (€14, 30min journey time) every 15min to the main station of Termini. From Termini, trains leave from outer platform 28. Alternatively, a regular SIT shuttle bus (online price €6) takes 90min to reach via Marsala 5 outside Termini. A direct Fiumicino-Termini bus service is also provided by Terravision (online €5).

A City Airport Taxi from Fiumicino into town has a fixed fee of €48.

Lesser-used Ciampino Airport is 12km (7.5 miles) south-east of town, served by the same bus companies to Termini, SIT and Terravision (online price €5, journey time 45min).

A City Airport Taxi from Ciampino has a fixed fee to the city centre of €45 but the standard rate you should find outside is €30.

Flagging down a taxi or finding a rank works out cheaper than calling one – such as Radio Taxi (+39 06 3570). Rome’s transport system consists of two metro lines, buses, trams and suburban trains. A BIT single ticket (€1.50) is valid for 100mins. A 24hr pass (€7), 48hr pass (€12.50) and 72hr pass (€18) are also available.

Bed
Convenient for the Olimpico, elegant three-star Hotel delle Vittorie sits near piazza Giuseppe Mazzini. Further out from the city, the Hotel Farnesina is also handy for the stadium.

The other side of the Vatican, near Roma S Pietro station, upscale Starhotels Michelangelo is a four-star boutique lodging with a modern feel.

Central Hotel Rome Garden (via Nomenita 28) forms part of a local chain. Good for location and price, Hotel Raffaello (via Urbana 3) is within easy reach of Termini.

Beer

The Druid’s Den (via di San Martino ai Monti 28), Irish-owned Finnegan near Cavour metro, football-oriented Highlander (vicolo di San Biagio 9) and Fiddler’s Elbow (via dell’Olmata 43) are typical of the expat genre. The Old Trafford offers ‘soccer and beer’ at via Angelo Erno 61.

The Bar San Calisto, in the square of the same name in Trastevere, is a lived-in local with calcio and boxing iconography. Nearby, IVO a Trastevere (via di San Francesco a Ripa 158) is a homely football hang-out.
All roads lead to Rome – or so it seems when you stride up the grandiose walkway to the impressive Stadio Olimpico. Stage for the Olympic Games of 1960, the World Cup final of 1990, Euro 2020 Group A games and a quarter-final, and many a major European final, the Olimpico remains the shared home of Lazio and Roma.

A 70,000-capacity bowl in Rome’s green northern reaches, Italy’s de facto national stadium will soon be abandoned by Roma. With the green light given to the Stadio della Roma in December 2017, Roma’s departure from the Olimpico is set for 2020.

Until that day, Lazio fans will fill the Curva Nord with noise and colour, Roma fans the Curva Sud – and never the twain will meet.

In 1928, the national stadium was in nearby Flaminio, where Mussolini opened the Stadio del Partido Nacional Fascista. It then hosted the World Cup final of 1934. A mile away across the Tiber, il Duce was planning a grand sports complex: il Foro Mussolini.

Although Mussolini’s vast project never came to pass, the grand Fascist entrance remains, with its walkway and hallmark obelisk. An open bowl inaugurated in 1953, the 54,000-seater arena was surrounded by the Foro Italico sports complex.

Host of the 1960 Games, the Olimpico was overhauled for the 1990 World Cup. The result is pretty much as you see today. Despite the sheer scale of the place – and a running track – on its night the Olimpico can be one of the loudest and most colourful football arenas in the world, as the Rome derby will testify.

Transport
From Ottaviano station on metro line A, veer away from the Vatican in the distance and into via Barletta, for the No.32 bus stop in the middle of the street. The infrequent No.32 heads north, past the Flaminio Stadium, and after 15mins passes the Olimpico at the stop LGT M. I. D. (De Bossis).

An easier journey might be to take regular tram No.2 from Piazza Flaminio/P de Popolo (metro line A) to the terminus at Mancini. You then just have to cross the bridge with the Olimpico ahead of you.

Tickets
The listicket/ticketone agency distributes tickets for Lazio and national games, either online or from outlets around town. AS Roma organise their own online sales. Both clubs also have their own outlets – see AS Roma and Lazio.

In all cases, you need ID for purchase.

Bars
On the city side of the river, by the No.2 tram terminus on piazza Mancini, Pizzeria ‘Il Derby’ allows you to gawp at autographed photos of Totti while your slice is being prepared.

A string of outlets hugs the river on the stadium side of Duca D’Aosta Bridge. These include friendly La Pizza del Buongustaio, the cabin-sized River Café, and the more bar-like Big Stefano’s, with table football.

In the sports complex around the stadium, the Foro Italico Circolo del Tennis on viale dei Gladiatori has a restaurant overlooking its tennis courts and the Olimpico.
Lazio

55 Lazio [sslazio.it/en] may not earn much sympathy in many quarters because of the shocking reputation of their right-wing following, but the club has managed to keep up with Italy’s best over the past two decades and counting.

Lazio were founded in 1900 by Luigi Bigiarelli, adopting the light-blue-and-white colours of the Greek flag. A fan base grew in Rome’s green-belt northern outskirts.

