

WALKING TOURS



WALKING TOURS

If you know one thing about Naples, it's probably that you don't want to drive here. Ever.

Italians will warn you not to take a car into Naples; Neapolitans will tell you (with just a hint of swagger) that you only need to get used to the road conditions. But unless you're staying for about 18 years you don't have time to get used to anything. The solution is simple – walk.

Even walking is not without its hazards. Scooters shoot past, brushing you as they go, parked cars block the pavements, and no car will ever stop at a pedestrian crossing unless physically forced to do so. The best advice is to cross the road with a local (ideally a nun) between you and the oncoming traffic.

Naples is a big city but it can easily be divided into manageable areas and explored on foot. The itineraries we describe here will take you through the heart of the city and give you an appetising taste.

SPACCANAPOLI & THE CENTRO STORICO

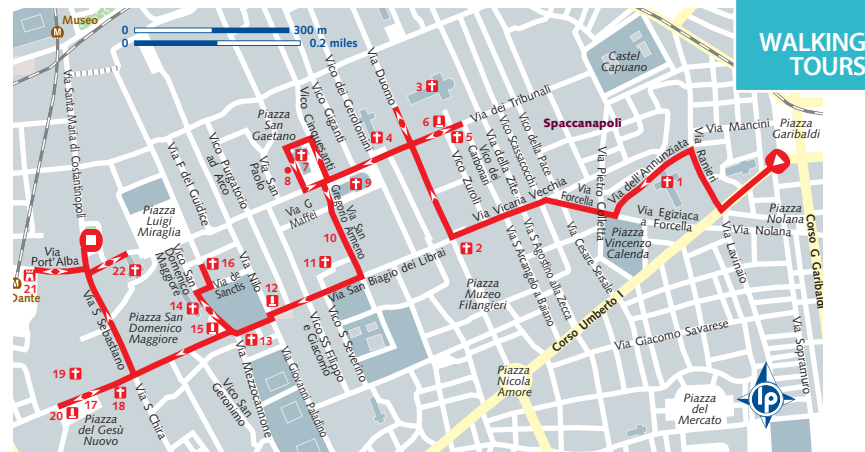
This tour takes you through the centro storico (historic centre), concentrating on its two main streets, Via San Biagio dei Librai and Via dei Tribunali.

Starting from **Piazza Garibaldi**, head a short way down Corso Umberto I before turning right into Via Ranieri and then left into Via dell'Annunziata. A little way down on your left you'll see the **Santissima Annunziata 1** (p77), famous for its orphanage. It's a sad but moving experience to see the *ruota*, the wooden wheel where babies were once abandoned. Continue down the street and turn right down Via Forcella. After crossing Via Pietro Colletta, follow the street as it veers left and merges into Via Vicaria Vecchia. Where it meets the busy cross street, Via Duomo, stands the **Basilica di San Giorgio Maggiore 2** (p74) on your left and, two blocks northwest up Via Duomo, the **Duomo 3** (p75). Thousands gather at the Duomo in May, September and December to witness San Gennaro's dried blood miraculously liquefy. Over the road from the cathedral is the entrance to the **Chiesa e Pinacoteca dei Girolamini 4** (p74).

Double back down Via Duomo until you meet Via dei Tribunali. Known to the Romans as the *decumanus maior*, this street runs parallel to the *decumanus inferior*, aka Spaccanapoli, aka Via San Biagio dei Librai. Before heading right into the heart of the centro storico, quickly nip left to admire Caravaggio's masterpiece *Le Sette Opere di Misericordia* (The Seven Acts of Mercy) in the **Pio Monte della Misericordia 5** (p73). Before you retrace your steps to Via Duomo, have a quick look at the baroque **Guglia di San Gennaro 6** (p72) in the small square opposite the church.

