

Guided walking journey

Amalfi Coast

Walking through the Italian Paradise

Naples, Vesuvius & Herculaneum, Pompeii, Amalfi & Atrani,
Ravello, *'Sentiero degli Dei'*, Praiano, Positano & Capri

8-day walking & discovery tour with 3 different bases in charming hotels



Spring & Autumn 2011

Local Organizer: Genius Loci Travel – Salerno (Italy)

Level: 2/3, moderate (reasonable fitness required, no technical difficulties)

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Introduction

The Amalfi Coast is definitely one of the most beautiful coastlines in Europe, an intriguing mix between an overwhelming natural environment and the patient labour of men, who has transformed the steep mountain slopes into a cascade of terraced lemon groves, with charming villages, chapels and other sites of cultural interest scattered all over. Its dramatic coastline offers wonderful views, different every step you take, and the smell of rosemary and citrus trees fills the air, fields of multicoloured roses overwhelm the eyes and sandy beaches are magical to the touch. It offers an extraordinary palette of colours, with deep azure skies, white limestone cliffs, deep blue seas, and bright citrus orchards lit by the dazzling Mediterranean sun. This intoxicating sensual feast inspires a celebration of the goodness of life itself.

A web of ancient pathways winds along shoreline cliffs, leading from bustling charming coastal towns through rustic woodlands and up to beautiful villages perched atop craggy peaks. Highlights include our hike along the stunning 'Sentiero degli Dei' (Footpath of the Gods), the wonderful walk into the intriguing Valley of the Mills, location of Europe's first paper mills, almost a 1000 years old, the spectacular villages of Positano, Atrani and Ravello, a visit and a beautiful roundwalk over the island of Capri. And of course beautiful Amalfi itself: as has been written, on the day an Amalfitano goes to Paradise, for him it's a day like any other...

But it is not only the scenery of the Amalfi Coast, but also the history of this region which is fascinating. Not without reason the Romans tagged it their 'Campania Felix'. First we visit the intriguing city of Naples, definitely one of the world's most interesting cities and more than worth a visit, notwithstanding all prejudices. A city with thousands of years of history, officially founded by the Greeks, which also boasts the world's finest museum on Roman history and some amazing Baroque architecture. And of course, the area is also known for its great food, including the world's best pizza.

The blue waters of the Mediterranean are dominated here by the world's most famous volcano, Mount Vesuvius (Italian: Vesuvio), the only volcano on the European mainland to have erupted within the last hundred years, but best known for its eruption in AD 79 that led to the destruction of the Roman cities of Pompeii and Herculaneum, a must for history buffs – and everybody else. We visit of course Pompeii, the world famous ruins, which give a real life impression of how a Roman city looked like, especially the way we plan the visit, beyond the crowds. Also do we go for a great roundwalk on Mount Vesuvius, the volcano which caused the destruction of Pompeii. Even for those who already have walked up the Vesuvius with thousands of other tourists, the walk we do will be one of the highlights of their trip !

On this enchanting walking adventure you will discover that with reason the Amalfi Coast has become Italy's most famous coastline, but as well that it takes only a little effort to get 'off the beaten track'. At only a few hundred metres away from the crowds, you will find yourself surrounded by nature. On this tour we also take you beyond the crowds in Naples to experience the hidden treasures and authentic culture of this intriguing city. You will discover the hidden tracks of Mount Vesuvius, offering amazing views over the whole Bay of Naples. In short, you'll discover the real Italian paradise.



Please note: this is a moderately easy tour which is suitable for those who have some experience with walking and a good general physical condition. Most of the walks are on good paths, some of them just recently restored by the local authorities. Average walking times: approx 5 hours each day.

DAY-TO-DAY PROGRAMME

Day 0 Naples

Arrival in Naples in case you arrive earlier. From Rome (and many other cities) Naples can easily be reached. There are regular AV (High-Speed), Eurostar and Intercity trains: travel time by High-Speed train: about one hour; cost around € 40,00), by IC-train: about two hours; cost around € 20,00; by normal, regional trains the cost is about 11 euro, and it takes almost 3 hours). Several hotels can be booked, according to your wish (either 'downtown' centrally located, or near the harbour or train station, ranging from 3 to 5-star. Of course the hotel used on Sunday night is recommended).

N.B. If you arrive one day earlier you have the possibility to pay a visit to the world famous archaeological museum, where all the artefacts from Pompeii and Herculaneum are exposed, and/ or the equally wonderful Capodimonte museum.