Lazio struck up a bitter rivalry with Roma but moved in to groundshare the Stadio Olimpico when it opened in 1953.

From 1992, tomato-sauce millionaire and financier Sergio Cragnotti transformed the club, bringing Paul Gascoigne, Alen Bokšić and, most of all, Giuseppe Signori. ‘Beppe’ was the hero of the Curva Nord, his 20 goals a season pushing Lazio into a title-challenging role, and back into Europe.

As club president, Dino Zoff hired adventurous tactician, Ždeněk Zeman, as coach. Lazio finished runners-up, then third, as the salary bill spiralled. Still after that elusive title, Zoff brought in Czech star Pavel Nedvěd and young defender Alessandro Nesta. It took the cool head of coach Sven-Göran Eriksson to sell Signori to win the Italian Cup and make the UEFA Cup Final, both in May 1998.

Keeping inspirational Roberto Mancini up front, Cragnotti then spent millions on Christian Vieri, Marcelo Salas and Sérgio Conceição, only to lose the title to Milan by one point. Compensation came with winning the last European Cup Winners’ Cup, 2-1 over Real Mallorca, in 1999.

Eriksson sold Vieri for midfielder Juan Sebastián Verón and found the right balance. Trailng until the last game of 1999-2000, Lazio took advantage of a Juve slip-up to take the title at the death. Cragnotti had got his crown.

Finances remained shaky. Cragnotti resigned halfway through the 2002-03 season, and Lazio only bounced back thanks to the coaching skills of Roberto Mancini.

Fiscal uncertainty, an exodus of star players and a match-fixing scandal then dominated the headlines, not to mention crowd trouble.

Making yet another Italian Cup final in 2017, the fourth in nine years, Lazio qualified for Europe through the back door, goals from Ciro Immobile blazing a path to the quarter-finals of the Europa League.

Tickets & shop

Of the handful of Lazio outlets in and around Rome, the one at via Guglielmo Calderini 66C is closest to the stadium, near piazza Mancini by the No.2 tram terminus. Considering the club’s stature, Lazio Style 1900 [Mon 4pm-8pm, Tue-Sat 10am-1.30pm, 2.30pm-8pm, match days 5hrs before kick-off] is very modest indeed, stocking a few replica shirts and Lazio-branded knick-knacks. It also acts as a ticket office [Tue-Sat 10am-1.30pm, 2.30pm-7pm, match days 5hrs before kick-off].

Tickets can also be bought online through listicket and from its outlets around Rome.

The Lazio faithful gather in the Curva Nord, where tickets are around €20. Along the sidelines in the Tribune Tevere and Monte Mario, they rise to €40-€60. For under-16s, prices are €10-€15 cheaper.

For lowly opposition, online tickets can drop to €10, even for adults.
Totemic one-club captain Francesco Totti may have retired in 2017 but AS Roma (asroma.com/en) are still leading contenders in the Italian game. For four seasons running, the Giallorossi have achieved a top-three spot in Serie A and made the knock-out stages in Europe.

In 2017-18, Roma reached the quarter-finals of the Champions League for the first time in a decade.

Shortly before, the green light was given to the Stadio della Roma, a new stadium at Tor di Valle in south-west Rome, out towards Fiumicino airport. A 52,500-capacity Colosseum-inspired circular arena, the club’s new home is due to open for the 2020-21 season, just under a decade after the gradual takeover of Roma by Boston-born billionaire James Pallotta.

The move will leave eternal city rivals Lazio as the sole tenant of the Stadio Olimpico, after a groundshare that dates back to the stadium’s opening in 1953.

Set on the site of the Tor di Valle racecourse, alongside Mussolini’s model district of EUR, the new stadium will form part of a leisure complex known as Roma Village. While the arena will take the inspiration for its exterior design from the Colosseum, around it will be a mock of the Spanish Steps and a huge screen for live projections of the match. Inside, Roma hope to recreate the Curva Sud of Olimpico lore.

The Stadio della Roma will be yet another stadium owned by its occupants, following the lead of Juventus and Udine as Italy moves away from its municipal shackles.

**Tickets & shops**

There are now 16 Roma stores (!) and around Rome.

The two main ones both also operate as ticket outlets. The AS Roma Store (daily 10am-7pm) at piazza Colonna 360 in the Tridente area of town contains a ticket office (10am-6pm, match days vary) on the upper floor; the walls decorated with classic images from Roma history. Note the rare shot of the line-up of Serie A winners from 1941-42.

Downstairs, items such as branded jeans, crash helmets and skateboards bear Roma’s emblematic wolf logo. Currently, the second kit is white with red-and-yellow markings, the third choice black.

There’s also a line in retro tops from the Falcão era.

A smaller store/ticket outlet is found at via del Corso 25 (Mon-Sat 10am-8pm), near the piazza del Popolo.

Match tickets are usually put on sale three or four weeks before the game. There’s also a Ticket Point (daily 10am-6pm) at via Appia Nuova 130 near Re di Roma metro station.

