



## » WHERE ELSE: Sperlonga A slice of Greece, just south of Rome

by Tiffany Parks

As you stroll the scorching Roman streets this month, you might get the impression that you're the only person left in the city. Italians famously fly the coop in August—particularly mid-month—and the city can seem like a ghost town. Well, if you can't beat 'em, why not join 'em? They're all at the beach! But instead of braving the heaving masses at Ostia or Fregene, head south to the adorable seaside town of Sperlonga.

Located 79 miles to the south, Sperlonga marks the halfway point between Rome and Naples. While it might take a little longer to reach than the more popular beaches around the Capital, it's well worth the trek. The town center, a cluster of whitewashed buildings perched on a hillside above the sea, has the flavor of a fishing village on a tiny Greek island. The winding alleys and picturesque piazzas bursting with flowers are ideal for a lazy *passaggiata* before or after plunging into the Tyrrhenian depths.

When it's time to soak up some rays, descend the long narrow staircase to the beach. Lounge chairs (*lettini* to the locals) can be rented along with umbrellas or minicabanas for €13–18 per person. If you don't mind a bit of direct sunshine or have your own umbrella, you can save a bundle by opting for the public beach, wedged in between the private paid ones.

But don't get so chilled out that you miss the chance for some culture. What we see of Sperlonga today is just a whisper of its original glory, and the ruins are worth a visit. Emperor

Tiberius had his summer residence here, a magnificent villa built into and around a natural cave with a number of pools carved into the rocks where exotic fish and amphibians were raised. The villa's spectacular decorative theme was based on Homer's epic *The Odyssey*, and several important Greek sculptures were discovered here, including the massive *Polyphemus*, by the same artists responsible for the legendary *Laocoon*. Find the cave at the southern extreme of Levante beach, and admire many of the villa's ancient artifacts at the **Sperlonga Archeological Museum** (km 16,300 of Via Flacca. Tel 0771548028).

For a scrumptious meal, you can't miss with **Gli Archi** (Via Ottaviano, 17), a family-run restaurant located in the middle of the old town that serves tempting seafood in an intimate setting. Another great option is **Mudejar Spiriti e Cucina** (Via Torre di Nibbio, 5), which despite its casual atmosphere offers some of the highest quality dining in the area. Want to stay the night? Modern and elegant **Moresco Park Hotel** (Via Fontana della Camera, 3) has bright, spacious rooms and spectacular views.



### Visiting Information

#### Getting There:

Trains depart from Termini Station every hour (€6.90 each way) for Fondi-Sperlonga (70 mins). From there, catch the connecting bus to the beach (30–40 mins). See [www.trenitalia.it](http://www.trenitalia.it) for schedules. By car take Via Pontina until Terracina and continue on Via Flacca (2.5 hours; longer on weekends).