

## 8. BAY OF NAPLES & THE AMALFI COAST

### HIGHLIGHTS

▲ Naples, Pompeii, Herculaneum, Capri, Amalfi, Ravello, Positano

▲ the ancient wonders of Pompeii, the island beauty of Capri, Naples' National Archaeological Museum, the pretty towns hugging the Amalfi Coast



## INTRO

The Bay of Naples is the gateway to the scenic island of **Capri** and the ancient Roman towns of **Pompeii** and **Herculaneum**. In **Naples** itself is the best Roman archeological museum in Italy, and some say all of Europe, filled with the artifacts from those ancient Roman towns that were covered in the ash and lava from the eruption of Mt. Vesuvius almost 2,000 years ago.

## COORDINATES

**Naples** sits on the Bay of Naples, about four hours south of Rome by train or car if you take the A2. You can also arrive by ferry or bus. The northern part of the **Amalfi Coast** is another hour or so south of Naples by car if there is no traffic, but you will likely find the bus much easier!



A little way beyond the bay are the picturesque villages of the **Amalfi Coast** perched scenically on the slope overlooking the pristine blue waters of the Mediterranean, where you will find **Positano**, **Amalfi**, and **Ravello**, among others.

## A WEEKEND IN CAPRI & NAPLES

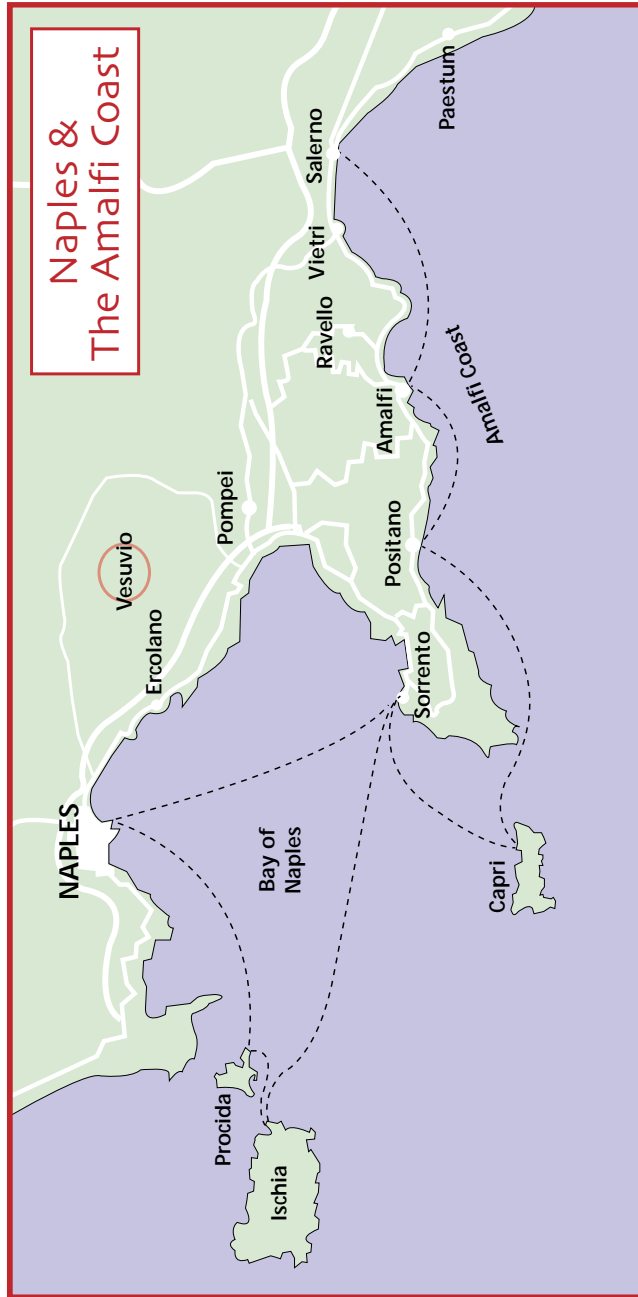
There is quite a lot to do in and around the **Bay of Naples**. This weekend is packed with scenic vistas, relaxing islands, ancient Roman towns, exemplary museums, and more.

### Friday Evening

As you pass through Naples, feel its energy, notice the chaos, smell the exhaust fumes, and be thankful you will be spending your weekend on the pristine island of Capri. Though we will be returning to Naples tomorrow to visit the National Museum and nearby Pompeii, for a peaceful evening there is no better place than the **Isle of Capri**.

People flock to Capri because the scenery is stunning, the pace of life relaxing, the restaurants are excellent, and the hotels world-class. With footpaths crossing the island, you can hike from cafe to cafe and town to town, along trails cut into the verdant hillsides.





Sunbathing and other water sports are also available. But the favorite pastime on Capri is to relax and soak up the incredible atmosphere. Despite the hordes of tourists that descend in the summer, Capri still maintains a quiet pace and a strong sense of community. *Info: [www.capritourism.com](http://www.capritourism.com).*

But first we have to get here. From the train station in Naples take a taxi to the Stazione Maritima at Molo Angionino where you will catch either the ferry (*traghetto*) or hydrofoil (*aliscafo*) to Capri. Ferries cost half as much but take twice as long. Signs indicate which company goes to which destinations. Pick up a schedule for your return visit tomorrow.

You arrive on Capri at the Marina Grande. From there, take either the funicolare, bus, or taxi up to the town of **Capri**. From you can walk to your hotel unless your hotel is out of town, then a taxi will be necessary.

After settling into your hotel, take the time to wander the town to get your bearings. Grab a drink at a café and settle into the slow pace of island life.

For dinner tonight, unless you find a place that catches your fancy, let's try **La Campannina**, a fine family-run, upscale, but rustic establishment (*see Best Sleeps & Eats*).