The club has its own English-language online distribution service (asroma.com/en/tickets/buy-tickets).

On match days Roma distribute a few hours before kick-off from the Foro Italico office on viale delle Olimpiadi, in the same sports complex as the stadium.

In all cases, ID is required for purchase.

The home end, the Curva Sud, is usually sold out. In the Curva Nord opposite, a seat is €25, reduced price €18 for over-65s and under 14s. Along the sidelines, in the Tribune Tevere and Monte Mario, it’s €60/€42, rising to €80/€60 in the prime spots.
Sassuolo/Reggio Emilia

It is the miracle of Sassuolo. From 2013-14, the smallest town in Italy to be represented in Serie A since the war has rubbed shoulders with Milan, Rome and Turin. Sassuolo Calcio (sassuolocalcio.it) even qualified for the group stage of the Europa League in 2016-17.

Home games take place 30km from Sassuolo at the 20,000-capacity Mapei Stadium-Città del Tricolore on the outskirts of Reggio Emilia.

Sassuolo fans occupy the Curva Sud, away ones the Curva Nord. The Tribuna Ovest contains the press and VIP seats, with Tribuna Est on the opposite sideline. Centrale Superior has the best spots – Est Laterale the cheapest.

Transport
The nearest airport is Parma 50km (31 miles) away, 2.4km (1.5 miles) from Parma station, connected by bus No.6 (€1.20/€2 on board, every 30mins, 15min journey time). The train from Parma to Reggio Emilia (€2.90) takes 15mins.

A Reggio Emilia taxi (+39 0522 452 545) charges €55 to/from Parma Airport, and €40/€51 between Sassuolo and Reggio Emilia.

The stadium is on the north-eastern outskirts of town, with its own stop, Reggio Stadio Giglio, on the Reggio Emilia-Guastalla regional FER rail line. 5mins/2 stops from Reggio station. It runs hourly during the week, four times a day at weekends (12min journey time).

Local buses in Reggio Emilia require a €1.50 ticket from a machine, €2 (exact change) on board.

At weekends, the No.5 runs every 30mins from downtown Teatro Ariosto, which stops at via Duo and via Ruini near the stadium. A taxi from the station should cost about €12.

Tickets
Viva Ticket (www.vivaticket.it) provides advance sales, online and through outlets such as Kukkuma Bar/Tabacchi in the I Petali complex by the stadium and the Tabaccheria Panciroli at via Panciroli 21A in the city centre.

On match days, a biglietteria operates by the stadium car park.

ID must be presented.

Average prices are €10 in the Tribuna Sud (home) and Nord (away). It’s €20-€30 in the Tribuna (Est), and €25-€55 in the main stand, Tribuna Ovest. For the most attractive opposition, prices rise to €30 behind the goals and €30-€105 along the sidelines.

Admission is reduced for women, over-65s and, amazingly, under-30s.

Bed
The only hotel near the stadium is the four-star, business-oriented Cristallo across the main strada Tangenziale.

In town, the two-star Ariosto (via San Rocco 12, +39 0522 437 320) is convenient for the bus to the stadium. The four-star Hotel Posta by the main square is historic. The four-star Europa, stands by the disused Stadio Mirabello, home of Reggiana until 1995. Convenient San Marco is a three-star directly opposite the station.

Beer
In Sassuolo, the Bar Luana by the Enzo Ricci stadium at piazza Risorgimento is decked out in green-and-black scarves, shirts (‘Sasol’) and souvenirs.

Apart from outlets at the I Petali mal, there are no bars at the stadium.

The nearest café is sleek La Nave (via Gramsci 1), in a little hub of shops where main roads meet. Also here are café/bakery L’Antica Macina and superior restaurant Trattoria del Buontempone.
Turin is a football city steeped in myth and tragedy. Juventus and Torino both gained new stadia in modern times, Juve’s an all-seater on the northern outskirts.

With strong local support, Torino played at the Stadio Filadelfia from its opening in 1926. Unveiled nearby seven years later, the Stadio Benito Mussolini was later named the Comunale.

The Filadelfia hosted the great Torino side of the 1940s, decimated by a plane crash into the Superga Basilica outside town. The Filadelfia was later abandoned, only recently revamped for training games.

Torino moved to the nearby Comunale, reconfigured for the 2006 Winter Olympics, then for football. In 2016, it was renamed the Stadio Olimpico Grande Torino in honour of the fallen side.

Juve adapted the unloved and distant Stadio delle Alpi, scene of the epic Italia ’90 semi-final between England and West Germany. The successful Juventus Stadium set the precedent for a club-owned arena in a land of crumbling municipal sports grounds. In 2017, it was renamed Allianz Stadium.

Bearings
Turin Airport is 16km (ten miles) north of town, a short drive to the Juventus Stadium. An express train (€3.70) runs every 30mins to Dora station towards the city centre, journey time 20mins. A taxi (+39 011 5737 or +39 011 3399) to town should cost €40 and take 30 minutes.

The main train station is Porta Nuova, south-east of the centre. From there, trams run to Juventus or Torino. Public transport consists of a metro, trams and buses. A single ticket is €1.50, a day pass €5.