After you've crossed Via Duomo make for Piazza San Gaetano, about 150m down on the right. The tiny square where the Roman forum once stood is now dominated by the imposing **Chiesa di San Paolo Maggiore 7** (p70). Tucked away to the side is **Napoli Sotterranea 8** (p65). It is here that you enter Naples' extensive underworld. Some 30m to 40m under the surface, the ancient network of tunnels was originally cut out by the Greeks to extract the tufa stone, but the tunnels were used in WWII as air-raid shelters. Back on the surface, opposite the piazza, is the **Chiesa di San Lorenzo Maggiore 9** (p70). A stark but beautiful Gothic church, it stands atop yet more Roman *scavi* (excavations) and is one of the highlights of the centro storico.

It's at this point that you leave Via dei Tribunali and head down **Via San Gregorio Armeno 10** (p74). In December people come from all over Italy to visit the shops that line this street. They specialise in the *presepi* (nativity scenes) that no traditional Italian house is without at Christmas. Along this street you'll also find the **Chiesa di San Gregorio Armeno 11** (p70), famous for its extravagant baroque décor and weekly miracle – the blood of Santa Patrizia is said to liquefy here every Tuesday.



WALKING TOURS

WALK FACTS

Start Piazza Garibaldi
End Piazza Bellini
Distance 3km
Duration 4 hours
Transport  Garibaldi



Chiesa di San Paolo Maggiore (p70)

JEAN-BERNARD CARLLET

At the end of the road you hit Via San Biagio dei Librai. Turn right and after about 250m you will pass the **Statua del Nilo 12** (p74) on your right. Less imposing is the altar to footballer Maradona on the wall opposite the statue. Further down on the left, the **Chiesa di Sant'Angelo a Nilo 13** (p70) is entered from the small sidestreet **Vico Donnaromita**.

The rear of the imposing **Chiesa di San Domenico Maggiore 14** (p69) abuts onto the café-fringed, pedestrianised **Piazza San Domenico Maggiore** (p73). At the heart of the square is the **Guglia di San Domenico 15** (p73), topped by a statue of the good saint himself. The not-to-be-missed **Cappella Sansevero 16** (p68) is just off this square in a lane east of the church. A jewel of a chapel, it's home to the stunning **Cristo Velato** (Veiled Christ), as beautiful a sculpture as any in Naples.

Back on Via San Biagio dei Librai, the road becomes Via Benedetto Croce and continues west to **Piazza del Gesù Nuovo 17** (p73), the scene of much nightly revelry. The lively piazza is flanked by the **Basilica di Santa Chiara 18** (p67) and the **Chiesa del Gesù Nuovo 19** (p69), while in the centre the **Guglia dell'Immacolata 20** (p73) is a study in baroque excess. The majolica-tiled cloisters of Santa Chiara provide one of the few peaceful spots in the centro storico, while the adjoining church stands as testament to the skill of Naples' restoration experts after it was almost completely destroyed by WWII bombs.

Backtrack from the square to the first intersection and turn left along Via S Sebastiano. At the next intersection on your left a short street leads down to book-lined **Port'Alba 21** (p74), a city gate built in 1625, then to Piazza Dante.

Back on route and ahead of you is **Piazza Bellini** (p72) and, to the right, **Piazza Luigi Miraglia**, flanked by Naples' conservatory and the **Chiesa San Pietro a Maiella 22** (p72). A great place to rest your weary feet is in one of **Piazza Bellini's** several cafés. While you're at it you could inspect the remains of the ancient Greek city walls under the square.

ROYAL SITES & SPECTACULAR VIEWS

The royal Santa Lucia district features some of the city's most recognisable landmarks, while Vomero boasts the city's highest point and best views. This tour covers both areas from the Castel Nuovo on the seafront to the Certosa di San Martino 250m up. But don't worry, you don't have to climb all the way to the top (although there is a long, steep stairway that leads up to the Certosa) – the funicular will haul you up to Vomero in about two minutes.