### Saturday

From our island refuge, we are going to head into **Naples**. To say that this city is chaotic is a gross understatement. Cars ignore red lights, scooters drive on sidewalks, and so on. Couple this with the omnipresent threat of getting your pocket picked, and it is hard to imagine why people come here. But they do.

For our purposes this weekend, however, all we need to do is get into Naples, head to the National Museum, then train out to Pompeii for a visit.

### Alternative Plan

**Stay on Capri:** visit the **Blue Grotto**, take the chair lift from Anacapri up to the top of Monte Salaro for a wonderful view of the whole bay, hike down, visit Roman Emperor Tiberius' villa dating from 27 AD, or simply luxuriate in the tranquil ambience of the island. See later in this chapter for details



On the northwestern outskirts of the *centro storico* just off of Piazza Cavour is the **National Archaeological Museum**, which boasts an amazingly rich collection of antiquities culled from Pompeii and Herculaneum. Considered by many to be the best archeological museum in Italy, if not Europe. One of its best exhibits is the **Gabinetto Segreto**, the secret closet. Filled with erotic statues, mosaics and other pieces of art of a sexual nature, these pieces definitely give you an insight into daily life back in the Roman era. *Info: Piazza Cavour. Tel. 081/440-166. Information and reservations: 848/800-288. [www.marketplace.it/museo.nazionale](http://www.marketplace.it/museo.nazionale). Open daily 9am-7pm. Until 8pm on holidays. Closed Tuesdays. €6.50.*

After witnessing the treasures culled from the excavations of **Pompeii**, do yourself a big favor and visit that world-famous site. To get to Pompeii by train from Naples, go one floor below the Central Station to the **Circumvesuviana** station for a local train to **Pompeii Scavi**. The trip takes about 30-40 minutes.

Tens of thousands of people died when **Vesuvius** erupted in 79 CE, submerging Pompeii with volcanic emissions. The lava and ash created an almost perfect time capsule, sealing in an important cross-section of an ancient civilization.



Before Pompeii was buried by lava, it was a major seaport linking it to the rest of the Roman Empire. As such it was an established city with a multicultural population of about 25,000 Greeks, Egyptians, Gauls, Iberians and every other nationality in the Empire. By 80 BCE, it was also a favorite resort for wealthy Romans.

Shaken by an earthquake in 62 CE, Pompeii recovered, brushed itself off and went back to work. Seventeen years later on August 24, 79 CE, Mt. Vesuvius erupted, spewing ash and pumice that covered the city. In places, there are human forms and family pets forever preserved having died in the embrace of the volcanic flow. You can see where gardens, food shops, apartment buildings, and villas used to be.

After many years of mismanagement, Pompeii is slowly re-emerging to be a true world wonder. The ancient city is now being restored to a semblance of its former glory. Pompeii is unique anywhere in the world, and is a must-see stop when in this part of Italy. *Info: Open April – October 8:30am-7:30pm. Last entry at 6pm. November to March 8:30am-5pm. Last entry 3:30pm. Admission €10.*

## A WEEK IN THE BAY OF NAPLES & THE AMALFI COAST

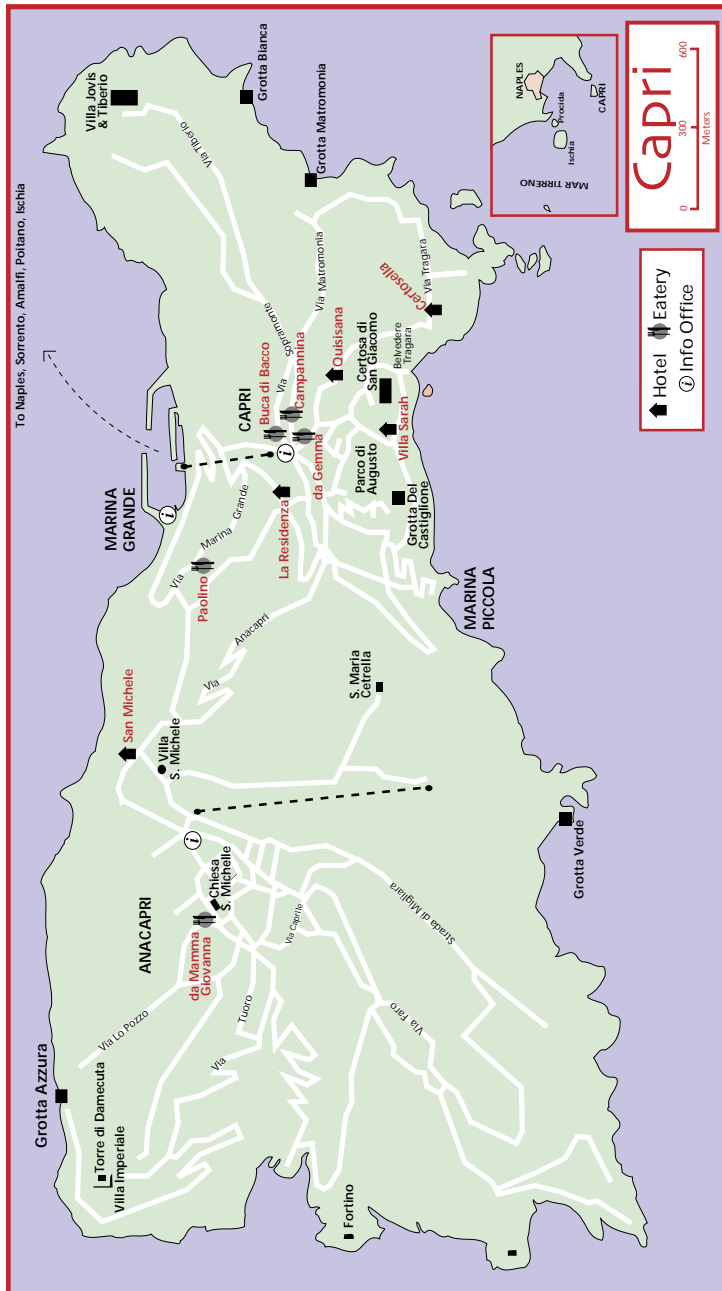
The history of **Pompeii** and **Herculaneum**, and the sun, sea, and serene living of **Capri** and the **Amalfi Coast** will make this a truly memorable vacation experience. On this trip you can combine urban adventures in one of Italy's most hectic cities, **Naples**, as well as peaceful relaxation along the coast. *Info: For information about Capri and ferries to the island visit [www.capritourism.com](http://www.capritourism.com). For ferry schedules and everything else associated with the Amalfi Coast, visit [www.amalfi.it](http://www.amalfi.it).*