Bed
By the Juventus Stadium, the Hotel Master is a handy three-star. Also close is the family-run Hotel Castello is set in a 17th-century building. On the same side of the city as Juventus, the Hotel Residence Sporting shares space with the Maffei Sports Centre, its pool, tennis courts and football pitches.

By the Olimpico, the Bed & Breakfast Stadium provides affordable comfort. The four-star Hotel Cairo is also within easy reach.

Porta Nuova train station is surrounded by hotels.

In the city centre, the Grand Hotel Sitea is elegance itself, with a gourmet restaurant.

Beer
The Po-side strip of bars, the Murazzi, between the bridges of Umberto I and Vittorio Emmanuele I, is the main nightlife hub.

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Of the pubs, on corso Vittorio Emanuele II, Murphy’s aka ‘Six Nations’ has rugby as its focus but screens soccer, too. Alongside, the Shamrock Inn is another favourite, while over the road nearer Porta Nuova, the 1870 Huntsman has TV screens and pool. Nearby, behind the corso, the Jumping Jester opens by day, when tables fill with diners.

Near Porta Susa station, the Isle of Skye has a full range of Tennent’s beers as well as Sky HD.

There’s another hub of sport-friendly faux pubs between piazza Castello and the Mole tower. Roar Roads has rare beers and TV football. On the next street over, the Shakespeare is more pub-like and puts calcio first.
Juventus

Juventus ([www.juventus.com/juve/en/welcome] now dominate the Italian game, as they did in the 1970s, 1980s and 1990s. Six straight Scudettos have been interspersed with two Champions League finals, and defeats to the Spanish giants in 2015 and 2017.

Juventus can also point to the ongoing success of their self-owned arena, rare in Italy where ageing state-run stadia are the norm. Being built around the 41,500-capacity Allianz Stadium is the J-Village of a training centre, office, hotel and concept store. Italian football is at last joining the 21st century.

The adjoining Area12 mall contains a Juventus megastore, while a Juventus Museum was opened in 2013.

The compact stadium comprises the home Tribuna Sud on corso Grosseto and Tribuna Nord on via Druento, behind each goal, Tribuna Ovest and Est Centrale on strada Comunale di Altessano by the Area12 mall contain the best seats along the sidelines. Visitors are allocated the north corner between the Nord and Est stands accessed through via Druento.

Transport

The Juventus Stadium is north of town. On match days, tram No.9 runs from Bernini on Turin’s metro line before returning all the way back to Porta Nuova station. Tram No.3 from piazza Repubblica runs close by.

Tickets

Tickets go on general sale via Listicket, either online ([www.listicket.com]) or at Lis outlets throughout Italy. In central Turin, these include the agency at corso Stati Uniti 9 beside Hotel Italia. ID is required before purchase. If you’re buying in person, there’s a €2 levy.

For an average Serie A fixture, it’s €35 (€20 under-16s) for a seat in home Tribuna Sud, or Tribuna Nord, €65 (€35) for a better seat in the Tribuna Nord, while prices in the sideline Tribuna Est or Ovest range from €75–€120 (€40–€60).

On match days, there are two ticket offices by ingresso C, one by ingresso B and three by ingresso D, E and F on via Druento.

Shops

The main Juventus Store ([daily 9am-9pm]) is by the club museum. It’s the largest of its kind in Italy, with shirt-printing and retro tops galore. In town, there’s a Juve store ([daily 10am-7.30pm]) on the corner of Garibaldi and XX Settembre by the Garibaldi stop on the No.4 tramline.

Tours & Museum

Behind the Tribuna Est, the Juventus Museum ([Mon, Wed-Fri 10.30am-6pm, Thur-Sun & hol 10.30am-7.30pm, match days from 9am-10.30am]) costs €15, €12 or under-16s/over-65s, free for under-6s. Trophies sit backlit on wall after wall while the club history is told in film, photo and football shirt form.

Stadium tours ([Mon, Wed-Fri 11am, 12.30pm, 2.45pm, 4.15pm, Sat, Sun & hol every 30min]) can only be purchased as part of a combined museum ticket (€22/€18 reduced).

Bars

On strada Comunale di Altessano, by via Sansovino, L’Elite features photos of the stadium while New York opposite is filled with TV screens. Nearer the stadium at strada Altessano 146, Alby and neighbouring Millegusti are standard choices.

By the ground in the Area12 mall, you’ll find eateries such as the Old Wild West and Wiener Haus.
Taking the bull of Turin as their symbol, disgruntled members of Juventus met in December 1906 to form Torino (www.torinofc.it). Among them was coach Vittorio Pozzo, who led Torino for ten years before his World-Cup winning stint as national team manager.

It was Pozzo who helped form the Grande Torino side of the 1940s, lighting up Turino’s beloved old Campo Filadelfia. Before a fifth title, a plane carrying the team flew into the hilltop Basilica of Superga outside Turin. Pozzo had to identify the bodies.