Day 1 Arrival - Naples

Today you arrive in the bustling city of Naples. After settling in our centrally located hotel, in the heart of the historical centre of Naples you can already go for a short stroll through the colourful streets, soaking up its atmosphere, or visit a museum. Towards the end of the afternoon we meet our leader and the rest of the group. After a brief introduction of the tour, we will go for a rewarding round walk through the heart of Naples, of course touching the most interesting 'highlights', such as the Royal Palace, the royal theatre, the beautiful 'Galleria' and the medieval castles, but also through unknown lively (but safe!) neighbourhoods, with their unbelievable history, where you can find in a few square metres Greek, Roman and medieval buildings. The walk brings you as well through quiet parks and along the sea shore, to relax from the hectic street life in Naples with a rewarding view on the Bay of Naples. In the evening we dine in a very nice restaurant close to our hotel.

Accommodation: Naples - Meals included: 1 dinner

Day 2 Vesuvius & Herculaneum

This morning we travel south and drive up to Mount Vesuvius, the volcano that with the fatal eruption of 79 AD completely destroyed the bustling city of Pompeii. We make an amazing roundwalk here, completely different from the standard visit to the Vesuvius (and normally closed to the public), which makes you feel in a completely different world! The walk takes us along the impressive volcanic phenomena to be seen around the crater: lava flows, pumice fields and grotto's and the amazing 'Valley of the Giant', culminating in a walk to the top. The literal high light is a spectacular detour, led by a specialist volcano guide, which will take us right around the crater rim and up to the highest point at 1281 metres (4000 feet), from where we have the very best view of the Bay of Naples, one of the panoramic wonders of the world. We then descend to have a relaxed lunch on the slopes of Mt. Vesuvius, before travelling back down to Herculaneum. This far less visited site boasts some perfectly preserved noble villa's. A short visit is definitely worth it. Towards the end of the afternoon we travel back to Naples, where we make a short stroll and have an 'aperitivo' in the piazza, before returning to our hotel. Tonight we go for a short stroll to the best pizzeria in town (and pizzas in Naples are considered to be the best in the world already!).

Accommodation: Naples - Meals included: 1 breakfast, 1 lunch, 1 dinner

Day 3 Along Pompeii to the Amalfi Coast

This morning we travel south under the shadow of Mount Vesuvius again, but now we drive straight to Pompeii, considered to be the world's most fascinating ruins. A visit to Pompeii gives you an amazing insight into the life of a Roman city, especially when walking along its chariot-marked back streets. You will be captivated by the exceptional frescoes to be found throughout the city or by the opulence of the villas, with

their atriums and charming peristyles, owned by the rich and influential of the day. Visit the amphitheatre as well as the Villa of Mysteries with its masterpiece frescoes depicting the secret Dionysus rites, the Roman Forum and basilica, temples, public baths, and the tiny Odeon created for music recitals. What is less known to many is that also the city of Pompeii is definitely worth the detour, if alone for its amazing sanctuary. We will go for a stroll here and then go for lunch in a great place in downtown Pompeii. After lunch we drive on by private coach to the Amalfi Coast. The bus drops us off in the charming village of Pontone, once a defensive stronghold for the Republic of Amalfi. Here we walk up onto the narrow ridge that contains part of this medieval defence system, in a park-like landscape, past shady pine trees and through fields of wildflowers, and enjoy stunning views across the Valle del Dragone to the gardens and villas of Ravello. A series of ascents and descent eventually brings us to the ruins of the Torre dello Zirro, known from the play 'The Duchess of Malfi'. From here we enjoy dramatic views of both Amalfi and Atrani, and the stunning coastline. We retrace our steps to Pontone, where we can enjoy an 'aperitivo' in the shade of the lemon trees, before our bus brings us to our next base, the amazingly beautiful small town of Amalfi. Maybe there is still some time for a dive into the Mediterranean. In the evening we eat all together in a nice restaurant in the medieval town centre, close to our hotel.

