



NAPLES & THE AMALFI COAST

SEARCHING FOR HAPPINESS ON THE AMALFI COAST

Naples is a double-shot espresso. Caught in the shadow of a snoozing Mt Vesuvius, it fronts each day with fatalistic intensity.

Teeming streets explode with high theatrics: lovers fight passionately, drivers dodge skilfully and counterfeit-Prada salesmen keep an eye out for police. From the hissing craters of the Campi Flegrei to the graphic ruins of Herculaneum and Pompeii, drama defines the details.

But Italy's hyperactive underdog is more than just mayhem and thin-crust margherita pizzas. This former regal diva boasts three royal palaces, a superlative archaeological museum, art collections spanning from the classics to Jeff Koons, and an ancient centro storico (historic centre) bursting with secret frescoed chapels and citrus-filled cloisters. Not bad for a city more renowned for bling-clad mafiosi.

Ironically, it is Naples' unfashionableness that has made it so cool. While other cities march to a globalised beat, Naples is keeping it real. Here, restaurants are family heirlooms and vintage tailors sew bratpack suits. The cutting edge exists but it lives side by side with the Naples of neorealist film director Vittorio de Sica's imagination – one of gesticulating crowds and Sophia Loren lookalikes.

A film star in its own right, the fabled Amalfi Coast rolls out to the south. Lush cliffs plunge into creamy-blue seas and chichi coastal towns read like a celebrity roll call. American heiresses prefer pastel Positano, day-trippers flock to Amalfi, and Gore Vidal once lived in elegant hillside Ravello. Across the Bay of Naples sits bewitching Capri, home to a neon-blue grotto and holidaying superstars. The island has always seduced the cream of the crop, from kinky Roman emperors to Jackie Onassis and Brigitte Bardot. Further west, steamy Ischia soothes the muscles with its thermal springs, while tiny Procida soothes the soul with its windswept villages and weathered, old fishermen.

Legendary coastlines, infamous ruins and a madcap metropolis to boot: welcome to Italy at its red-blooded best.

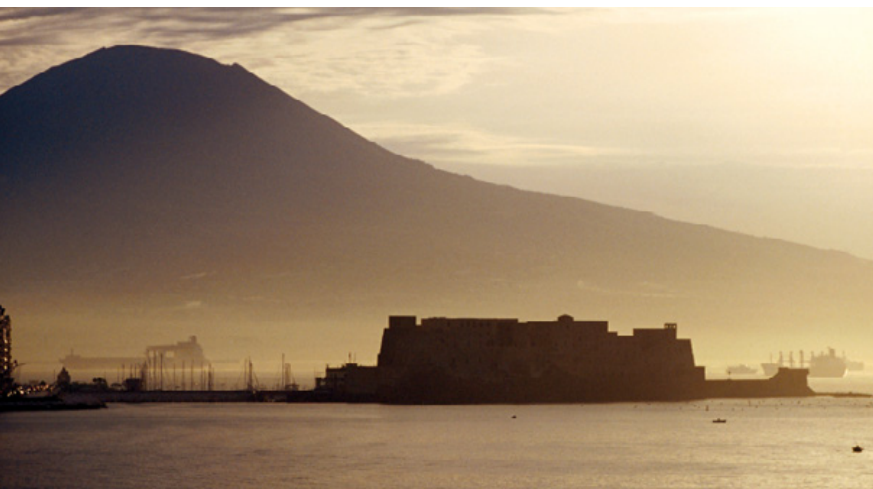
INTERVIEW 1: SUN, SEA & THE SILVER SCREEN

NAME	Antonietta de Lillo
AGE	47
OCCUPATION	Film-maker
RESIDENCE	Naples & Rome

What makes Naples queen of the Italian screen?

'Naples is an endless source of inspiration for me as a film-maker. There's an energy here that seems drawn from Mt Vesuvius itself. Like Caravaggio's chiaroscuro paintings, it's a place of extreme light and shadow. On one level there are the grand, sun-drenched castles of Sant'Elmo, Castel Nuovo and Castel dell'Ovo, and the sweeping views from Posillipo. But then there's a hidden Naples, the Naples of the *Quartieri Spagnoli* and *La Sanità*, where poverty and chaos sit side by side with grand baroque staircases, secret courtyards and forgotten palazzi. One of my favourite buildings in Naples is Luigi Vanvitelli's Palazzo Doria D'Angri on Piazza VII Settembre. It's considered one of Naples' finest 18th-century creations, and I used it as a location in *Resto di Niente*, a film set during the days of the Parthenopean Republic.

'Like any intriguing protagonist, Naples is complex and multilayered. Beneath its frantic streets sits an otherworld of catacombs, ancient cults and ruins. A fascinating way to explore it all is on a *Napoli Sotterranea* tour, which takes you underground into an eerie landscape of ancient passageways and caves. The sense of mystery continues at street level, where haunting little shrines and altars pay homage to various saints...and footballers. Naples is home to many cults, and our love of ritual and performance helps explain our rich



Mt Vesuvius looms behind Castel dell'Ovo (p83)

