



Shopping at a local market in Palermo.

swordfish, precarious houses that look as though they might crumble any time (some have in recent years), and tiny, hole-in-the-wall eateries that may seem shady and improvised, but are some of the best in town.

IL BALLARÒ Another of Palermo's historical markets is within the Albergotta district, starting at Piazza Bologni and extending as far as Corso Tukory. The narrow lanes are crammed with shoppers making their rounds among the stalls.

IL CAPO The largest and the most bazaar-like of Palermo's markets is at the heart of the neighborhood of the same name, enclosed within an area that includes Via Papireto, Via Volturmo, Via Maqueda, and Corso Vittorio Emanuele. The tiny, winding streets and alleyways spread out behind the Teatro Massimo. The Capo was once the headquarters of the secret society of the Beati Paoli, the legendary sect that robbed from the rich and gave to the poor; pickpockets still adhere to this age-old principle, so watch your wallet.

ALBERGHERIA This is the oldest of the four *mandamenti*; it is also known as the *mandamento Palazzo Reale* because the Phoenicians first laid the foundations of what would become the royal place on the highest part of the city. Like the *Kalut*, it is filled with tiny, dimly lit alleyways barely wide enough for a person to walk and with decaying buildings in dire need of repair. It is also unsavory in some patches, despite the ever-growing presence of cafes and eateries. These were the streets roamed by the soothsayer and charlatan Giuseppe Balsamo (aka Count Cagliostro), an adventurer, traveler, swindler, forger, and thief who spent time in the Bastille after allegedly stealing a diamond necklace from Marie Antoinette and was finally tried by the Inquisition and died in a Roman prison. There are some very exquisite corners—especially the splendid Piazza Bologni, with its noble palaces and a statue of Charles V.

CASTELLAMMARE Owing its name to the castle that once overlooked the sea, this area is bordered by Corso Vittorio Emanuele, Via Cavour, Via Roma, and Via

Crispi. Though heavily bombed by the Allies during 1943, the neighborhood houses some spectacular *palazzi* and churches, such as the Oratorio del Rosario di Santa Cita and the Oratorio di San Lorenzo (p. 530).

NEW CITY As you head north from Via Maqueda, the streets grow broader but also more nondescript. The monumental Teatro Massimo, at Piazza Verdi, roughly marks the division between the Old City and the New City. While Via Maqueda cuts through the medieval district, it becomes Via Ruggero Settimo as it heads north through the modern town. This street explodes into the massive double squares at Piazza Politeama, site of the Teatro Politeama Garibaldi. North of the square is Palermo's swankiest street, Viale della Libertà, running up toward Giardino Inglese. This is the area where the Art Nouveau movement triumphed in the city, as is still visible in the kiosks at Piazza Castelnuovo and in Piazza Verdi, but many of these priceless edifices were torn down by unscrupulous builders to make way for the ugly cement behemoths that do not blend with the elegance of the neighborhood.

Where to Stay

Palermo has some excellent hotels, and rates are much lower than they are in Rome or Florence. For convenience and atmosphere, don't stay too far beyond the neighborhoods in the old center (see above).

Butera 28 ★★★ The 17th-century Lanza Tomasi Palace, facing the seafront, is the home of Duke Gioacchino Lanza Tomasi, the adoptive son of Prince Giuseppe Tomasi di Lampedusa, author of one of the greatest works of modern Italian literature, "The Leopard." The gracious duke and his charming wife, Nicoletta, have converted 12 apartments of their *palazzo* to short-stay apartments, filling them with family pieces and all the modern conveniences, including full kitchens and every traveler's dream come true, washing machines. Apartments have one or two bedrooms; some have sea views and terraces, some are multilevel, and all have beautiful hardwood or tile floors and other detailing. The duchess also offers cooking classes, and she and the duke are on hand to provide a wealth of advice to help you get the most out of their beloved Palermo.

Via Butera 28. www.butera28.it. ☎ 39-333316-5432. 12 units. From 70€ double. **Amenities:** Kitchens, Wi-fi (free). Bus: 103, 104, 105, 118, or 225.

Centrale Palace ★★ A wonderful location just steps off the Quattro Canti put this much-redone yet still grand *palazzo* within easy reach of most sights. Public rooms, including a vast frescoed salon where breakfast is served, evoke the 1890s Belle Époque age when the 17th-century *palazzo* was first converted to a hotel. The good-sized guest rooms above are comfortably functional, with some luxe touches like rich fabrics and mosaic-tiled bathrooms; double-pane windows in the front rooms keep the street noise at bay. A rooftop sun terrace is retreat from the city below, with views that extend across the rooftops to Monte Pellegrino. There's an airy dining room up here, and you may want to linger well into a warm summer night.

Via Vittorio Emanuele 327 (at Via Maqueda). www.centralepalacehotel.it. ☎ 091-336666. 104 units. 188€-271€ double. Rates include buffet breakfast. Parking 18€. **Amenities:** 2 restaurants; bar; exercise room; sauna; room service; babysitting; Wi-Fi (free). Bus: 103, 104, or 105.

Grand Hotel Piazza Borsa ★★ A conglomeration of three historic buildings seems to take in a bit of every part of Palermo's past—the banking floor and

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