The Granata later moved from Filadelfia to groundshare with Juve at the Comunale, pipping their city rivals to win an emotional league title in 1976.

Revived and rebuilt for the Winter Olympics of 2006, and converted thereafter for use as a football ground by Torino, the Comunale became the Stadio Olimpico Grande Torino, holding 28,000.

The Marathon Tower distinctly rises high over the home end, or Curva Maratona (or Curva Nord, yellow). Visiting fans are allocated a section between the opposite Curva Primavera (green) and the Distinti Granata (red). The best seats are found in the Tribuna Granata, suitably also named the Tribuna Grande Torino.

The nearby Filadelfia, meanwhile was revamped and reopened in 2017 as a club HQ and training ground.

Transport
Arriving into Porta Nuova station, turn left into via Sacchi, and cross the tram tracks for the No.4 stop. It takes 10-15 mins to reach the rond-point of San Gabriele. Walk right down via Filadelfia – left takes you to the old Toro stadium. Tram No.10 runs from Porta Susa station to corso Agnelli, the main street that runs parallel to the Stadio Olimpico. This is closer to the stadium and also allows access to the club shop.

Tickets
The main ticket office is on corso Sebastopoli (Mon-Fri 10am-1pm, 2pm-6pm and 2hrs before kick-off). You must provide a valid passport before purchase. For lesser opposition, the cheapest tickets in the Curva Maratona or Primavera are as cheap as €10, rising to €15 in the Distinti Granata. A decent seat in the Poltroncine Granata is €30, €60 in the Tribuna d’Onore and €90 in the Tribuna Grande Torino. For A-category opposition, prices rise at least 20%.

Shops
The main Toro outlet is in the city centre, the Granata Store (Mon-
Udine

Set in Italy’s far north-east, close to Slovenia, the Adriatic and the Alps, Udine is the main city of Friuli. With Germanic and Slav influences, Friuli has its own language and its own wine. Udine is home to Moretti beer. The brewery once owned the club, who first played at Stadio Moretti. This club, now Udinese Calcio, are Italy’s second oldest, formed in 1896. The opening of the Stadio Friuli in 1976, north-west of town by the motorway that links Venice with Austria, shifted focus away from Moretti Park.

Reopened in 2016, the stadium is the second in Serie A to be owned by the club who play there. A sponsorship deal with car firm Dacia helped pay for it. In the top flight since 1995, Udinese have no immediate local rivals. Most away trips are a trek – Udine to Crotone is 1,200km.

Bearings
Friuli-Venezia-Giulia Airport aka ‘Trieste Airport’, is close to Udine 44km (27 miles) away. Bus No.E51 runs every 1-2hrs, taking 1hr to reach the bus terminal in Udine, near the train station on viale Europa Unità, 2km south of the city centre. Tickets (€4.75) are sold from the machine or at the info desk in arrivals.

Udine is served by local buses. A ticket (biglietto orario) is €1.25 from the main office opposite the train station, or €2 on board. A day pass (giornaliero U-24) is €4.35. Taxi Udine (+39 0432 505 858) charges €15 from the train station to the stadium.

Bed
The regional Tourist Office (turismofvg.it) has a room-booking function.

Two three-star hotels are located opposite the station: the Principè used by Italian rail staff; and the Europa. Also close to the station on piazzale Giobatta Cella is the Hotel San Giorgio, with rooms in the €100 range.

On via Giosuè Carducci, you find upscale lodgings at the Ambassador Palace. Under the same umbrella, the Friuli on viale del Ledra and Astoria on piazza XX Settembre offer mid-range comfort in downtown locations. For a quality stay, Al Vecchio Tram is a designer spot on via Brenari.

Convenient for stadium and city centre, Hotel Suite Inn on via di Toppo is more four-star than three.

Beer
Udine is the historic home of Moretti.

Al Vecchio Stallo on via Viola is a lovely rustic spot decked out in vintage paraphernalia. The excellent Osteria Piermorte is on via Bartolini near the Udinese store. It’s real football hang-out – though without a TV.

Recently closed The Little Box may find a buyer to revive this popular spot. The Black Stuff on via Gorghi is the city’s main pub. The bare-brick, more restaurant-like I Piombi on via Manin attracts a discerning but pub-seeking crowd – with TV football, too. Also central, Il Delser at via Cavour 18 has football on TV and a party feel on Saturday nights.

North of the centre, Bire at piazzale Osoppo has its own beers and a large TV. Nearby at viale Volontari della Libertà 12, Old Pub keeps the focus on Serie A.
Udinese

Udinese (udinese.it/eng) are the Zebrette, the Little Zebras, their black-and-white stripes representing Udine since 1896.

Mired in the lower reaches of Serie A since the retirement of the prolific Antonio Di Natale, Udinese at least now have their own stadium. The Dacia Arena, the former Stadio Friuli, was unveiled in 2016.

Di Natale bowed out the same year, after scoring a goal every other game over 12 seasons. Striking partners, including Alexis Sánchez, came and went, each time Udinese selling on at a profit.

Behind this policy is Giampaolo Pozzo. Udinese’s long-term owner has a football empire, stretching from Granada to Watford.