JEAN-BERNARD CARLLET

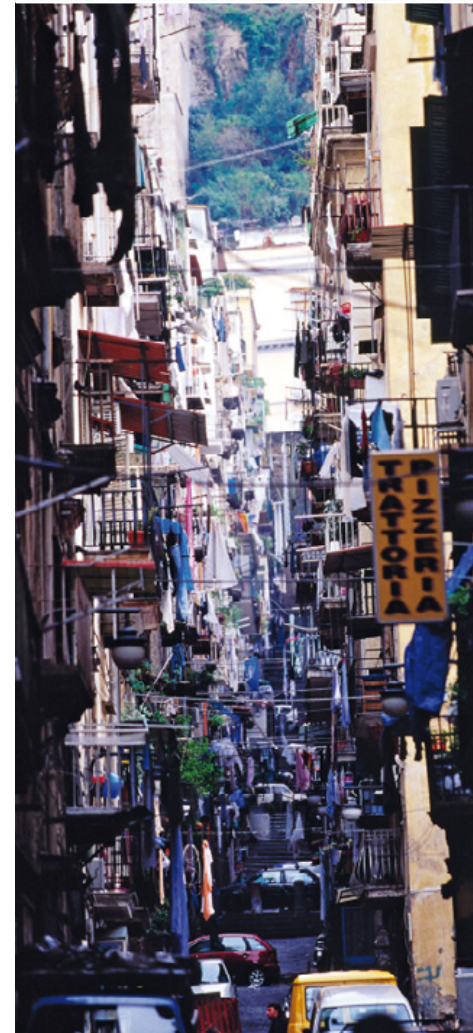
dramatic and musical legacy. *Commedia dell'arte* was born on these streets, and the *Teatro San Carlo* is one of the world's great opera houses.

'Once again, Naples shows a completely different side at *MADRE*, the city's new contemporary art gallery. I adore coming here for the contrast between the cutting-edge work on display and the weathered old city on the other side of the windows. It's a sharp paradox and what I love best about my home town. This, and the pastries at *Moccia*, of course. I have travelled the globe and am yet to find a *pasticceria* (pastry shop) as equally sublime. You can't sit down but it's a small price to pay for the world's best *caprese* (chocolate and almond cake).

'COMMEDIA DELL'ARTE WAS BORN ON THESE STREETS, AND THE TEATRO SAN CARLO IS ONE OF THE WORLD'S GREAT OPERA HOUSES'

'When I need inspiration (or just a break), I try to get away to *Procida*. This tiny island has inspired some great work, including Elsa Morante's bitter-sweet novel *L'Isola di Arturo* (Arthur's Island) and the wonderful film *Il Postino* (The Postman). My own film *Non e' Giusto* (It's Not Right) was shot here. With its fishermen and pastel-hued Arabesque houses, the island feels wilder and more authentic than neighbouring *Ischia* and *Capri*. A wonderful annual spectacle is *Ischia's Festa di Sant'Anna*, when the sea fills with boats and fireworks are set off at midnight in honour of the island's martyred protector. It's very beautiful to watch from *Procida*.'

THIS IMAGE
NOT AVAILABLE
IN PICK & MIX



On the streets of Naples' Quartieri Spagnoli (p78)

JEAN-BERNARD CARLLET

INTERVIEW 2: THEATRE, CURSES & FALLING CHURCHES

NAME Francesco Sivo
AGE 32
OCCUPATION Architect
RESIDENCE Naples

If walls could talk, what would they say about Naples?

'To understand a city, you need only to look at its buildings. Each stone and each square offers a revealing insight into not just its history but also the soul of its people. In *La Perle et le Croissant*, the French writer Dominique Fernandez observes: 'Naples is resistant to bourgeois order, yet all the city is baroque...there is also baroque in the psychological fragility of the inhabitants, the very theatricality of each moment of existence.' Some of the most evocative examples of this dramatic sensibility are the city's old staircases. Particularly famous are the double-flighted creations of the 18th-century architect Ferdinando Sanfelice, which look fit for an opera. The best examples are in the *Palazzo Sanfelice* and the *Palazzo dello Spagnolo*. A recently restored baroque highlight is the *San Gregorio Armeno* in the centro storico (historic centre), with its lavish gilded interior and sumptuous marble sculptures and art.



Baroque *guggia* (obelisk) in Piazza San Domenico Maggiore (p73)

DALLAS STIBBLEY



Chiesa del Gesù Nuovo (p69) in Naples' centro storico

GREG ELLIS

'Naples is also famous for its history of alchemy. An intriguing example of this is the diamond-stoned exterior of the *Chiesa del Gesù Nuovo*. The façade itself predates the church and was originally part of the 15th-century *Palazzo dei Principi di San Severo di Sarno*. Few people know that each stone is engraved with a mysterious esoteric symbol. Professors in ancient alchemy believe that these symbols were meant to bring good luck but for some unknown reason were engraved inversely on the stones, consequently cursing the building. According to legend, each one of its inhabitants was destined to be driven out. The first owner, Antonello Sanseverino, was forced to leave the palace by the Aragon ambassador. The second, Ferrante Sanseverino, was driven out in 1580 by Spanish king Philip II who sold the palace to the Jesuits. In 1767, they were thrown out and Franciscan monks moved in, only to be thrown out themselves in 1821 to allow the Jesuits back in. We're still waiting for the next ousting.

'Today, most of the bad luck that hits the city's buildings comes from a lack of funding for restoration works. Naples is packed with hundreds of lesser-known but sublimely beautiful buildings left run down and forgotten. One particularly sad example is the *Chiesa di Santa Maria Delle Grazie a Caponapoli* (Largo Santa Maria delle Grazie a Capo Napoli), next to the *Ospedale dei Incurabili*. Designed by Giovan Francesco di Palma, this Tuscan-inspired Renaissance church is exquisite. Decorated with hand-carved stones, it features a beautiful front door by Giovanni Donadio and is one of the most famous Neapolitan sculptures of the 16th century. Today, it's boarded up and decaying. Thankfully, the beautiful frescoed courtyard has been spared; it's now used as a laundry for the hospital next door.'

