

Sightseeing Guide

POSITANO



Photo: Astrid Franz



3 THE PHLEGRAEN FIELDS

CUMAE
BAIA
POZZUOLI
THE SOLFATARA

4 CASERTA
CAPUA
SANT'ANGELO IN FORMIS
CASERTA VECCHIA

5 NAPLES

6 OLD NAPLES

7 HERCULANEUM

8 VESUVIO

9 POMPEI
OPLONTIS (TORRE ANNUNZIATA)

10 SORRENTO

11 CAPRI

12 THE AMALFI COAST

13 POSITANO

14 AMALFI

15 ATRANI

16 RAVELLO

17 PAESTUM

18 THE CARTHUSIAN MONASTERY OF PADULA
THE CAVES OF PERTOSA AND CASTELCIVITA
SALERNO



THE PHLEGRAEN FIELDS

2 hours from Positano.
Tour time: full day.

CUMAE

The most ancient and **important Greek settlement in Italy**, Cumae was founded by Calcidians around 1000 BC. Of particular interest are the remains of **Acropolis**, the **Cavern of Sybil**, the **Cave of Cocceio** connected with the nearby **Lake of Avernus**, and the **Temple of Jupiter** built on top of the Cumae hill.

BAIA

The vacation resort of the ancient Roman elite, this is the site of a splendid **villa of the Caesars**, now unfortunately under the sea. Still to be seen are the splendid baths on the hill overlooking the sea.

POZZUOLI

Pozzuoli was founded by the Greeks under the name of Dicerarchia and became an active trading port under the Romans. Remains include the **amphitheatre**, one of the largest in Italy, the **Temple of Serapis**, situated near the sea and partly submerged, and the **Temple of Augustus**, the present **Roman Catholic Cathedral**.

THE SOLFATARA

An area where you can witness extraordinary **volcanic activities**.



CASERTA

2 hours from Positano.
Tour time: 2 hours.

- **The Royal Palace**, one of Italy's most outstanding, was built by Vanvitelli in 1752 for the Bourbon King Charles III. The building is a masterpiece of proportion and is arranged around four inner courtyards. It contains a majestic staircase and a series of vast consecutive rooms with frescoes and furniture, still providing an idea of the past splendor. Opposite the main entrance, the Palace gate opens onto the park and gardens also designed by Vanvitelli, the focal point being the monumental water cascade, three kilometers long.

CAPUA

30 minutes from Caserta.
Tour time: 2 hours.

- **Ruins of Capua** include a **Roman amphitheatre** (a smaller version of the Coliseum in Rome).
- The **Provincial Museum** contains an archaeological collection of the most precious artwork inherited from nearby pre-Roman Capua, also an important library and an interesting **Art Gallery** with paintings from the 15th – 16th centuries.

SANT'ANGELO IN FORMIS

30 minutes from Capua.
Tour time: 30 minutes.

- This **Benedictine basilica** was built in the 11th century by Abbot Desiderio from Monte Cassino, over the ruins of a previous church, and is considered one of the most important in Southern Italy. It contains a series of important early frescoes in Byzantine style and is lavishly decorated with marble columns and ancient capitals.

CASERTA VECCHIA

On the return journey to Positano, 45 minutes from Capua.
Tour time: 1 hour.

This is a charming **medieval village** whose focal point is a 12th **century cathedral**, a charming piece of architecture in a mixture of Romanesque and Norman-Arab style. As an alternative to Caserta Vecchia you could visit:



NAPLES

1 1/2 hours from Positano.

Tour time: full day.

- **National Archeological Museum**

Open from 9.00 to 20.00 – Closed on Tuesdays (*please confirm these information with the concierge*).

Tour time: 2 hours.

The collection is essentially composed of important Greek and Roman sculptures belonging to the Farnese family and archeological finds from Pompei and Herculaneum. Among these, fabulous mosaics and frescoes, the latter open to the public only three times a week and just for a few hours: enquire with the concierge. This is one of the most important museums in the world for Graeco Roman antiquities, dusty and fascinating beyond belief.

- **Museum of Capodimonte**

Open from 8.30 to 19.30 – Closed on Mondays (*please confirm these information with the concierge*).