### CAPRI

To get to the town of Capri, after you've made it to the **Marina Grande**, the main harbor on the island, take the funicular, taxi or bus up the hill. At the **Piazza Umberto I**, you can enjoy the memorable view out onto the Bay of Naples. This is the perfect piazza to have a seat on any one of the cafés and watch the world go by.

### Recommended Plan

Stay on **Capri** for the first five days and commute to Naples by ferry, and to Pompeii and Herculaneum by ferry then train. Then for the last two nights pick a town on the Amalfi Coast — I would suggest **Amalfi** itself — to use as your base to explore that area.



From here you can walk – granted it's a long way – or take a public bus northeast to the **Palace of Tiberius**, the biggest, best preserved Imperial villa on the island. You won't find elaborate mosaic floors or statues in place here, and at first glance the site might seem disappointing, but what makes this place special is the sheer extent of the ruins located in such a superb setting. Built in the first century, the villa was initially 12 stories high but only partial remains of three remain. However, the beehive of passageways leading to many small rooms make it evident that this villa functioned as a mini-city, with baths, store rooms and servants' quarters.

The Palace is perched on an imposing hilltop called **Il Salto** (The Leap) from which the Emperor is said to have thrown his enemies (and if you've read any Roman history this is probably true). *Info: Open daily 9am until 1 hour before sunset. Admission €3.*

On the south edge of town is the **Certosa di San Giacomo**, a 14th century Carthusian monastery that was founded in 1371, destroyed in 1553 and rebuilt soon after. It was used as a prison and a hospice in the 1800s and today houses a secondary school and a library. The cloisters and the dark Gothic church are open to the public.

From the monastery walk along the Via di Certosa to the **Parco Augusto**. From the terrace here you will find some fine views to the south of the island over the **Marina Piccola** (small harbor) and the **Faraglioni** rock formations.

My favorite part of the island is **Anacapri**. You get here either by bus, taxi or foot from Capri. Anacapri is more relaxed and down-to-earth as compared to the faster-paced Capri. Perched high up on a rocky plateau, its flat-roofed whitewashed buildings are clearly Moorish in style. Here you can find the 18th century **Church of San Michele** (*Info: open daily 7am–7pm*) with its sober Baroque design and intricate frescoed floors. Also in Anacapri is the **Villa San Michele**, which is known for its beautiful gardens and vast collection of classical sculpture.





*Info: open summer 9am–6pm, winter 10am–3pm; admission €6.* If you want to go higher, you can walk or take a chair lift up to **Monte Solaro**, which has amazing views over all of Capri. Bring a sweater or jacket even on sunny days since the wind and height tends to cool things down slightly.

Finally, onto the famous **Grotta Azzura** or **Blue Grotto**. You get here from the Marina Grande by motorboat with a number of other people, then transfer to rowboats to enter the grotto. You will have to sit on the floor of the rowboat as the captain (on his back) leads the boat in by pulling hand over hand on a length of fixed chain. The silver-blue light inside sparkles incandescently. An incredible sight. *Info: Open 24 hours. Boat trips from Marina Grande go from 9am–6pm. Cost €5.*

## BEST SLEEPS & EATS

### Sleeps



**Quisisana** (*photo at left*) is an ultra-luxurious five-star with an indoor and outdoor swimming pool, health club, tennis courts, sauna, a great restaurant, and excellent views of the whole island. If you have the means, this is the place to stay.

*Info: Via Camerelle 2, Tel. 081/837-0788, Fax 081/837-6080. www.quisi.com. 150 rooms, 15 suites. All credit cards accepted. Double €310-900; Suite €640-1200. Closed November 1 to March 31.*

**La Residenza** is a four-star with all you could want for your stay on Capri: a restaurant and a pool both with scenic views and relaxing garden setting, a location on the sea, clean and comfortable rooms, transport around the island, and more.

*Info: Via F Serena 22, Tel. 081/837-0833, Fax 081/837-7564. www.laresidenzacapri.com. 114 rooms. All credit cards accepted. Single €140-160; Double €300-810; Suite €1,010.*

**Certosella** offers pleasant and comfortable accommodations and includes a swimming pool. A great little three-star hotel. *Info: Via Tragara 13, Tel. 081/837-0713, Fax 081/837-6113. www.hotelcertosella.com. Closed November and Easter. 18 rooms. Double €200-280. All credit cards accepted. Breakfast included.*

**San Michele** is located in Anacapri on the edge of a cliff overlooking the water. Almost all the rooms in this three-star have the most spectacular view you could find anywhere. *Info: Via G Orlandi 3, Tel. 081/837-1427, Fax 081/837-1420. www.sanmichele-capri.com. 100 rooms. Double €90-450; Breakfast extra. All credit cards accepted.*

**Villa Sarah** is a villa with a garden located in a tranquil setting along the road that takes you to the Villa Tiberio. A great three-star in Capri. *Info: Via Tiberio 3, Tel. 081/837-0689, Fax 081/837-7215. www.villasarahcapri.com. Closed from the end of October until Easter. 20 rooms. Single €90-140; Double €135-210. Credit cards accepted. Breakfast included.*

### Eats

**Buca di Bacco da Serafina** is a small *trattoria* with an extensive menu and great atmosphere. Highly recommended. *Info: Via Longano 35, Tel. 081/837-0723. Closed Wednesdays and November. All credit cards accepted. Meal for two €40.*