Accommodation: Amalfi - Meals included: 1 breakfast, 1 lunch, 1 dinner

Day 4 Amalfi & the Valle dei Mulini

In the morning we will first pay a short visit to the beautiful medieval town with its wonderful 'Duomo' and the Paradise cloister. Amalfi once was an important naval power, like Venice and its past glory still shows. Every street hides a charming square, and it's a real pleasure to wander through the labyrinth of white-washed alleys. We'll pass through the Piazza dei Dogi and along the Antichi Arsenali. Another street takes us to the Vagliendola quarter, with its tower houses and the famous Hotel dei Cappuccini - once a monastery called San Pietro della Canonica, founded in the 13th century. Then we walk up (optional bus) to the charming little village of Pontone, gateway to the ridge of the Torre dello Zirro, but also to the intriguing 'Valle dei Mulini', the valley of the watermills, with its ruins of Europe's most ancient paper fabrics, dating back to the 11th century and the . The path takes us deep into the valley, to the entrance of the nature reserve, with its lush vegetation and waterfalls. We have a great picnic lunch near the river, before returning to Amalfi. From here it's about an hour's walk back down to Amalfi, passing through the charming little back streets of the town centre. We'll now also have the option to visit the fascinating paper museum, the Museo della Carta. Back in Amalfi there is still some time for a swim or an 'aperitivo'. In the evening we then all join for a great evening meal. We are picked up by private boat and brought to a nice restaurant located in a beautiful little bay nearby. After dinner we travel back to our hotel, gliding by boat over the glorious Mediterranean.

Accommodation: Amalfi - Meals included: 1 breakfast, 1 picnic lunch, 1 dinner

Day 5 The historical heart of the Amalfi Coast: Amalfi, Atrani & Ravello

From Amalfi we first walk to the beautiful little town of Atrani, along a very scenic path, with great viewpoints on the city centre. From Atrani we proceed through the narrow white little streets and then up the 'Valley of the Dragon', until we reach Ravello, another highlight of the Amalfi Coast, where we have plenty of time to visit. Ravello not only has a very interesting history and many medieval monuments, but also offers beautiful views over the Amalfi Coast, and villa's with stupendous gardens. We pay an extensive visit to the dramatically located Villa Cimbrone, with its amazing gardens and one of the coast's most famous viewpoints. Then along the hamlet of Castiglione we walk back down to the little town of Atrani, passing through the vineyards and lemon groves. In Atrani, one of the best preserved villages of the coast, we now take the time to look around the narrow white little streets of the town centre, and perhaps drink a glass on the square. From here it's now only 15 minutes back to Amalfi, passing along the coast. In the evening we are free to choose from a large choice of restaurants, ranging from simple pizzeria's to exclusive restaurants.

Accommodation: Amalfi - Meals included: 1 breakfast

Day 6 Along the 'Sentiero degli Dei' – down to Positano

In the morning we take the local bus for a very scenic drive to the village of Bomerano, high above the coast, where we can take a coffee and buy some sandwiches. Then we start walking along one of the most famous footpaths of the area, the 'Footpath of the Gods'. This path really lives up to its name, suspended between the sky and the Mediterranean. It winds through unique scenery, with unrivalled views over the coast and sea. A few hours we will be walking along some of the most spectacular scenery of the whole Amalfi Coast, until we reach the charming small hamlet of Nocelle. Here we have a good lunch in a nice restaurant, with amazing views over Positano and the Amalfi Coast. Passing another spectacular valley we then arrive in the little village of Montepertuso. After Montepertuso it's only a short walk downstairs to Positano itself, one of the most charming villages of the Coast. We stroll through its small, almost oriental alleys, and perhaps have a swim or a drink on one of its many pleasant terraces, before settling in our beautifully located hotel. In the evening we are free to choose from a large choice of restaurants, ranging from simple pizzeria's to exclusive restaurants.

Accommodation: Positano - Meals included: 1 breakfast, 1 lunch

Day 7 By boat to Capri – discovery walk of the island

Today we travel by boat to the rightly famous island of Capri, the island where already the roman emperors liked to come as tourists, and that since then never lost its fame. We arrive in Marina Grande, the main harbour from where we walk up through lemon groves and gardens, to the central square of the little town of Capri, the famous 'Piazzetta', the centre of mundane life. Then we make a beautiful roundwalk around the eastern part of the island, which shows us most of the 'highlights' of the island. These are both cultural and natural wonders, always accompanied with beautiful views in an unrivalled Mediterranean landscape. The walk brings us along the amazing Villa Lysis, and the ruins of the Imperial Villa Iovis, one of the villas of the Roman Emperor Tiberius. We'll walk past the Arco Naturale, and of course along the Faraglioni, three rocks off the South coast, may be the most famous and most painted rocks in the world. We have a great picnic lunch in an amazing spot, after which we have the time for a coffee or an ice cream. Walking back to the centre we have the opportunity to visit the Certosa and the Gardens of August, from where we can also opt to walk down to Marina Piccola, along the spectacular Via Krupp. This walk can be extended or shortened in many ways. Late in the afternoon we travel back to Positano by boat. A nice meal in a relaxed atmosphere is the perfect end for the last day on the Amalfi Coast.