Tour time: 2 hours.

The Royal Palace of Capodimonte is a beautiful, 18th century villa, standing in the middle of a splendid park. It's been entirely restored and transformed in a museum. It contains one of the most important collections of Old Master paintings in Italy, if not in Europe: the Farnese collection was already composed, at the end of the 18th century, of 1700 paintings. During the course of the 19th century many more works of art came to enhance the museum: the Bourbon collection, objects and paintings from monasteries and private collections, Egyptian pieces, Greek and Roman antiquities, among which the famous Celestial Globe. Often beautiful exhibits are organized in Capodimonte: enquire with the concierge.

- **The Museum of Martina at the Villa Floridiana**

Open from 9.00 to 14.00 – Closed on Mondays (*please confirm these information with the concierge*).

Tour time: 1 hours.

This houses the famous porcelain collection of the Duke of Martina, one of the most important in Europe. It includes also many small decorating objects, documents of everyday life: glassware, ivory pieces, corals, turtles.

For further information, visit www.musis.it, which is the official site of all Neapolitan Museums. Or, contact our concierge.



OLD NAPLES

1 1/2 hours from Positano.

Tour time: full day.

Naples is a very old city, it was the capital of the Reign of the two Sicilies and of the Reign of Naples for many centuries. The historical center is very rich, full of beautiful monuments and churches. We refer in these notes just to those monuments of extreme importance, but there is a lot more to see and we suggest, if you are interested, to ask our concierge to organize a good guide to take you around Naples.

- This area covers numerous monuments and churches of importance, such as **Santa Chiara**, the burial ground of the Angevines, with annexed cloister decorated in Capodimonte faience; **San Domenico Maggiore**, having both splendid gothic and baroque features; the **Chapel of San Severo** with an exuberant baroque interior; **San Lorenzo Maggiore** with a fine gothic nave lined with chapels and containing important works of art; and the **Carthusian Monastery of San Martino**, an important baroque church with a lovely cloister and several Neapolitan paintings of the 16th and 17th century. Annexed to the monastery is a museum containing a collection of Neapolitan cribs, as well as numerous paintings and sculptures from the 15th-19th centuries.

NOTE: A FULL DAY WOULD COVER A VISIT TO ONE OF THE ABOVE MUSEUMS IN THE MORNING AND A TOUR OF OLD NAPLES IN THE AFTERNOON. IF YOU ALLOW FOUR HOURS FOR THE VISIT TO OLD NAPLES, YOU MAY MANAGE TO VISIT THREE OR PERHAPS FOUR OF THE ABOVE MONUMENTS.



HERCULANEUM

1 1/2 hour from Positano.
 20 minutes from Pompei,
 10 minutes from Oplontis.
 Tour time: 2 hours.

Founded, according to the tradition, by Hercules, this Roman town was buried in mud following the eruption of Vesuvius in 79 AD.

- Besides the **baths (Thermae)** which are in excellent condition, and the theatre, the excavations have brought to light an entire series of **Patrician villas**, some remarkably well preserved, with **splendid columns, frescoes and mosaics**.

Most objects, classical statues, frescos and mosaics which were found in the excavations are now displayed in the archaeological museum o Naples.



VESUVIO

1 1/2 hour from Positano.
Tour time: 3 hours.

Regardless to the many scenarios that scientists keep forecasting, ultimately, it will be the volcano to decide when to wake up. The Vesuvio is a sleeping volcano, but still an active one. The last eruption happened in 1947 and put an end to the smoke coming out of the mouth. Another eruption, similar to the one that destroyed Pompei in 79 A.D. could actually happen any day. In 1845 Ferdinand II Bourbon founded the **Vesuvian Observatory**, to try to forecast the volcano's eruptions. Today the Observatory is one of the most important scientific institutions dedicated to volcanoes in the world. The Vesuvio is monitored 24 hours a day by numerous scientists from all over the world, who observe the movements of the mountain and elaborate possible future scenarios.