INTERVIEW 3: NAME YOUR PRICE

NAME	Cinzia Boggia
AGE	32
OCCUPATION	Telecommunications Officer
RESIDENCE	Naples

Have you got what it takes to shop like a local?

'If you're up for a bargain, it's hard to beat the markets in Naples. You'll find almost anything here and it's usually very cheap. A great place to start is at **Poggioreale**. It's huge and the place for shoes. You can find everything from men's trainers to designer Italian stilettoes. What might cost you €150 in a shop, you can get here for €20. The big names aren't fakes, just excess stock, which means that finding your size can be a question of luck. Try to come on a Sunday or Monday when all the stalls are open. As for haggling, always offer the vendor half their initial asking price. They'll always refuse, at which point you should feign disinterest and make to walk away. This is when you'll get that winning second offer that meets you halfway.



Market time (p140)

CRAG PERSHOUSE

'Another great Neapolitan market is **La Pignasecca**. Here you'll find absolutely everything from discount perfume and linen to cheap CDs – and pickpockets, so leave your valuables at home. The designer clothes and bags are convincing copies and seriously cheap, so there's no need to haggle. But above all, this is the place for food, from fast-food *croccè* (potato mash breadcrumbed and fried, filled with mozzarella cheese) to fresh fish.

'For a totally different vibe, head to the **Bancarelle a San Pasquale** in Chiaia. This little market is very 'in' at the moment and a fabulous spot for cool clothes and unusual jewellery, bags and sarongs. Just don't

'THE DESIGNER CLOTHES AND BAGS ARE CONVINCING COPIES AND SERIOUSLY CHEAP'

haggle – it's not the done thing in this part of town. Up the hill in Vomero, check out the **Mercatino di Antignano** for good-quality Italian-made shoes, clothes and homewares.

'My personal favourite is the **Mercatino di Posillipo**. It's my local and a lot more chilled than the markets downtown. Towards the top of the hill on the right-hand side you'll find a stall that sells vintage clothes. Some of the pieces are really rare and beautifully tailored. Last-season or sample stock from Armani, Moschino, Dolce & Gabbana and Calvin Klein can go for as little as €10. The Gucci and Prada here are fakes, as are the Louis Vuitton bags sold at the bottom of the hill. That said, they're brilliant copies and the African vendors are always up for a haggle. Offer them half their asking price and expect to walk off with a bargain.'



GREGGINS

INTERVIEW 4: ISLAND LIFE

NAME Claudia Verardi
AGE 37
OCCUPATION Translator
RESIDENCE Naples

What is it about Capri that keeps the A-list coming back?

'I have a true passion for Capri: all of my favourite memories as a child belong to this magical place. The long walks with my family, late-night chocolate gelato on the piazzetta, the trips to the **Grotta Azzurra**. These days, I head there with my dog Scooby and we just amble with no particular place to go. The soft light and heady scent of jasmine make me feel at peace with myself. Walking around, you never know who you might meet. In the 1950s and '60s, it was common to see the likes of Sophia Loren, Clark Gable and Vittorio de Sica on the piazzetta. Funnily enough, I saw de Sica's son Christian on the same square last summer. Days later, I spotted Tom Cruise outside the **Capri Palace**, a popular haunt for visiting stars. Naomi Campbell, another famous guest, is sometimes seen partying at **Musmè** and **Anema e Core**, two of Capri's most exclusive clubs.

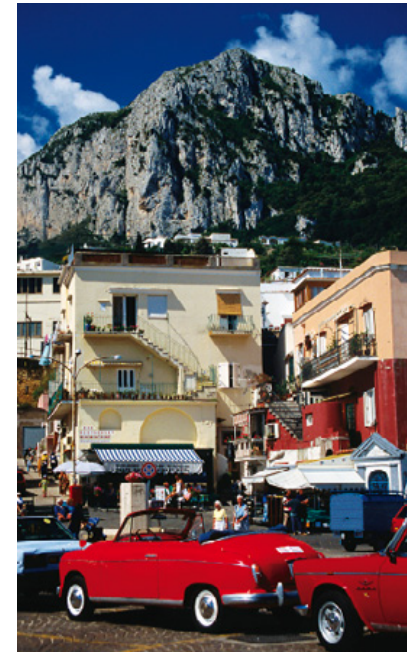


The giant limestone pinnacles of Isole Faraglioni (p175), Capri

STEPHEN SAKS

'Of course, Capri had been courting the rich and famous long before the days of yachts and paparazzi. In the 1st century AD, Emperor Tiberius had 12 luxury villas built for himself here. The best preserved and most visited of them is **Villa Jovis**, although it's possible to visit some of the others with the help of a specialised guide.

'For icons of a different kind, head to the southeast coast, where the giant Faraglioni rocks rise from the water. Sculpted by wind and sea, the furthest of the three is home to the rare and beautiful *lucertola azzurra* (blue-tinted lizard). My favourite time to visit Capri is in the spring and early summer. The weather is warm, bougainvillea carpets the white-washed buildings and the summer crowds are still at bay. But before you pack your bikinis, make sure you watch *L'Imperatore di Capri* (The Emperor of Capri), a hilarious film about Capri starring the legendary comic Totò. It makes an interesting introduction.'