**La Campannina** is a fine family-run place that is upscale but rustic. Here you will get peasant fare in a local down-to-earth ambience. *Info: Via delle Botteghe 14, Tel. 081/837-0732. Closed Wednesdays and November to Easter. All credit cards accepted. Meal for two €70.*



**Da Gemma** is famous for their *spaghetti alle vongole* (with clam sauce) and the *fritto alla Gemma* (fried mozzarella and zucchini and other vegetables). *Info: Via Madre Serafina 6, Tel. 081/837-0461. www.dagemma.it. Closed Mondays and November. All credit cards accepted. Meal for two €25.*

**Da Mamma Giovanna** is a small, local *trattoria* that makes great pizzas as well as grilled or oven cooked meats and fish. Located in the heart of Anacapri. *Info: (Anacapri) Via Boffè 3/5, Tel. 081/837-2057. Closed Mondays and the ten days after Christmas. All credit cards accepted. Meal for two €40.*

**Paolino** has old stoves and other cooking devices supporting the tables, which lends the place a nice down to earth touch that goes well with their expensive prices. *Info: Via Palazzo a Mare 11, Tel. 081/837-6102. Closed Mondays and January 15 to Easter. All credit cards accepted. Meal for two €60.*

## BEST SPORTS & RECREATION

On **Capri**, two fun things to do are the **Blue Grotto** and the chairlift up **Monte Solaro** (see pages 231, 236). Walking is by far the best way of getting about the island, but horse-drawn carriages, buses and taxis link Capri and Anacapri.

## NAPLES

Naples is chaotic, energetic, passionate, and edgy. Make sure you keep your valuables in safe locations on your body. I have traveled the world, but the only place I ever had my pocket picked was in the Naples. Fear not, however, as a rule no one will harm you for the contents of your wallet. But if you put down your camera and turn your back, or when buying something set your wallet on the counter ... there's a good chance it will be gone. Despite the omnipresent possibility of petty theft, Naples is also an incredible cultural experience. *Info: [www.comune.napoli.it](http://www.comune.napoli.it) or [www.enit.it](http://www.enit.it).*

The place to start your trip is in the heart of Naples, its **Centro Storico**. Located just north of the harbor, this part of Naples is the best location to walk and get a feel for the city. It has winding streets dotted with small churches and quaint old buildings. A fun place to explore during the day but be careful at night. Even locals advise you not to frequent anywhere between the Duomo and the train station at night unless you really know what you are doing.



The old main street, called the **Spaccanapoli** (Naples splitter) is a combination of all the streets from the Via Toledo, through the Via Maddaloni, to the Via Croce, and onto the Via S. Giagio ai Librai. This series of streets, as well as the small alleys that are

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offshoots from it, are lined with shops of traditional artisans, such as the **Palazzo di Strumenti Musicali** in front of the San Domenico Maggiore. Up the stairs to the first floor you'll find guitars and other instruments being crafted by hand. *Info: Vico San Domenico Maggiore #9*

Another unique shop is the **L'Ospedale delle Bambole**, The Doll Hospital. Here you'll find ancient dolls and puppets hanging or strewn haphazardly about. *Info: Via S Biagio ai Librai*. A can't-miss street in the *centro storico* is the **Via San Gregorio Armeno**, which is commonly known as the "Nativity Scene Street" since they sell figurines for crèches year round.

Also in the *centro storico* is **Napoli Sotterranea**, an amazing underground tour of catacombs, ancient aqueducts, cisterns, and the remains of Roman and Greek buildings that lie below modern Naples. The entrance is to the left of the church of S. Paolo Maggiore. Also featured in this tour are visits inside nearby homes that have been carved out of the ancient Roman amphitheater that used to exist here. You will see old stadium seats incorporated into modern apartments. *Info: Piazza San Gaetano 68. Tel. 081/296-944. napolisotterranea.org. Tours Mon-Fri noon, 2pm, and 4pm. On Thurs at 9am. Sat, Sun and Holidays 10am, noon, 2pm, 4pm, and 6pm. Groups need to book in advance. Admission €8.*

Right across the small piazza from Napoli Sotterranea is another excellent archeological excavation, **Scavi di San Lorenzo Maggiore**. Self-guided, but with a wonderful map, illustrations and descriptions, this is a sight well worth seeing. Located on the Via San Gregorio Armeno. *Info: Piazza San Gaetano. Time M-S 9am-5pm, Sun 9:30-1:30. Admission €4.*

Finally, a trip to Naples is not complete without a visit to the **National Archaeological Museum**. This museum boasts an amazingly rich collec-



of antiquities. Considered by many to be the best archeological museum in Italy, this is definitely a must-see destination when in Naples. One of its best exhibits is the **Gabinetto Segreto**, the secret closet. Filled with erotic statues, mosaics and other pieces of art of a sexual nature, these works give you an insight into

tion life back in the Roman era. *Info: Piazza Cavour. Tel. 081/440-166. Information and reservations: 848/800-288. www.marketplace.it/museo.nazionale. Open daily 9am-7pm. Until 8pm on holidays. Closed Tuesdays. Admission €6.5.*

After you have done all this, head back to your ferry and return to your island paradise, Capri.

## BEST SLEEPS & EATS

**Note: don't stay in Naples.** Instead, book a hotel in nearby Capri, Positano, or anywhere else on the Amalfi Coast. There are some great things about Naples, and even some great hotels, but overall you are much better off staying elsewhere. But we do list our favorite restaurants, below, for your (brief!) visit here.