Piazza del Municipio (p86) is a big, brash place that's Naples in a nutshell. Traffic thunders past, spewing out clouds of black fumes; people crowd the pavements simultaneously eating gelati, smoking and shouting into mobile phones; tourists traipse past on their way to the ferry port. Overlooking all of this is **Castel Nuovo 1** (p83). Known to Neapolitans as the Maschio Angioino, this sturdy castle dates to the 13th century and now houses a museum. From the castle, cross over the square and turn left towards Via Medina where you'll find the **Fontana di Nettuno 2** (p85), one of Naples' finest baroque fountains. At the head of the piazza stands the **Chiesa San Giacomo degli Spagnoli 3** (p86), where Naples' 16th-century Spanish viceroys Don Pedro de Toledo is buried. Next door the mayor has her office in **Palazzo San Giacomo 4** (p86).



Following Via G Verdi south you emerge onto Via S Carlo and the **Teatro San Carlo 5** (p87). Italy's largest opera house, it predates Milan's La Scala by 41 years. Opposite the theatre is one of four entrances to the **Galleria Umberto I 6** (p79), the 19th-century shopping centre that, like Teatro San Carlo, compares to a similar building in Milan, the Galleria Vittorio Emanuele II. Continuing down Via S Carlo brings you to the massive **Palazzo Reale 7** (p85), home to the national library and some richly furnished royal apartments. The entrance to the royal palace is on **Piazza Trieste e Trento 8** (p86), a magnet for thirsty tourists keen to try the coffee at **Caffè Gambrinus 9** (p120). From the pavement in front of the café, stairs lead down to an unexpected and original gallery, **Raccolta de Mura 10** (p87), dedicated to traditional Neapolitan music and theatre.

Fuelled with coffee, hop across to the huge **Piazza del Plebiscito 11** (p86) where you'll find Naples' own version of the Roman Pantheon, the **Chiesa di San Francesco di Paola 12** (p86). From here backtrack to Piazza Trieste e Trento, continue past the **Chiesa di San Ferdinando 13** (p86), and about 150m up Via Toledo you'll see a funicular station on the left. Jump on any funicular and you'll be headed for Vomero.

When you get out at the top, walk down Via Domenico Cimarosa for **Villa Floridiana 14** (p92), one of the city's rare patches of green and a good spot for a picnic. At the bottom of the park is the **Museo Nazionale della Ceramica Duca di Martina 15** (p92). When you're done with ceramics, exit the park and take Via Giovanni Merliani as far as the first crossroad, Via A Scarlati. Turn right and follow Vomero's main drag through **Piazza Vanvitelli 16** as far as it will go. Keep on going straight, up the stairs near the Morghen funicular station, and turn left into Via Colantonio. Turn left again into Via Annibale Caccavello and at the end of the street you'll come out on Via Tito Angelini. Here you'll find **Castel Sant'Elmo 17** (p91) and about 100m further down the road the **Certosa di San Martino 18** (p91). Dating to the 14th century, this stunning monastery houses a fabulous museum and art gallery. And if all that's not enough, just look at the views – they're the best in town.



WALK FACTS

Start Piazza del Municipio
 End Certosa di San Martino
 Distance 4km (excluding funicular)
 Duration 4 hours
 Transport 🚆 R2 to Piazza del Municipio & Funicolare Centrale Via Toledo to Fuga



A SEAFRONT STROLL

Starting at the Borgo Marinaro and the wonderfully named Castel dell'Ovo (Castle of the Egg), this route leads up to Piazza del Plebiscito, and round Via Chiaia to Piazza dei Martiri. From here you head seawards to pick up Villa Comunale and the *lungomare* (seafront) as it curves round the bay to Mergellina. The seafront is a favourite Neapolitan walk that is particularly enjoyable in the cool of a summer evening.

Start on the island of volcanic rock known to the ancient Greeks as Megaris and to modern Neapolitans as the **Borgo Marinaro** (p83). Naples' oldest castle, **Castel dell'Ovo 1** (p83) has stood here since the 12th century. Returning to the mainland you'll see a row of luxurious hotels across the busy seafront road Via Partenope. Before you cross the road, however, take a second to admire the dramatic **Fontana dell'Immacolatella 2** (p85) a few metres down on your right.