When Italy’s bid to host Euro 2016 fell through, Pozzo went ahead and built the club a new stadium all the same.

Behind a sleek, diamond-patterned exterior, the Dacia Arena puts football as the focus, the old running track removed and stands up close to the pitch.

With the Curva Nord and Tribuna Est ready for 2015-16, and the Curva Sud unveiled that December, capacity reached 25,000.

Away fans are allocated sectors Q1/2 and R1/2 in a corner of the Curva Sud nearest the main Tribuna Centrale. Home fans are in the Curva Nord. Seats in the Distinti Centrali are more affordable than those in the Tribuna Centrale (Nord/Sud).

Transport

Two buses serve the stadium from Udine station: the No.9 to the north side of the ground; and the more frequent No.2 to piazza Rizzi, which drops you by the Bar allo Stadio at the church square. You'll see the floodlights behind the bank by the bus stop.

Both take about 15mins from the station and both skirt the historic centre. A taxi should cost about €15.

Tickets

The main ticket office is by the Udinese Store (Tue-Sat 10.30am-12.30pm, 3pm-7pm, match days) at the stadium. There’s a city-centre Udinese Store/ticket office (Tue-Sat 9.30am-12.30pm, 3.30pm-7.30pm) at via Portanuova 1, between the Castle and the Palazzo Antonini/Banca d’Italia.

Listicket, which distributes online, also has outlets around Udine and region. One is right by the castle at via Mercatovecchio 33.

Tickets are also available at the stadium on match days for a €5 levy.

In all cases, ID is required for purchase.

Standard prices for the Tribuna Centrale and Laterale along the sidelines are €35-€50, €25 for the Distinti and €15 in either end, the Curva Nord and Sud.

Shop

At the Udinese Store (Tue-Sat 10.30am-12.30pm, 3pm-7pm, match days) at the Dacia Arena, souvenirs include bandanas, baseball caps and frilly pennants. Second kits are currently canary yellow.

There’s a smaller downtown outlet (Tue-Sat 9.30am-12.30pm, 3.30pm-7.30pm) at via Portanuova 1.

Bars

Outlets surround piazza Rizzi just behind the Carnera sports hall. Best is supporters’ hangout Bar allo Stadio (via delle Scuole 6), decorated with images of Antonio Di Natale, signed shirts and hooped evidence of Celtic’s visit here.

On the other side of the church, Trattoria Nuovo Fiore is a pleasant osteria with a terrace. Nearby, tucked down narrow via Milano, No.7, homely Osteria da Dalia 3.0 serves affordable local wines and tasty eats.
The lesser-known of Italy’s cross-city groundshares is Verona – the top-flight derby between century-old Hellas Verona and upstart rivals ChievoVerona is a fleeting phenomenon.

Chievo represent the suburb of the same name, 4km west of town tucked inside the river Adige. Their fairytale rise from park football to Serie A was even backed by a local cake company. With Chievo maintaining their top-flight status, this rather odd city rivalry, the Derby della Scala, is reenacted whenever Hellas drift into Serie A.

The stage is the Stadio Bentegodi, home of Hellas since it opened in 1963, and renovated to stage Belgium’s group games for Italia 90. By then, Chievo had already moved in, soon after gaining professional status.

The first Serie A derby came in 2001. Hellas fans occupied most of the Curva Sud, while Chievo’s were allocated the traditional away end, the Curva Nord. Both sets fly yellow and blue flags, the colours of the city of Verona adopted by both clubs.

Chievo play the role of happy underachievers. Hellas and their notoriously right-wing have a bigger gripe with Veneto rivals Vicenza.

### Bearings

**Verona Villafranca (Catullo) Airport** is 5km (3 miles) south-west of Verona, connected by ATV Aerobus (€6) to Verona train station every 20mins, journey time 15mins. ATV also runs the city bus network – it’s €1.30 for a single ticket (€2 on board), €4 for a day pass. A taxi (+39 045 532 666) from the airport should cost about €26–€30 to town.

**Bed**

The Verona Tourist Office (tourism.verona.it) has a hotel-booking service.

Halfway between station and stadium and walking distance to either, the Hotel Piccolo and adjoining Martini on via Giulio Camuzzoni are part of the mid-range Hotels Verona group that also includes the nearby Porta Palio on viale Galliano. Across from it on via Longhena, the Hotel San Marco is a spa hotel with pool.

In town, tourist magnet Verona has plenty of hotels, though all might be booked for summer’s opera season. All within a short walk of the Arena are four-star Colomba d’Oro (via Cattaneo 10), the standard San Micheli (via Valverde 2), the comfortable Bologna (piazzetta Scalette Rubiani) and the low-cost Albergo Trento (corso Porta Nuova 36) and Hotel Torcolo (via Cattaneo 11). The Hotel Europa (via Roma 8) is a handy three-star in the same convenient vicinity.