### Eats

**La Taverna dell'Arte** (*photo at right*) is my favorite place in Naples. A small local trattoria situated in the heart of the *centro storico*. *Info: Rampa S. Giovanni Maggiore 1a, Tel. 081/552-7558. www.tavernadellarte.it. Closed Sundays and August. No credit cards accepted. Dinner for two €40.*



**Lombardi** is located near the Museo Archeologico Nazionale and has some of the best Pizza Napoletana in town. *Info: Via Foria 12, Tel. 081/456-220. Closed Mondays. All credit cards accepted. Meal for two €28.*

**Lombardi a Santa Chiara** is the sister pizzeria to Lombardi's. This one is in the heart of the *centro storico* right next to the Chiesa di Santa Chiara and their beautiful cloisters. *Info: Via B Croce 59, Tel. 081/522-0780. Closed Sundays and three weeks in August. Credit cards accepted. Meal for two €33.*

**Il Trianon** claims to have the best pizza in Naples. Even if it is not, it is definitely in the top ten. As is its vibrant local atmosphere. *Info: Via P Colletta 46, Tel. 081/553-9426. www.napolibox.it/trianon. Closed Sundays and for lunch, New Years Eve and Christmas. No credit cards accepted. Meal for two €25.*

**Al Barcadero Café** is an intimate little cafe in the ritzy part of Naples. Set down on the water and away from the frenetic pace of the city, this is a great place to come if you have to wait for a ferry. *Info: Banchina S. Lucia 2, Tel. 333/222-7023. Open from 10am to 10pm.*

### **BEST NIGHTLIFE & ENTERTAINMENT**

If you are in **Naples** from December to June — the traditional opera season — have some formal attire and have a taste for something out of the ordinary, try the **Teatro San Carlo**. *Info: Via San Carlo 98f, 80132 Napoli, Tel. 081/797-2331 or 797-2412, Fax 081/797-2306.*

If opera is not your thing, try **Riot**. *Info: Via S Biagio dei Librai 26. No phone. Open from 9pm-3am.* This place is made up of some rooms in an old building from the 18th century with tall French windows opening out onto a lush terrace of palm trees, pebble paths, and tables at which to sit and enjoy a drink or a smoke. During the summer they have art exhibits and late night bands, mostly American blues and jazz.

### **BEST SHOPPING**

The main shopping streets are the **Corso Umberto**, **Via Toledo**, and **Via Chiaia**. Along these byways you'll find your international style, upscale, expensive stores. In the *centro storico*, a unique shop is the **L'Ospedale delle Bambole** (The Doll Hospital), located on Via S Biagio ai Librai, where you'll find ancient dolls and puppets hanging everywhere or strewn haphazardly about. The **Via San Gregorio Armeno**, commonly known as the Nativity scene street, sells figurines for crèches.

## **POMPEII**

This is a city truly trapped in time. One day in 79 CE life stopped for



**Pompeii** when Mt. Vesuvius erupted, and roads, gardens, shops, bordellos, apartment buildings, villas and more all remain almost as they were from that fateful day.

Some of the best homes to see are the **House of the Faun** (*photo at left*) and the

the **House of the Vettii**, both in the residential area north of the **Forum**. Other homes of interest are the **House of the Melander** (located to the east of the Forum), the **Villa of the Mysteries** (located to the west of the main town), and the **House of Pansa** (located to the north of the Forum) that also included rented apartments.

The public **Amphitheater**, in the east of the city, should not be missed because of its scale and level of preservation.

The ancient town of Pompeii covered 160 acres, and was well supplied with public amenities. Lead water pipes found everywhere show that all but the very humblest of houses were supplied with running water. Most houses either doubled as workshops, or had small workshops in them since the ancient world's slave economy did not foster the development of the large scale factory system. The lives of ancient tradesmen, about which literature tells us almost nothing, becomes more real for us here than anywhere else in the ancient world. Except possibly, for the abandoned port of Rome, Ostia Antica.

Pompeii has also enriched our knowledge of ancient Romans' relations with their gods. Graffiti in Pompeii shows us that the Imperial cult, whereby Emperors were decreed to be deities in and of themselves, was adhered to, though generally only with lip service. One such wall scribbling states "Augustus Caesar's mother was only a woman." Blasphemous!

Also in evidence in Pompeii are symbols of the Greek cult of Dionysis, one of many that flourished in the city. **The Temple of Isis** (to the east of the Forum) testifies to the strong following that the Egyptian goddess had here. The Roman warrior sect of Mithras was also well represented, as were family cults that worshipped dead ancestors. This is evidenced by the fact that most homes and workshops had private shrines usually housing busts of ancestors. However, the true god of Pompeii was, as with other cities ancient and modern ... money.

Ironically, it was that worship of money that got many people killed. Going back for their hoards of silver and gold spelled death for many of the residents of Pompeii. Under the hail of pumice stone and ash many were asphyxiated or engulfed. A particularly disturbing cluster of victims, with their children and burdensome possessions, is preserved near the **Nocera Gate**. *Info: To get to Pompeii by train from Naples, go one floor below the*



*Central Station to the Circumvesuviana station for a local train to Pompeii Scavi. The trip takes about 30-40 minutes. Open April – October 8:30am-7:30pm. Last entry at 6pm. November to March 8:30am-5pm. Last entry 3:30pm. Admission €10. [www.scavidipompei.it](http://www.scavidipompei.it).*

## HERCULANEUM

Close to Naples, and seventeen miles northeast of Pompeii is the smaller town of **Herculaneum**. At the time of the eruption of Mt Vesuvius in 79 CE Herculaneum had only 5,000 inhabitants, very little commerce, and made most of its living from fishing. The volcanic mud that flowed through every building and street in Herculaneum was a different covering from that which buried Pompeii. This steaming hot lava-like substance settled eventually to a depth of 30-40 feet and became rock-hard, sealing and preserving everything it came in contact with. Dinner was left on tables, wine shops abandoned in mid-purchase, sacrifices left at the moment of offering, funerals never finished, prisoners left in stocks, and watchdogs perished on their chains.

Fortunately for the residents, but not for archeologists, the absence of the hail of hot ash that rained down on Pompeii, which smashed the buildings of that city and trapped many residents of that town, meant that many of the inhabitants of Herculaneum were able to get away in time. Despite the absence of preserved human remains, Herculaneum offers complete houses, with their woodwork, household goods, and furniture.