From the fountain cross Via Partenope, turn left and take the second right into Via Santa Lucia. Make your way up this attractive street to the top, turn left, and after about 200m you'll find yourself at **Piazza del Plebiscito 3** (p86). Traverse the square and bear left into Via Chiaia. Cobble and smart, this historic street cuts through to Via S Caterina and **Piazza dei Martiri 4** (p89), the centre of the upmarket Chiaia district, dominated by a 19th-century obelisk. This is a good place to stop for a coffee.

Refreshed, continue down Via Calabritto, pausing to shop or look in the expensive designer shops, until you reach Piazza Vittoria and the entrance to **Villa Comunale 5** (p89). This smart park of palms, statues and swings is home to Europe's oldest aquarium, the **Stazione Zoologica 6** (p89). For more greenery and some priceless porcelain make for the **Museo Pignatelli 7** (p88), on the inland side of the park.

To get back to the *lungomare*, retrace your steps over the Riviera di Chiaia and Villa Comunale to Via Francesco Caracciolo, the extension of Via Partenope. From here it's a pleasant and relaxing walk around the bay to Mergellina. This stretch of the route has no sites per se but if you look out to sea you'll spot the distinctive shape of Capri in the distance. When you get to Mergellina – you'll know you're there once you pass the **Porticciolo 8** (p101) – make a beeline for the bars and gelaterie (ice-cream parlours) known as the **Chalets 9** (p101). Here you can rest up and either call it a day or, if you've energy left, push on for a short final leg.

WALK FACTS

Start Borgo Marinaro
End Parco Vergiliano
Distance 5km
Duration 4 hours
Transport  C25 to Via Partenope



If you can tear yourself away from beer and ice cream cross over the main road to pick up Via Mergellina, which heads north, becoming Salita Piedigrotta after Piazza Sannazzaro. At the top of the short incline you will see the **Chiesa Santa Maria di Piedigrotta 10** (p99) on your left and across the road Mergellina train and metro station. At the church, go left, hold your breath as you walk under the railway bridge, and you'll come to the **Parco Vergiliano 11** (p100) on your left. A small but well-tended park, this is where Virgil is said to be buried.

FROM CATACOMBS TO CAPODIMONTE

This tour takes in two museums, three catacombs, a few churches and a park. From the Museo Archeologico Nazionale located on Piazza Museo Nazionale, the route rises through the little-explored La Sanità district and continues up to the Palazzo Reale di Capodimonte before finishing up at the Catacomba di San Gennaro.

You don't need to be an archaeologist to appreciate that the collection at the **Museo Archeologico Nazionale 1** (p80) is something special. Highlights include the **Toro Farnese** (Farnese Bull) sculpture and the incredible mosaics, many of which once adorned noble houses in Pompeii.

From Piazza Museo Nazionale follow the traffic along Via Foria, passing Piazza Cavour (the grand name for a strip of bald grass) until shortly after the Cavour metro station. Take a left at Via Vergini and enter the Sanità district.


Known as La Sanità (which means 'healthy'), this area of crumbling buildings and impoverished streets was for centuries where the city buried its dead. The network of catacombs that runs underground is the main reason to come here.

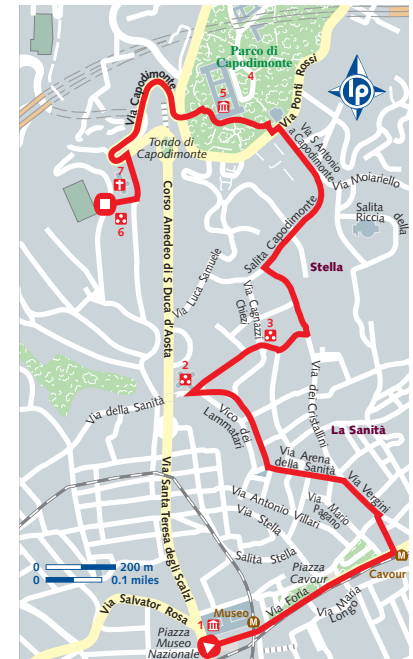
At the end of Via Vergini the road forks. Follow the left-hand street, Via Arena della Sanità, which becomes Via della Sanità as it approaches Piazza della Sanità. On the square, the **Chiesa Santa Maria della Sanità 2** (p95) is the entrance to the dark and dank **Catacomba di San Gaudioso**. Here you'll find mosaics and frescoes from the 5th century and learn the secrets of medieval inhumation.