Marina Grande (p178), Capri

JONATHAN SMITH



Bathing boxes at Marina Piccola (p179), Capri

STEPHEN SAKS



INTERVIEW 5: MYTHS & LEGENDS

NAME	Marcello Donnarumma
AGE	24
OCCUPATION	Tourism Researcher
RESIDENCE	Naples

Could the ancient Campi Flegrei be Naples' best-kept secret?

'I wrote my thesis on the Campi Flegrei and I'm forever blown away by it. There's something surreal and beautiful about the place, with its volcanic landscape, haunting ruins and ancient myths and legends. It feels like every stone has a tale to tell. In **Cuma**, you can see where Virgil's hero Aeneas sailed ashore and where he spoke with the Sibyl. Close by, **Lago d'Averno** is where Aeneas, and later Dante, entered Hades – the underworld. Roman emperors spent their summers in decadent villas on these hills. And yet, the Campi Flegrei remains a little-known destination.

'To start exploring, catch the Cumana train from Montesanto station and get off at Arco Felice. Here you'll find **Monte Nuovo**, Europe's newest mountain. This is my favourite spot. I love the fact that it was formed just over 400-odd years ago. On its slopes, you'll find little holes exhaling volcanic steam. It's an easy climb to the top and the views over the Bay of Pozzuoli are amazing. Best of all, it's free.



Solfatara Crater (p104), Pozzuoli

MARTIN MOSS



Anfiteatro Flavio (p103), Pozzuoli

JEAN-BERNARD CARLLET

'Another little-known wonder is the **Piscina Mirabilis** in Bacoli. It's the largest Roman cistern in the world and one of Italy's most impressive archaeological sites. However, to visit it, you need to find Signora Filomena, an elderly local who lives down the street. She's the site's custodian and has keys to the place. This is wonderful because it feels so secret, like opening the doors to something really mysterious and mythical. While you're here, take a walk through Bacoli itself. It's like a slice of 1950s Italy and is a good place to go for a swim.

'Another great swimming spot is the **Spiaggia del Castello**, which lies right below the Castello di Baia. This tiny beach has a cute little lighthouse, and you can only get there by water taxi. Avoid it on summer weekends though, when half of Naples tries to cram onto it. After a swim, I sometimes walk up to the castle. Here you'll find the **Museo Archeologico dei Campi Flegrei**, which houses the famous ancient Roman Nymphaeum discovered under the sea in Baia.'

DUNCAN GARWOOD

Duncan first visited the Amalfi Coast on a wet weekend in May 1998. Driving a battered Ford Fiesta he crept his way along the coastal road, enjoying the endless grey horizons and praying that his car would make it up the hill to Ravello. Hooked on the area, he returned to research and write for the Lonely Planet *Italy* guide and then,



a couple of years later, to cover Naples for the first edition of this book. He currently lives near Rome but takes every opportunity to pop down the motorway for a blast of Neapolitan energy.

CRISTIAN BONETTO

Much to the chagrin of Cristian's northern Italian relatives, his loyalties lie with Naples. Such affection seems only natural for a writer of farce and soap with a penchant for mussels and running red lights. Cristian's first taste of the city came in 1997 as a rookie backpacker. One moped ride along the lungomare (seafront) and he was hooked. In 2003 his play *Il Cortile*, which is set in Naples, toured Italy, and his musings on the city's bewitching contradictions have appeared in several Australian and UK travel magazines. Currently based in

THE PHOTOGRAPHER GREG ELMS

A contributor to Lonely Planet for more than 15 years, Greg finds shooting for city guides is like travelling with the fast-forward button pressed down. To maintain energy levels and to stay one jump ahead of Naples' manic drivers, he found himself devouring margherita pizzas, linguine alle vongole (linguine with clams) and making regular stops for gelato. The Amalfi Coast was more laid back, though the precipitous cliffs meant keeping one eye on the drop while the other framed a shot. Greg is based in Melbourne, Australia, and freelances for magazines, graphic designers, advertising agencies and book publishers.

Melbourne, Cristian regularly returns to Naples for a fix of his favourite Neapolitan extreme sport – crossing the street.



THE AUTHORS



GETTING STARTED

Naples and the Amalfi Coast couldn't be more different; the former is a high-octane burst of urban energy, the latter boasts Italy's most spectacular coastline.

The Amalfi Coast is one of the country's top tourist destinations. Most people arrive on the coast via Naples, either by train through Naples' Stazione Centrale or by air through Capodichino airport. Eight kilometres northeast of Naples' city centre, the airport is a 75-minute bus ride from Sorrento, the coast's western gateway. Once on the coast, travelling is relatively simple: there's a cheap, efficient and comprehensive year-round bus service, and between Easter and late September ferries connect the main coastal towns. A car is a mixed blessing, providing both freedom and headaches (think impossible parking) in equal measure.

If you're staying in Naples, there's no great need to book accommodation in advance unless you're arriving in peak season; on the coast, however, it's advisable throughout the year. In summer the area's main towns (Amalfi, Positano, Ravello and Capri) swell with holiday-makers, and in winter many places simply shut up shop.

WHEN TO GO

Naples is a destination for all season, even though some months are more popular (and expensive) than others. May is the busiest time of the year as thousands pour into the city for the annual Maggio dei Monumenti (May of the Monuments) festival. Similarly, the pre-Christmas period and Easter are considered peak season by city hoteliers. The best time to visit is spring (April to mid-June) when temperatures are bearable and the city is still in full swing. Arrive in August and you'll find Naples half-closed and most Neapolitans (along with most Italians) on the coast.