Although Herculaneum was a relatively unimportant town compared with Pompeii, many of the houses that have been excavated were from the wealthy class. It is speculated that perhaps the town was like a retirement village, populated by prosperous Romans seeking to pass their retirement years in the calm of a small seaside town. This idea is bolstered by the fact



that the few craft shops that have been discovered were solely for the manufacture of luxury goods.

Archaeologists surmise that the most desirable residential area was in the southwest part of town, which overlooked the

ocean in many different housing terraces. Here you will find the **House of the Stags**, famous for its beautiful frescoes, sculpted stags, and a drunken figure of Hercules. Farther north you can find the marvelously preserved **House of the Wooden Partition**. It is one of the most complete examples of a private residence in either Pompeii or Herculaneum. Near this house to the north are the **Baths**, an elaborate complex incorporating a gymnasium and assorted men and women's baths.

Important to remember as you compare Herculaneum with Pompeii is that this town was only recently excavated, and as a result modern methods and tools were used for the job. This allowed for more advanced preservation efforts. *Info: To get to Herculaneum by train from Naples, go one floor below the Central Station to the Circumvesuviana station for a local train to Ercolano. The trip takes about 20-30 minutes. Gates to the site open year round 9am to one hour before sunset. Admission €10. [www.comune.ercolano.na.it](http://www.comune.ercolano.na.it).*

## AMALFI COAST

The steep slopes and rugged beauty of the **Amalfi Coast** have enchanted visitors for centuries. **Mount Vesuvius** reigns majestically in the distance, dominating the scenery as it once dictated the lives of the area's inhabitants with its eruptions. Dotted with little hillside towns, the serpentine road connecting them usually has bumper to bumper traffic. In the off-season the traffic decreases considerably, but then so does the temperature, and bathing in the sea is one of the attractions of this coastline.

The narrow, two-lane road that joins Vietri (near Salerno) to Positano is dug almost entirely out of the rock, and curves maniacally. Built in the 1800s by the King of Naples, this road follows the lay of the mountains on one side and the stunning curves of the sea on the other. Every turn offers coastal panoramic views of unparalleled proportions.

The coastline is filled with high-end hotels, excellent restaurants, nightlife options, ancient medieval

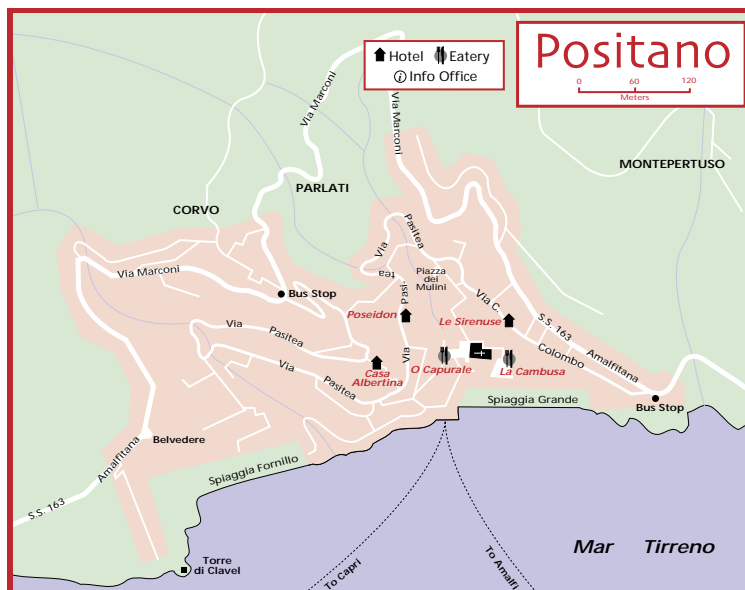


streets and passageways, cultural sights and fun-loving locals. The Amalfi Coast is a place you will want to return to time and time again. *Info:* [www.amalfi.it](http://www.amalfi.it).

### Positano

Perched up hillsides in a tangle of houses, alleys, stairways and tourist shops, overlooking a series of pristine beaches, the town of **Positano** (*see photo on previous page*) has been a part of this beautiful landscape for almost a thousand years. When Emperor Tiberius moved to Capri to escape the intrigue of Rome, he had his flour brought in from a mill in Positano, one that is still working today. In the 10th century, as a sea power and active trade competitor with Venice, Pisa and Genoa, Positano was one of the most important commercial centers on the Italian peninsula. In the 16th and 17th centuries, filled with the wealth from its trading, was when many of the beautiful Baroque homes scattered on the hills of the town were built. *Info:* [www.aziendaturismopositano.it](http://www.aziendaturismopositano.it)

Because of its timeless beauty, Positano has been the playground of the rich and famous for centuries. Writers, musicians, nobles, aristocrats – all have come here to bathe in the azure waters and relax in the lush green hillsides. Filled with excellent restaurants, world-class hotels, and all manner of water sports, Positano is a perfect holiday destination.



For historic sights, try the **Santa Maria Assunta**, a 12th century church that dominates the Positano hillside. The ancient floor is a Byzantine mosaic and on the main altar is a relief of the Madonna and Child in black marble. Other than that, Positano is a place to relax, read, and connect with the one you love. *Info: <http://positano.starnetwork.it>*

## BEST SLEEPS & EATS

### Sleeps

**Le Sirenuse**, a five-star, is definitely the place to stay in Positano. There is a pool at your disposal, a sauna, and a small boat to ferry you along the coast. Their restaurant, **La Sponda**, is one of the best, if not the best, in the city. Expensive, yes, but when the excellent Neapolitan cuisine is combined with the great views from the terrace, the price is irrelevant. *Info: Via Cristoforo Colombo 30. Tel. 089/875-066, Fax 089/811-798. [www.sirenuse.it](http://www.sirenuse.it). 60 rooms. Single €310-850. Double €350-900. Credit cards accepted. Breakfast included.*