The Vesuvio is very beautiful. It became a National Park in 1972. An ascent to its top is very interesting. You can arrive by car up to one km below the top and this last leg have to be walked on foot. There is no vegetation, only blackened lava and pumice stone pebbles. Spooky but fascinating. The maximum diameter of the crater is 600 metres and, looking inside it from the rim, one can see the "cork" 200 metres below. There still is a little bit of smoke coming out of the cork edges.

The view of the Gulf of Naples from the top of the Vesuvio, with the islands of Ischia and Procida on one side and Capri on the other is absolutely extraordinary.



POMPEI

1 hour from Positano.

Tour time: minimum 3 hours.

Pompeii, buried in cinder in 79 AD in one of the most disastrous volcanic eruptions, provides first class evidence of the way of life in a Roman city at the time of the Empire.

- The site, located in an attractive setting, is huge and there is a lot to see. Among the most important ruins are the Forum (the centre of the town), containing the **Basilica** which is the largest building in Pompeii; the **Temple of Apollo** standing against the background of Vesuvius; the **Stabian Baths**, divided in sections for men and women with a swimming pool, hot and cold rooms (in an excellent state of preservation); the **House of Vettii**, the most lavishly decorated in town; and the **Villa of Mysteries**, standing outside the city walls and containing splendid frescoes.

OPLONTIS (TORRE ANNUNZIATA)

10 minutes from Pompeii.

Tour time: 1 hour.

- This is a **splendid villa** recently partly excavated, of the same type seen in Herculaneum but larger. It is in a marvellous state of preservation and contains frescoes which are among the best left to us from Roman times.

Most objects, classical statues, frescos and mosaics which were found in the excavations are now displayed in the archaeological museum o Naples.



SORRENTO

40 minutes from Positano

Tour time: 2/3 hours.

- The main square is **Piazza Tasso**, where the statue of Torquato Tasso, an important Italian renaissance poet from Sorrento, is situated in the centre of the square. From here the two main streets of the old town depart, truly characteristic and charming. The town of Sorrento is looking over to the Gulf of Naples. When you reach the terraces on the sea, the Vesuvio is in front of you, domineering the bay. At its left, the city of Naples. Along the coast of Sorrento, the limestone cliffs are vertical, very high and breathtakingly beautiful. Below is the port, where the hydrofoils land, and are the beaches, covered, during the summer months, by umbrellas, beds and cabins. An old shipyard builds the best wooden fishing boats of the Gulf of Naples.
- In an old aristocratic house, **Palazzo Correale** is the **Museo Correale di Terranova** (via Correale 12; Wed - Mon 9am to 2pm). The private collection is made of Neapolitan, Dutch and Flemish paintings, important clocks and Capodimonte porcelains, antique inlaid wooden furniture of the Sorrentine school and important pieces from the Roman time. It is a small and delightful museum, never too crowded by tourists. A secret jewel that you can visit in an hour.



CAPRI

In the summer months, 20 minutes by hydrofoil from Positano.

In the winter months, 40 minutes drive to Sorrento and 30 minutes boat ride.

Tour time: 4 hours

- **Villa Jovis (Jupiter's Villa)**, was the residence of Emperor Augustus and, afterwards, of his successor Tiberius. The imperial apartments have a loggia overlooking the sea with a beautiful panorama of the whole island. The stairway behind the little church leads to the Tiberius Leap, from where slaves were supposedly thrown into the sea.
- The **Carthusian Monastery** has two cloisters. In the smallest there are statues which were recovered from the Nymphae of the Blue Grotto.
- From the **Augustus Garden** there is a fabulous view of the Faraglioni, the famous rocks of Capri.
- **Monte Solaro** is reached by a chairlift overlooking charming terraces and gardens. From the top there is a spectacular panorama of the island and the Bay of Naples.
- For those interested in seeing the **Blue Grotto**, this can easily be reached by a 15 minutes boat ride from Capri's harbour.



THE AMALFI COAST

Tour time: 2 hours.

“The Amalfi Coast is an area of great physical beauty and natural diversity. It has been intensively settled by human communities since the early Middle Ages. There are a number of towns such as Amalfi and Ravello with architectural and artistic works of great significance. The rural areas show the versatility of the inhabitants in adapting their use of the land to the diverse nature of the terrain, which ranges from terraced vineyards and orchards on the lower slopes to wide upland pastures.” This is the declaration by which, in 1997, the Unesco Committee approved to include the Amalfi Coast among the World Heritage Sites.