### Beer

Once an unpretentious football pub, the Re Carlo da Barca (via Carlo Cattaneo 12/corner vicolo Disciplina) has upped the ante on its gastronomic offering while keeping its fine beers and TV sports. Nearby Hartigan’s, tucked inside a courtyard off vicolo Disciplina, is the main Irish bar.

Also big on beer is the Caffè Anselmi on piazza delle Erbe while, alongside, bloom provides plenty of screen action and outdoor seating. Equally upscale is Vini Zampieri (via Alberto Mario 23), with fine wines and football paraphernalia.

Finally, don’t miss a peek into the Patagonia (via San Nicolò 43), an ice-cream parlour themed after Argentine football.

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**Verona**

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In town, tourist magnet Verona has plenty of hotels, though all might be booked for summer’s opera season. All within a short walk of the Arena are four-star Colomba d’Oro (via Cattaneo 10), the standard San Micheli (via Valverde 2), the comfortable Bologna (piazzetta Scalette Rubiani) and the low-cost Albergo Trento (corso Porta Nuova 36) and Hotel Torcolo (via Cattaneo 11). The Hotel Europa (via Roma 8) is a handy three-star in the same convenient vicinity.

### Beer

Once an unpretentious football pub, the Re Carlo da Barca (via Carlo Cattaneo 12/corner vicolo Disciplina) has upped the ante on its gastronomic offering while keeping its fine beers and TV sports. Nearby Hartigan’s, tucked inside a courtyard off vicolo Disciplina, is the main Irish bar.

Also big on beer is the Caffè Anselmi on piazza delle Erbe while, alongside, bloom provides plenty of screen action and outdoor seating. Equally upscale is Vini Zampieri (via Alberto Mario 23), with fine wines and football paraphernalia.

Finally, don’t miss a peek into the Patagonia (via San Nicolò 43), an ice-cream parlour themed after Argentine football.
Opened in 1963 and now showing its age more than five decades later, the Stadio Bentegodi is shared by Hellas Verona and ChievoVerona, occasional Serie A rivals.

Named after the local patron who backed Hellas more than a century ago, the Bentegodi is over the river from the town centre, in the western district of Borgo Milano. The original Bentegodi, where Hellas Verona first played in the early 1900s, was a field near downtown piazza Cittadella, a short walk from the Arena.

Between 1915 and 1928, Hellas played at Porta Palio, near the riverside hotel of the same name, then moved back to the original Bentegodi after a merger with two other local clubs.

When the new Bentegodi was being built, Hellas had only spent one brief season in Serie A but the civic pride dictated that a modern, municipal sporting arena should complement the historic one in the main square.

All-seated with a running track, the 42,500-capacity Bentegodi was modern and progressive, a step ahead of the Comunale stadia built under Mussolini. Its curtain-raiser was a Serie B game between Hellas and Veneto rivals Venezia shortly before Christmas 1963.

Attracting record crowds during Hellas Verona’s title-winning season of 1984-85, and used by Chievo a year later, the Bentegodi saw a number of renovations before the 1990 World Cup, namely a new pitch and extensions to the roof and third tier.

Capacity is currently just under 40,000 but Chievo rarely take up more than a quarter of the seats, Hellas rarely more than half. The stadium comprises four tiers: tribuna/curva superiore; poltrone; poltronissime, and parterre.

The Curva Sud is the home end for Hellas fans, the Curva Nord on via Leonardo da Vinci is for Chievo’s. Press and VIPs are allocated the Tribuna Ovest alongside piazzale Olimpia. Tribuna Est offers cheaper sideline seats.

Transport
The nearest bus stops are piazzale Olimpia/via Palladio, served by Nos.11, 12 and 13 that run every 15-20mins from Porta Nuova main train station leaving from platform C near the stream to the right of the forecourt. Bus Nos.11 and 95 also serve Chievo and the No.90 links with focal piazza Brà. Walking from the station takes 15-20mins – follow the left-hand side of the stream up as far as via Fra Giocondo, then turn left.

Tickets
Each club has its own ticket outlets, either in person or online. Both sell at the ground on the day. ID is required.

Bars
The main bars around the stadium – the Stadio, Olimpia, The Den pub and Bentegodi, all behind the Tribuna Est on the stretch of piazzale Olimpia between via Fra Giocondo and via Sansovino – are Hellas strongholds.

Just round the corner on via Sansovino, at No.20, lounge bar Atipico is a contemporary revamp of the lovely old café that once stood here.

Near the via Palladio bus stop en route to the stadium from the station, the Corner Café offers quality coffee and Italian football glossies.
Chievo

ChievoVerona (chievoverona.it/en) come from the modest suburb of the same name tucked inside the Adige river north-west of downtown Verona.

Here local enthusiasts formed a football club in 1929, playing at the bottom of the Italian league hierarchy until the arrival of Luigi Campedelli in 1964.

Head of local cake company Paluani, Campedelli steered Chievo (then AC Cardi Chievo) up to Serie D, the highest amateur level. It took another ten years for the club to reach the fourth-flight Serie C2, when Chievo moved from their modest pitch by the river to the Stadio Bentegodi.