The low season (from April to mid-May and mid-September to October) is a good time for exploring the Amalfi Coast. The weather is usually pretty good, hotel rates are up to one-third cheaper than in high season and there are fewer tourists around. That said, June to September is the best time to catch some of the area's festivals (see p18).

Definitions of high and low season vary between hotels but expect to pay high-season rates at Easter, during summer (which on the coast runs from June to mid-September) and over the Christmas–New Year period. Note also that many coastal and island hotels close over winter, typically from November to March.

COSTS & MONEY

Your budget will almost entirely depend on where you stay. Naples is one of Italy's less-expensive cities, and accommodation (your greatest expense) is widespread and varied; in contrast, the Amalfi Coast is expensive with accommodation geared to a more moneyed market. In Naples, a realistic high-season budget covering accommodation in a comfortable

(Continued on page 20)



JEAN-BERNARD CARLLET

FEBRUARY

CARNEVALE

The lead up to Ash Wednesday involves a good deal of celebration and revelry: kids dress up in fancy costumes and throw *coriandoli* (coloured confetti) all over each other, and locals enjoy their last opportunity to indulge before Lent.

FESTA DI SANT'ANTONINO

Sorrento
Sorrento celebrates its patron saint on 14 February with musical processions through the centro storico (historic centre) and a huge fireworks display.

MARCH/APRIL

SETTIMANA SANTA

Easter's Holy Week in Naples and the surrounding area is marked by solemn processions and Passion plays. Particularly famous are the processions of Procida and Sorrento.

THIS IMAGE NOT AVAILABLE IN PICK & MIX

SETTIMANA PER LA CULTURA

www.benculturali.it

A nationwide initiative to celebrate Italy's national heritage. For the week of its duration, publicly owned galleries and museums are free.

MAY

FESTA DI SAN GENNARO

Duomo, Naples
Thousands gather in the Duomo on the first Sunday of the month to witness the saint's blood liquefy in its phials. This is a miracle said to save the city from potential disasters.

THIS IMAGE NOT AVAILABLE IN PICK & MIX

MAGGIO DEI MONUMENTI

081 247 11 23; Naples
The city's premier cultural event offers a month-long programme of exhibitions, concerts, dance performances, guided tours and much more. Many buildings that are otherwise closed throw open their doors to the public.

JUNE

PALIO DELLE QUATTRO ANTICHE REPUBBLICHE MARINARE

Amalfi
The first Sunday of the month brings a procession of boats and a race between the four ancient maritime rivals: Pisa, Venice, Amalfi and Genoa. The event rotates between the four towns and will next be in Amalfi in 2009.

ESTATE A NAPOLI

081 247 11 23; www.napolioggi.it; Naples
All the city's a stage as music, film and dance take to the streets from June to September.

RAVELLO FESTIVAL

089 85 83 60; www.ravellofestival.com; Ravello
The Amalfi Coast's top cultural event boasts performances by world-class musicians from June to September in the gardens of Villa Rufolo.

JULY/AUGUST

FESTA DI SANT'ANNA

Ischia
The feast day of St Anne is marked on 26 July by the allegorical 'burning of the Castello Aragonese', along with a boat procession and fireworks.

FESTIVAL DELLE VILLE VESUVIANE

081 40 53 93; www.vesuviane.net; Ercolano
Open-air concerts are staged at Villa Campolieto, one of the 18th-century Ville Vesuviane in Ercolano.

MADONNA DEL CARMINE

Piazza del Carmine, Naples
The traditional celebration of the Madonna del Carmine, held in Piazza del Carmine on 16 July, culminates in a spectacular fireworks display.

NEAPOLIS ROCK FESTIVAL

www.neapolis.it; Bagnoli, Naples
Southern Italy's largest rock fest attracts top international acts. It's held west of Naples' city centre, down by the beach at Arenile di Bagnoli.

FERRAGOSTO

The busiest day of the beach year, the Feast of the Assumption is celebrated with concerts and local events on 15 August.



DALLAS STIBBLEY

SEPTEMBER

FESTA DI PIEDIGROTTA

Mergellina, Naples
Dedicated to the Madonna, this once-popular song festival is being revived. Centre of events is the Chiesa di Santa Maria di Piedigrotta in Mergellina from 5 to 12 September.



JEAN-BERNARD CARLLET

FESTA DI SAN GENNARO

Duomo, Naples
Repeat performance of San Gennaro's powder-to-blood miracle held in May.

LA NOTTE BIANCA

www.nottebiancanapoli.it (in Italian); Naples
A night-long bonanza of mainly free events, including open-air film screenings, concerts, art exhibitions and dance performances. Shops also stay open all night.

PIZZAFEST

081 420 12 05; www.pizzafest.net; Naples
Homage is paid to the city's most famous export as *pizzaio* (pizza makers) from all over the country perform in various pizza-based events.

DECEMBER

FESTA DI SAN GENNARO

Duomo, Naples
Third running of the blood miracle of Naples' patron saint on 16 December.

NATALE

Christmas brings church concerts, exhibitions and a shopping frenzy, particularly around the shops selling *presepi* (nativity scenes) in Naples' Via San Gregorio Armeno.

CAPODANNO

Piazza del Plebiscito, Naples
Tens of thousands of Neapolitans pile into Naples' Piazza del Plebiscito for the traditional New Year's Eve concert.

(Continued from page 17)

midrange hotel, two square meals a day, transport and admission to a museum would total about €115 per day per person. On the Amalfi Coast you'd be looking at €130 plus.