Back in the open air and with your back to the church, turn left down Via San Severo a Capodimonte towards the Chiesa di San Severo. Under the 16th-century church lies Naples' first bishop, buried in the **Catacomba di San Severo 3** in AD 410.

The road, or rather alleyway, now turns north. The Salita Capodimonte rises to the left of Piazzetta San Severo. At the top of the steps, head left and follow the street as it carves its winding way up to Via Capodimonte and, over the road, to the **Parco di Capodimonte 4** (p95). Enter through the gate and follow the path round to the **Palazzo Reale di Capodimonte**

WALK FACTS

Start Piazza Museo Nazionale
End Catacomba di San Gennaro
Distance 3km
Duration 4 hours
Transport  Cavour



5 (p93). This majestic Bourbon palace houses one of Italy's most important art collections. Paintings by artists ranging from Caravaggio to Warhol line some 160 rooms spread over three floors.

To get to the last port of call, the **Catacomba di San Gennaro 6** (p93), you can either walk down Via Capodimonte, or jump on a bus (any going downhill from outside the park gate) for the quick trip down to the catacombs. Get off the bus by the impossible-to-miss **Chiesa di Madre di Buon Consiglio 7** (p93) on the right-hand side. The catacombs are the last resting place of San Gennaro and are known for their Palaeo-Christian frescoes and mosaics.

CLIMB THE ANCIENT HILL

Rising behind Piazza del Plebiscito, Monte Echia and the Pizzofalcone district is the oldest inhabited part of Naples. Greeks founded the city of Parthenope here in the 7th century BC, predating Neapolis (New Town) by some 300 years. Although the short tour outlined here does not include a whole host of must-see sites, it's an atmospheric (and relatively peaceful) walk that offers some fine views. Be warned though that it does involve a fairly steep climb and a hairpin descent.

Behind the columns on the northern side of Piazza del Plebiscito, **Piazza Carolina 1** is the starting point for the climb up to Monte Echia. Rising up the hill are two narrow streets – Vico Santo Spirito di Palazzo and Via Gennaro Sorra. Take one of these, it doesn't matter which, and head up to **Piazza Santa Maria degli Angeli 2**. A small, undistinguished square, it takes its name from the yellow-fronted **Chiesa Santa Maria degli Angeli 3** (p87). A baroque church, its most impressive feature is its huge dome.

From the square continue upwards along Via Monte di Dio until, on your right, you come to Via Generali Parisi. At the end of this short street is **La Nunziatella 4** (p87), one of Italy's most prestigious military schools.

Backtracking to Via Monte di Dio, continue straight down Via Nunziatella until the first crossing. Turn right up Via Egiziaca Pizzofalcone and head uphill. The street is dark and atmospheric and the climb comfortable. At the top, continue straight up the Salita Echia and carry on until you come to the shabby gardens at the top. From here the views are your reward.

To return to sea level you can either go back the way you've come or follow the path that leads right off the garden terrace. Technically a private road, the Rampa Privata di Pizzofalcone zigzags its steep way down the side of the rock face until it flattens out into Via Chiatamone. As you descend notice the houses carved into the rock. Once you get to the bottom turn left and after a few metres you'll find yourself on **Via Santa Lucia 5**, an ideal place to plonk yourself at a pavement table and order a pizza.



WALK FACTS

Start Piazza Carolina
End Via Santa Lucia
Distance 1.5km
Duration 2 hours
Transport CS to Piazza Trieste e Trento

© Lonely Planet Publications. To make it easier for you to use, access to this chapter is not digitally restricted. In return, we think it's fair to ask you to use it for personal, non-commercial purposes only. In other words, please don't upload this chapter to a peer-to-peer site, mass email it to everyone you know, or resell it. See the terms and conditions on our site for a longer way of saying the above - 'Do the right thing with our content.'