**Poseidon** is a fine four-star hotel located in the heart of Positano. *Info: Via Pasitea 148. Tel. 089/811-111, Fax 089/875-833. [www.hotelposeidonpositano.it](http://www.hotelposeidonpositano.it). 48 rooms. Double €240-310; Suite €360-600. Credit cards accepted. Breakfast included.*

**Casa Albertina** is an excellent family-run three-star located in a tranquil area. They also have a superb restaurant. *Info: Via della Tavolozza 3. Tel. 089/875-143, Fax 089/811-540. [www.casalbertina.it](http://www.casalbertina.it). 20 rooms. Single €120-170; Double €140-240. Credit cards accepted. Breakfast included.*

### Eats

**La Cambusa** are known for their great seafood. A little expensive, but the food and ambiance are worth the price. *Info: Piazza A. Vespucci 4, Tel. 089/875-432. Closed November 11 to December 20. Credit cards accepted. Meal for two €70.*

**'O Capurale** has been in the family for over one hundred years and is part of the life of Positano. People come here for the friendly local atmosphere

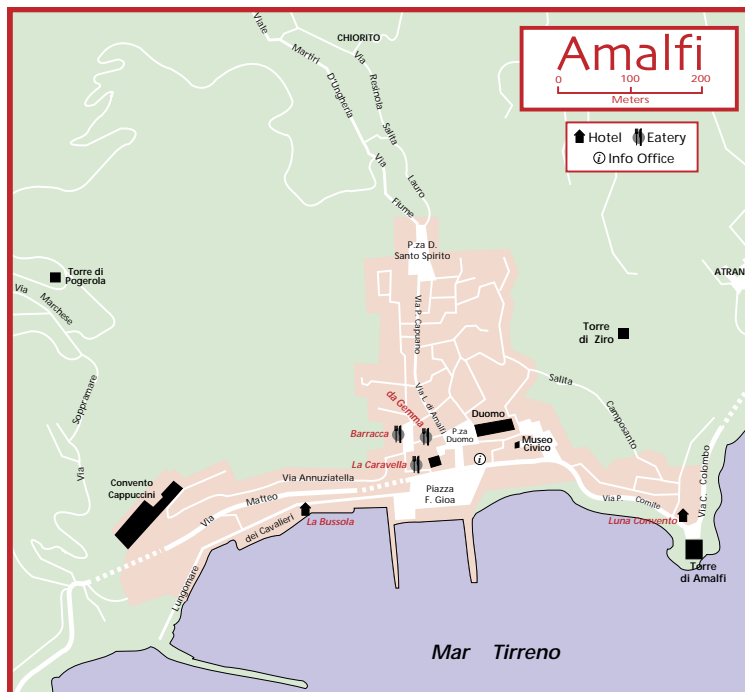
as well as the fine food. *Info: Via Regina Giovanna 12, Tel. 089/811-188. Closed Tuesdays (not in summer) and January. Credit cards accepted. Meal for two €35.*

## BEST NIGHTLIFE & ENTERTAINMENT

Nightlife is generally limited on the Amalfi Coast to finding a nice restaurant or cafe and lingering over dinner or coffee. In **Positano**, you can go dancing with the younger crowd in a cave at **Music on the Rocks**. *Info: Via Grotte dell'incanto, 51, Tel. 089/875-874, www.musicontherocks.it.*

### Amalfi

What an amazingly beautiful town. Clinging to the rocky coast of the Sorrento peninsula is one of the most picturesque little towns in Italy, **Amalfi**. It is primarily the slow pace, friendly locals and engaging colors of Amalfi that attracts visitors. Set on a backdrop of blue, the pastel colored houses of red and yellow, and the striped fishing boats fill the canvas of the town. If you want to experience an amazing place, come to Amalfi.



Legend has it that the town was established by Constantine the Great as a respite from the chaos of Rome. By the Middle Ages it had a population of 50,000, but today it is only around 7,000. As a tourist location, Amalfi offers everything you could need to make your stay pleasant: fine restaurants, wonderful hotels, nightlife, shopping, water sports and sightseeing.



Some of the sights you can see are the **Duomo of Sant'Andrea** built in the Lombard Romanesque style in 1203. Its fine portico with pointed arches was totally rebuilt in 1865. On the west side is a bronze door that was cast in Constantinople in 1066. In the crypt you will find the remains of the Apostle, Saint Andrew.

High above the town, reachable by a steady hike, is the **Capuccini Monastery** that offers fine views of the city. Now a hotel, some areas will be off limits to visitors who are not guests of the hotel. A 15-minute boat ride away is the **Grotta di Amalfi**, an ancient stalactite cave on the coast. One kilometer away along the coast road is the tiny little village of **Atrani**, picturesquely sitting along the mouth of a rocky gorge. In the main piazza is the 10th century **church of San Salvatore**, complete with Byzantine bronze doors cast in Constantinople in 1087.

## BEST SLEEPS & EATS

### Sleeps

**Luna Convento** is a wonderful four-star situated in a convent founded by St. Francis of Assisi in 1222. This place is awash with charm. *Info: Via Comite 33. Tel. 089/871-002, Fax 089/871-333. www.lunahotel.it. 45 rooms. Double €240-340; Suites €380-850. Credit cards accepted. Breakfast included.*



**La Bussola** is a superb three-star hotel strategically placed directly on the walkway along the sea in an old mill and pasta factory. A great place to stay in Amalfi. *Info: Lungomare dei Cavalieri 16. Tel. 089/871-533, Fax 089/871-369. www.labussolahotel.it. 63 rooms. Single € 70-95; Double € 100-200. Credit cards accepted. Breakfast included.*

### **Eats**

**Barracca** serves classic seafood cooking prepared with attention and served perfectly. *Info: Piazza dei Doggi, Tel. 089/871-285. Closed Wednesdays (not from June 15 to September 15) and January 15 to February 15. Credit cards accepted. Meal for two € 45.*