Land transport in the region is inexpensive: a bus ticket from Sorrento to Amalfi, for example, costs €2.40; a train ticket from Naples to Pompeii, €2.30. Car hire starts at about €55 per day, but to this you'll have to add the cost of petrol and parking, which can be very expensive on the Amalfi Coast. The price of ferry tickets depends on whether you take a regular ferry or a hydrofoil: a ferry from Sorrento to Capri costs €7.80, a hydrofoil costs €12.

To save money, look out for museum discounts – admission is often free to EU citizens under 18 and over 65 years, and discounted to those between 18 and 25. On the accommodation front, *agriturismi* (farm stays) are often good value, particularly for families, although without a car they can be difficult to get to.

TRAVEL LITERATURE

Naples and its environs have long fascinated foreign writers. In 1663 the great Spanish poet Cervantes described Naples as the best city in the world, a sentiment that Stendhal echoed 200 years later when he judged it the world's most beautiful. In 1775 the Marquis de Sade claimed, a little unbelievably, to be shocked by the habits of the Neapolitans, while in the mid-19th century Charles Dickens wrote of the theatrical life of the city's squalid streets. More recently, Virginia Woolf and her Bloomsbury set found solace in the rarefied air of Ravello, and Capri gained a reputation as a literary hideaway.

HOW MUCH?

Taxi from Capodichino airport to Stazione Centrale €12.50

1L of petrol €1.30

Mineral water (500ml) €0.50 to €2

Bottle of Peroni beer €1 to €5

Slice of pizza from €1.50

Souvenir T-shirt about €10

Naples bus ticket €1

Entry to Naples' Museo Archeologico Nazionale €6.50

Hydrofoil from Naples to Capri €14

Admission to Pompeii €11



Worth a read:

Falling Palace: A Romance of Naples (Dan Hofstadler) Naples' electric streets are brought to life in this evocative and loving portrayal of a city mired in romance and passion.

Capri and No Longer Capri (Raffaele La Capria) Acclaimed Italian author La Capria goes beyond the island's decadent reputation to present his slightly melancholic vision of modern Capri.

Italian Days (Barbara Grizzuti Harrison) With an acute eye and a baroque pen, Harrison travels Italy in search of her southern Italian roots.

The Story of San Michele (Axel Munthe) Swedish doctor and philanthropist Munthe falls in love with Capri, builds a villa in Anacapri and writes a breathless book about it.

Italian Journey 1786–1788 (Johann Wolfgang von Goethe) Naples as seen by the 37-year-old German poet and recorded in this, his classic Italian travelogue.

INTERNET RESOURCES

Campania Trasporti (www.campaniatrasporti.it) A comprehensive transport website with links to bus and ferry companies and a useful route planner (note that you need to insert Napoli not Naples when filling in your departure point or destination).

Capri (www.capri.net) The best of many websites dedicated to Capri, this site has accommodation lists, ferry schedules, suggested itineraries and a whole lot more.

Lonely Planet (www.lonelyplanet.com) Read up on Naples and the Amalfi Coast and speak to travellers who've already been there on the Thorn Tree forum.

Naples (www.inaples.it) The official site of the Naples tourist board with a wealth of information covering the city's major monuments, transport details, upcoming events and historical background.

Pompeii Sites (www.pompeiiites.org) All the latest info on the big archaeological sites – Pompeii, Herculaneum, Oplontis, Boscoreale and Stabiae – from the sites' managing body, the Soprintendenza Archeologica di Pompei.



ROUTES



CLASSIC ROUTES

THE COASTAL RUN / TWO WEEKS

It's the compelling mix of chaos, culture and spectacular scenery that makes this whistle-stop coastal run such an eye-opener.

Start out by exploring **Naples** (p63) for a couple of days. Visit the **Museo Archeologico Nazionale** (p80) and wander Spaccanapoli's Dickensian streets; eat pizza in the city that created it and drink some of Italy's best coffee.

When the pace of the city starts to wear you down, jump on a train for **Pompeii** (p160), one of Italy's top tourist attractions. You'll need the best part of a morning to investigate the ancient streets, fossilised by ash from nearby **Mt Vesuvius** (p158). Looming menacingly overhead, the far-from-extinct volcano is now part of a national park crisscrossed with walking trails; the most popular route is to the summit crater.

Continuing round the Bay of Naples, **Sorrento** (p204) retains a genteel charm despite the foreign tourists who crowd the centre in summer. Perhaps it's the stunning views over the water to Mt Vesuvius. Push on from here to **Positano** (p221), the Amalfi Coast's westernmost town and a stunning picture of a place. Colourful houses cascade down the mountainside to two small beaches. The awe-inspiring coastal road ribbons its way along the dramatic coast to **Amalfi** (p230), the once proud capital of a powerful maritime republic. Once you've strolled the historic streets and perused the gaudy shops, take a trip up to **Ravello** (p237), the coast's aloof aristocrat. Famous for its villa gardens, it commands the coast's finest views. Last stop is **Salerno** (p244), a busy port city with an appealing medieval core.

Two weeks might seem a long time to cover 110km, but few areas reward slow travel more than the coast-line between Naples and Salerno. On the way you'll encounter an ancient ghost city and the volcano that reduced it to ruins, classical Mediterranean seascapes and views that will melt the heart of the most jaded traveller.