Bedfellows Hellas, who had previously paid them scant attention, called Chievo the ‘Flying Donkeys’ – a reference to mules flying before Hellas play Chievo in Serie A. Myth and reality became ever closer in 1989, when Chievo reached Serie C1.

Campedelli died suddenly in 1992, leaving his son Luca in charge. Remarkably, promotion came two years later, setting up a first clash with Hellas, in Serie B. The Derby della Scala continued to be played throughout the 1990s before coach Luigi Delneri led Chievo to an unlikely promotion in 2001.

Chievo then stormed to the top of Serie A and, for six crazy weeks, sat atop the lot.

Chievo finished a respectable fifth, then seventh, then ninth. The current Serie A run dates back to 2008, the club remaining close to its community roots.

Tickets
Advance online sales are dealt with by ticket one.

On match days, tickets are sold from Biglietteria A, in the Palazzina Masprone at the south-west corner of the stadium.

For most games, the quality seats in the Poltronissime will cost €60-€65, decent ones in the Poltrone €25-€30. In the home end, the Curva Nord, it’s €20-€25, the same for away fans in the Curva Sud. There are discounts for ladies, seniors and juniors.

For the visits of Hellas and the biggest names, prices rise to €30 in either end, €50 in the Poltrone and €100 in the Poltronissime.

Women and men over 60 and under 26 are charged more or less half-price. Under-15s pay €15 for top fixtures, €5 for A2 category games and can see A3 matches for free.

ID is required for purchase.

Shop
The ChievoVerona store (Tue-Fri 3.30pm-7pm, Sat 10.30am-1pm, 2-6pm) is at the Bottagisio Sport Center, via Perlroso 14, over a narrow waterway about 50 metres from the main road in the Chievo part of town.

Merchandise includes the current kits of yellow-and-blue, white with a sky-blue stripe, and green with a yellow-and-blue stripe.

Bars
Chievo fans meet at specific venues around piazza Chievo. Prime spot is La Pantalona (via Aeroporto Angelo Berardi 80/82), by the pitch where the club played before moving up to the Stadio Bentegodi. A yellow-and-blue flag above the Café Hausbrandt sign leads into a bar of Chievo revelry on match days. By the Chievo shop on a spur of via Perloso, the bar at the Bottagisio Sport Center is also popular.

Just off piazza Chievo at via Puglie 79, Bar Da Tommaso is another Chievo hangout, with pizzas sold by the portion.
Hellas Verona

Italian champions in 1985, Hellas Verona (hellasverona.it) gained promotion to Serie A in 2013 and 2017. Despite a long history and significant fan base, the club has spent twice as many seasons in Serie B than in the top flight.

After a solitary cup final appearance in 1976, a golden decade began with the arrival of coach Osvaldo Bagnoli. Hellas hit the heights, leading Serie A for a few rounds in 1982-83 – and staying there in 1984-85. With 1986 World Cup stars Hans-Peter Briegel and Preben Elkjaer, Hellas steamed ahead, beating Napoli and Milan. A draw in Bergamo sealed the title. This was the first season that league referees were chosen at random, a factor cited by many as the reason for a topsy-turvy table free of dubious influence.

Hellas subsequently flopped in Europe, financial woes resulting in relegation and two changes of name. Worse was to follow in 2007 – not only with relegation to Serie C1 but a subsequent season at the bottom of the lower flight.

After relegation in 2016, Hellas bounced back under former Napoli midfielder Fabio Pecchia.

Stadium

Hellas have played at the Stadio Bentegodi since its opening in 1963, occupying the Curva Sud on via Fra Giocondo gates/cancello 18-19. For the bigger games, Hellas fans take up most of the 37,000 capacity.

Tickets

During the week before the game, tickets go on general sale through Vivaticket, both online (vivaticket.it) and through outlets such as Boxoffice Verona, near the historic Arena at via Pallone 16.

From 11am on match days, tickets are distributed from the Hellas Verona Ticket Point at Parcheggio A at the Bentegodi.

In all cases, ID is required.

Bought in advance, a ticket for a standard Serie A game is €40-€65 in the Poltronissime seats, €25-€32 in the Poltrone and €18 behind the goals in the home Curva Sud and away Curva Nord.

Prices are reduced for women, over-60s and under-16s, by about €10-€15. Under-14s are charged €2. For match-day sales, prices rise by about €2-€5.

Bars

Around the stadium, the main bars, behind the Tribuna Est on the stretch of piazzale Olimpia between via Fra Giocondo and via Sansovino, are all Hellas-focused. The main one is Stadio, immediately facing the stadium, covered in Hellas scarves and images of the Bentegodi and a composite image of Hellas in the 1980s.

On the corner of Sansovino, Olimpia also displays Hellas support while at the other end of piazzale Olimpia, the modest Bentegodi is another popular pre-match spot.

The Hellas Store is at via Cattaneo 2, on the corner with via Oberdan. There’s also a match-day outlet at the stadium behind the Tribuna Est.

Kits come in various combinations of blue and yellow, with variations of T-shirt including images of the Stadio Bentegodi and a composite image of Hellas in the 1980s.