**La Caravella** is a little pricey but worth the expense. *Info: Via Matteo Camera 12, Tel. 089/871-029. www.ristorantelacaravella.it. Closed Wednesdays (not in the summer) and November. Credit cards accepted. Meal for two € 75.*

**Da Gemma** represents the best of the local, traditional cuisine in Amalfi. Their terrace is a wonderful place to enjoy your meal. *Info: Via Fra' Gerardo Sasso 10, Tel. 089/871-345. Closed Wednesdays (not in the summer) and Jan 15 to Feb 15. Credit cards accepted. Meal for two € 55.*

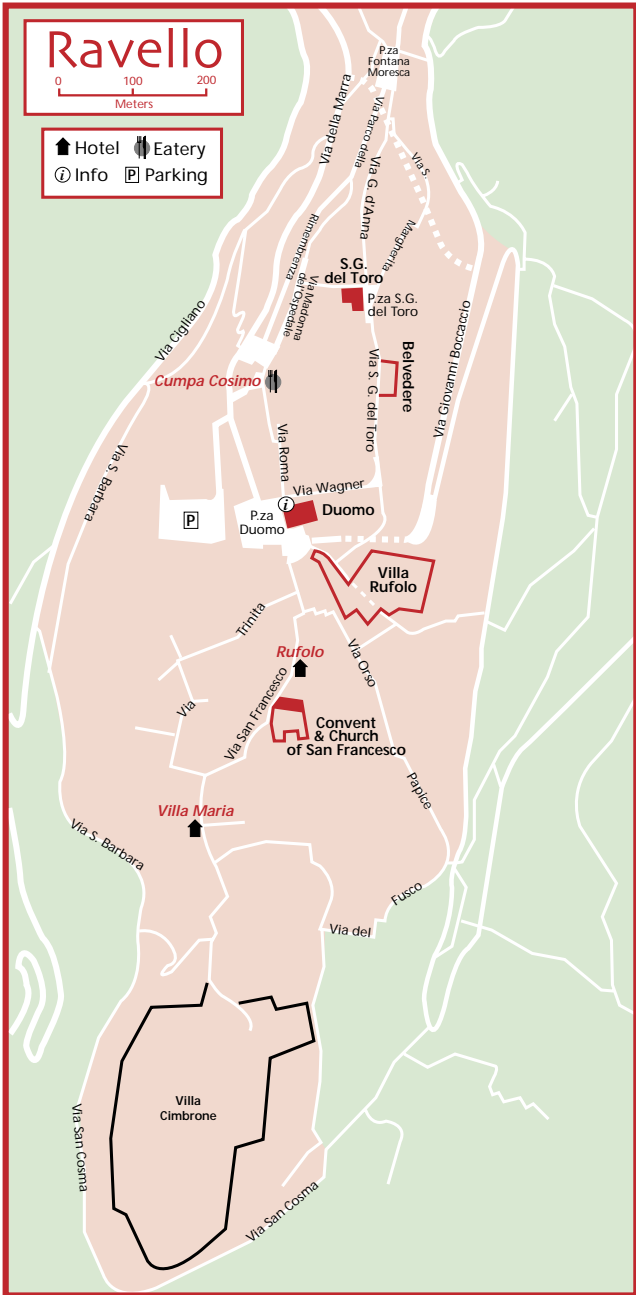
### **BEST SHOPPING**

About five kilometers from Salerno is **Vietri** the ceramic capital of the Amalfi Coast. *Info: take bus 10 from Amalfi.* Nondescript as Amalfi Coast towns go, it has an abundance of **ceramic stores**, all of which contain many designs unique to the region.

#### **Ravello**

About five kilometers up the hill from Amalfi, **Ravello** is one of the most enchanting spots in the world. Perched on a 350-foot high cliff overlooking the azure sea of the Amalfi Coast, Ravello has preserved its historical monuments through the ages and incorporated them into everyday life. *Info: www.ravello.it/aziendaturismo.*

One of the most important monuments in Ravello is the **Cathedral**, founded in 1086. Here you can admire the Byzantine mosaic work on the pulpit, the bronze doors, and the civic museum located in the crypt. **Villa Rufolo** is another sight to see, especially when the views are complimented with the many music festivals they offer, one of which is the **Ravello Music**





**Festival**, which usually begins in July each year. *Info:* [www.ravelloarts.org](http://www.ravelloarts.org) or [www.ravello.info](http://www.ravello.info).

The **Villa Cimbrone** also contains lush gardens and is known for its breathtaking views, which have been described by many as the best in the world. Other sights to see while in Ravello are the church of **San Giovanni del Toro** with its mosaic pulpit; the **Villa Episcopio** where King Vittorio Emanuele abdicated the throne; the cloister of the 13th century **convent of St. Francesco** with its amazing library; and the scenic **Piazza Fontana Moresca**.

## BEST SLEEPS & EATS

### Sleeps

**Villa Maria** is a great four-star. Highly recommended. *Info:* [Via Santa Chiara 2](http://www.villamaria.it). Tel. 089/857-255, Fax 089/857-071. [www.villamaria.it](http://www.villamaria.it). 18 rooms. Single €160-190; Double €190-230. Credit cards accepted. Breakfast included.

**Rufolo** is a wonderful four-star with every imaginable amenity. An ideal choice for an unforgettable stay in Ravello. *Info:* [Via S. Francesco 1](http://www.hotelrufolo.it), Tel. 089/857-133. Fax 089/857935. [www.hotelrufolo.it](http://www.hotelrufolo.it). Double €235-245; Suite €400-500.

### Eats

**Cumpa Cosimo** is a great little *trattoria*, and is close to being my favorite in all of Italy. *Info:* [Via Roma 44](http://www.cumpacosimo.it), Tel. 089/857-156. Closed Mondays (not in Spring and Summer). Credit cards accepted. Meal for two €40.