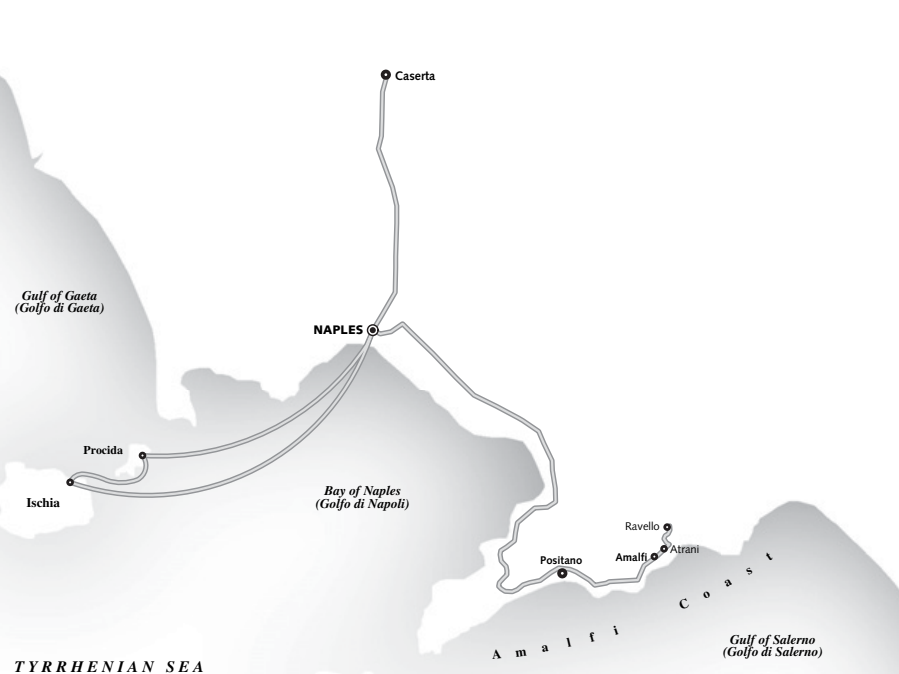
HOLLYWOOD ON THE MED / ONE WEEK

One of the few places that looks as good in real life as it does on celluloid, the Amalfi Coast is the ideal place for jetting from one film-set location to the next.

In 1953 John Huston and an unruly cast of Hollywood divas took over much of **Ravello** (p237) and **Atrani** (p230) for the crime caper *Beat The Devil*. Just down the road, **Amalfi** (p230) provides the backdrop to Mike Barker's 2004 light-hearted comedy *A Good Woman*, featuring Scarlett Johansson. Continuing west, **Positano** (p221) was an unlikely location for filming on the 2003 *Under the Tuscan Sun*, a classic do-up-a-Tuscan-villa flick. More action than art, Paul Greengrass' high-octane 2004 thriller, the *Bourne Supremacy*, stars Matt Damon as a CIA agent following leads through Berlin, Moscow and **Naples** (p63). Damon also stars in *The Talented Mr Ripley*, the 1999 film for which the Italian Tourist Board should be forever grateful. The list of locations for this film includes Naples' Teatro San Carlo, Ischia Ponte on **Ischia** (p188) and Marina Grande on **Procida** (p200). Still on Procida, Marina Corricella and Pozzo Vecchio beach were used for several scenes in Michael Radford's acclaimed 1994 hit, *Il Postino* (The Postman).

'Set jet' your way up the coast and discover just what it is that makes the area such a hit with international directors. This 120km route leads from Gore Vidal's former home town, Ravello, down the Amalfi Coast, up to Naples and its bay islands, before finishing at Caserta's monumental royal palace.

Back on shore, *Star Wars* fans will not want to miss the massive Palazzo Reale (known in Italy as the Reggia) in **Caserta** (p101) used by George Lucas for interior shots of Queen Amidala's residence in both *Star Wars Episode 1: The Phantom Menace* (1999) and *Star Wars Episode 2: Attack of the Clones* (2002).



ISLAND HOP THE BAY / ONE WEEK

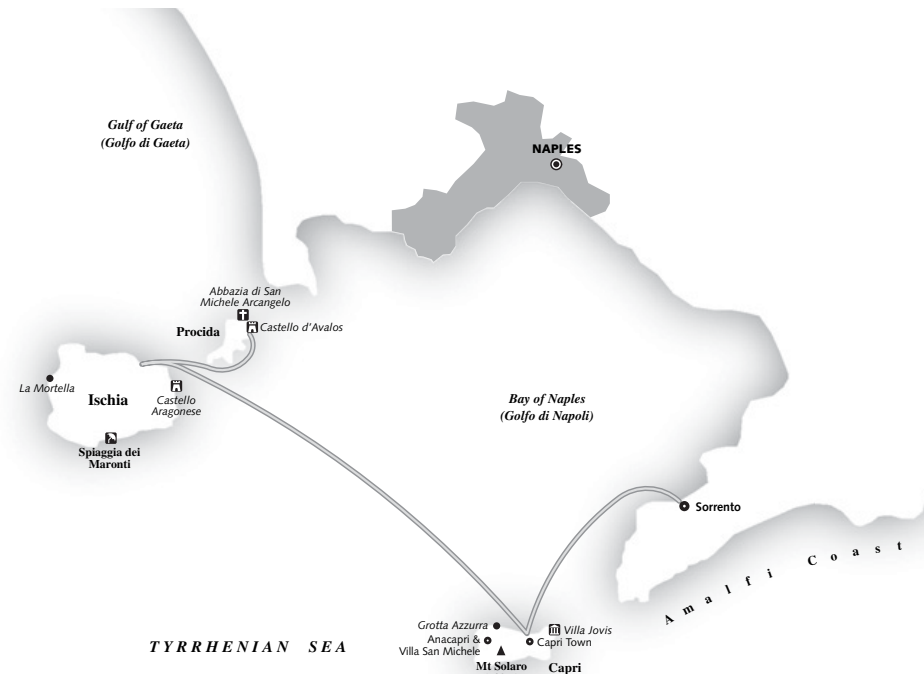
Capri, the most famous of Naples' three bay islands, has long exerted a powerful hold on the public imagination. But be sure to also explore Ischia and Procida; you'll be rewarded with stunning gardens, tumbledown fishing villages, beaches and castles.