Accommodation: Positano - Meals included: 1 breakfast, 1 picnic lunch, 1 dinner

Day 8 Positano

The tour ends in Positano after breakfast today. You can make your way to Salerno or Naples, either by boat or bus. A taxi transfer can be arranged on request.



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TOUR DETAILS

ACCOMMODATION & MEALS

All nights are spent in beautiful, characteristic hotels, mostly historical buildings (generally 3/4-star; 4/5-star on some departure dates). All rooms have en-suite facilities.

Accommodation is on **B&B** basis, in all accommodations. Most evening meals are included, for which we have selected the best available restaurants. On two nights you are free to choose from the wide choice of restaurants in the area. Your guide can give you good tips.

Almost all (picnic) lunches are included in the tour price. Only on one day (in Ravello) you are free to have your own lunch. Here you have the option to have your lunch in a nice restaurant, or purchase your supplies for a picnic lunch.

Nights 1 & 2: The first two nights are spent in Naples. Our accommodation is a 4-star hotel in an amazing palace, in the heart of the historical centre.

Nights 3, 4 & 5: These three nights are spent at Amalfi, the ancient capital of the Amalfi Coast. Our recently renovated 4-star hotel is located in a central position, right in the historical heart of the city at only a few metres from the sea shore.

Nights 6 & 7: The last two nights you stay in the romantic & fashionable little village of Positano, with its characteristic houses built onto the steep slopes of the mountains. You stay either in a comfortable 3-star hotel, right on the beach, or in a bigger 4-star hotel. Both hotels are centrally located, at walking distance from the seashore, shops and all main monuments.

INCLUSIONS

On our GUIDED WALKING TOURS we include almost everything :

- Private English speaking tour leader for 8 days
- Accommodation: 3 nights Amalfi, 2 nights Napoli, 2 nights Positano in good ***/**** hotels
- Meals: 7 breakfasts, 5 dinners (good restaurants!), 4 warm lunches, 2 picnic lunches
- All private & public transfers as indicated throughout the entire itinerary
- Entrance fees of all sites along the itinerary
- Special activities as outlined in the day by day itinerary
- Guest experts for special places
- 24/24 h local assistance
- Luggage transport
- All gratuities for baggage, porters & hotel service

Not Included

- Departure taxes
- Visas
- Travel Insurance
- Drinks and meals not mentioned in the itinerary
- Optional additional tours or activities
- Tips
- Items of a personal nature

LEVEL OF DIFFICULTY

Moderately easy (2/3): Mostly easy walks, but with nonetheless some walking uphill, sometimes on paths with rough surfaces. On the Amalfi Coast there are many steps! On most days shortcuts are possible (as well as occasional extensions).

Fitness: High standard of fitness is not necessary but you should be able to walk for up to 5 hours a day in hot sun on dusty or stony tracks.

ARRIVAL & DEPARTURE

Arrival: The tour starts in NAPLES, a city with an international airport, and connected with Rome and all other major Italian cities by a frequent (high speed) train service.

A taxi pick-up service can be arranged either from Naples airport or train station.

Departure: The tour ends after breakfast on day 8 in POSITANO. A frequent boat or bus service can bring you to either Sorrento or Salerno, from where you travel to your next destination (Naples and Rome can easily be reached by train). Several taxi services are available to bring you directly to your next destination.

EXTRA NIGHTS

It is possible to include extra nights at the beginning or the end of the tour. The tour can easily be extended with a few days in Naples or Salerno, or on the Amalfi Coast or a few days on the island of Capri (see below).

Several good accommodations are available. Details and prices on request.

TOUR VARIATIONS

It is possible to include some extra nights before or after your tour, in any of the accommodations 'en route'. For those who have never been in Naples an extra day here is strongly recommended.

At the beginning or the end of the tour there is the opportunity to visit Naples. The tour can easily be extended with a few days here. Also in SALERNO (a nice city and a good base for visiting Paestum), or ROME several good accommodations are available. Details and prices on request.

The tour can also be extended with a few days on a beautiful agriturismo in the Cilento, for some relax in the countryside. Several superb accommodations are available. Details & prices on request.

UPGRADE

On some dates we run an upgraded version of this tour, staying in luxurious 4-star hotels. Look for the 'Premiere Inns' signs.

SHORTER & LONGER VERSIONS

A shorter, 6-day version of this tour is also available. See also our other Amalfi & Campania tours !

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