From **Sorrento** (p204) jump on a ferry to glamorous **Capri** (p172), the day trip capital of the Med. Once you've explored diminutive **Capri Town** (p174) and visited the spellbinding **Grotta Azzurra** (p178), walk up to **Villa Jovis** (p176), the remains of Tiberius' main island residence. In **Anacapri** (p177) check out Axel Munthe's **Villa San Michele** (p177) and hitch a chair lift to the top of **Monte Solaro** (p177).

From Capri's fabled caves and swish designer hang outs to Ischia's gardens and Procida's picturesque landscapes, this 42km route could be done in three or four days. But give yourself a week, overnighting on each island, and you'll find yourself slowly relaxing into the pace of local life.

To the northwest, **Ischia** (p188) is an easy ferry crossing away. Best known for its thermal waters, the island boasts fine beaches and some spectacular scenery. Investigate the landmark **Castello Aragonese** (p192) before heading over to Forio on the western coast. Here the gardens of **La Mortella** (p194) are considered among Italy's finest, with more than 1000 rare and exotic plants. For a dip in the sea, the **Spiaggia dei Maronti** (p194) near Barano is a scenic spot.

Procida (p200) is the least developed and smallest of the islands. Tourism has arrived but Procida's pastel-coloured villages and quintessential 'islandscapes' retain an authenticity that is not always apparent elsewhere. Visit the **Abbazia di San Michele Arcangelo** (p201) and let the **Castello d'Avalos** prison (p201) give you the chills. Best of all, just hang out, potter around the pretty marinas, eat great seafood, or perhaps hire a boat for a day of leisurely beach-hopping.

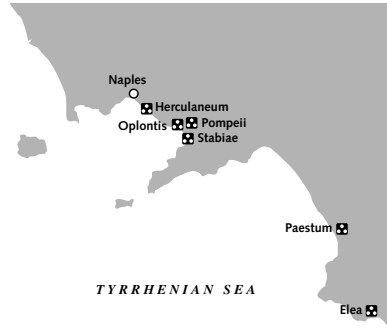


TAILORED TRIPS

THE ANCIENT COAST

Boasting some of Italy's finest archaeological sites, the coast southeast of Naples is rich in ancient Roman history. To get the best out of it, though, you'll need to ignore the urban sprawl that surrounds so many of the ruins.

To put yourself in the mood, start in **Naples** at the **Museo Archeologico Nazionale** (p80). Feast your eyes on mosaics stripped from Pompeii and check out the model of the doomed city. Once your appetite has been suitably whetted, take the Circumvesuviana train to Ercolano Scavi, the stop for **Herculaneum** (p165). Much smaller than Pompeii, Herculaneum's well-preserved ruins cover an area of about 4.5 hectares and can easily be visited in a couple of hours. Next stop is Torre Annunziata where the centrepiece of the **Oplontis** (p157) site is Villa Poppaea, holiday home of Nero's second wife. Just down the road, **Pompeii** (p160) needs no introduction. The highlight of any archaeological trip, it provides fascinating insight into everyday ancient Roman life. Further south, the two villas at Castellammare di Stabia are the only visible remains of ancient **Stabiae** (p157). Continuing down the coast and you'll eventually come to **Paestum** (p168) and its remarkable Greek temples. Forty-four kilometres away at Ascea (Velia) are the ruins of the ancient Greek settlement of **Elea** (p248).



SOUTHERN TASTES

As any Neapolitan will tell you, the pizza in **Naples** (p115) is the best in the world. The classic is the tomato, mozzarella and basil margherita. Other city treats include *babà*, a rum-sodden sponge cake, and coffee, served in short, deadly measures. Offshore, **Capri** (p172) lays claim to the ubiquitous lemon liqueur, *limoncello*, as well as the salad of tomato and mozzarella, *insalata caprese*. A short sail away, **Sorrento** (p204) is famous for *gnocchi alla sorrentina* (gnocchi baked in tomato sauce with mozzarella) and *limoncello*. Nearby, in **Vico Equense** (p215), you can order pizza by the metre at the restaurant where it was created, Pizzeria da Gigino.

It was in a convent in **Conca dei Marini** (p229) that *sfogliatella* (cinnamon-infused ricotta in a puff-pastry shell) was invented in the 18th century, and in a monastery above **Maiori** (p241) that *melanzane al cioccolato* (chocolate aubergines) were conceived. Further east, **Cetara** (p242) is an important fishing centre, celebrated for its tuna and *colatura di alici* (anchovy seasoning). Pick some up at Saporì Cetaresi by the beach. For buffalo mozzarella you have two choices: either head up to **Caserta** (p101) or push south to **Paestum** (p168), where you can see it made at the Fattoria del Casaro buffalo farm.



© 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.'