Less than 50 km long, this road connects the Sorrentine peninsula with Vietri sul Mare, next to Salerno. Curves and bridges run after each other and offer panoramas of incredible beauty over high and steep cliffs covered by Mediterranean vegetation. In the middle of the deep and blue sea are the Islands of Li Galli and other islands.

Fishing, tourism and the production of lemons are the main ingredients of the local economy. The ceramic of Vietri, sold in every village of the Coast is also very important and beautiful.

Positano, Amalfi and Ravello are the most important towns along the Coast, but you’ll find other small communities such as Furore, Nerano, Conca dei Marini, Cetara, which are equally fascinating.



POSITANO

Positano is nestled in the heart of the Amalfi Drive, located where the Sorrentine Peninsula bends towards the South becoming the Gulf of Salerno.

- In the middle of this panoramic bay lie the **Islands of Li Galli**, formerly called the "**Island of the Sirens**" in mythological times, as it was believed that the islands were inhabited by Sirens that lured sailors with their beauty and sweet melodies.

The houses in Positano seem to cling to the mountain, sitting one on top of the other, framing a black volcanic beach. The beach is also the centre of activity.

- In the middle of the village is the main church, called **Santa Maria Assunta**. The church facade was rebuilt in the 1930s, by the parish priest of the time, Don Saverio. This explains why it differs from other churches of the area. The inside is very simple, painted white and gold, yet appearing somehow grand and important for such a small village as Positano.



AMALFI

40 minutes from Positano.
Tour time: 1 hour.

Amalfi was the first born among the Four Maritime Republics and reached its maximum splendour during the 10th and 11th centuries, with merchant colonies in the main harbours of the Mediterranean Sea: Byzantium, Alexandria, Beirut, Cyprus. The Maritime Laws of the city, explained in the famous "Tabula Amalphytana" (Amalfi's Board), were for centuries the international mercantile code accepted and taken as model. In the 12th century, after the Norman conquest, Amalfi lost its importance in the Mediterranean commerce and had to be content with a modest local role. The new dynasties ruling over Naples and the Southern Italy have been supported in their conquests by other Maritime Republics (first Pisa and then Genoa) that will receive in exchange the monopoly of the international commerce.

- The **Cathedral**, founded in the 9th century, retains its original bell tower. The Church went through a number of alterations and eventually the façade was re-built in the 19th century based on the original monument. There are two important doors at the entrance and two 12th century ambos in the interior.
- The **Cloister of Paradise** is accessible from the atrium and is one of the most charming examples of Norman-Arab architecture.



ATRANI

45 minutes from Positano.

5 minutes from Amalfi.

Tour time: 1 hour.

- A few curves away from Amalfi is Atrani, a small village built in the valley formed by the river Dragone's delta. The top of **Mount Aureo**, with the beautiful **Tower of Zirro**, used to survey the coastline from the Saracens's attacks in the Middle Ages, is the bordering line between the two villages. This small enclave is as big as only one square kilometre, its houses and churches well adhering the cliffs of the valley as if they were small baroque cream pastries, one on top of the other, interconnected by a network of narrow walkways and steep stairways, partly covered by arched porticos.
- In the Middle Ages, Atrani was part of the Maritime Republic of Amalfi. The local aristocracy had chosen to reside there. Doges were crowned in the church of **San Salvatore de Birecto**.
- In the centre of the village is **Piazza Umberto I**, never overcrowded, not even in high season. From here all the little winding streets depart to connect with the many churches of Atrani. There were more than 300 churches in medieval times. But, in those years the village was indeed bigger and more developed.
- The church of **Santa Maria Maddalena** is overlooking the sea, at the very limit of the plateau on which the entire village lies. While watching this church, Walter Benjamin felt like it was God Himself descending into the sea.



RAVELLO

1 hour from Positano.
 20 minutes from Amalfi.
 Tour time: 2 hours.

- The **Cathedral** was founded in 1086 and eventually transformed in the 18th century. The bell tower is still original in a magnificent Norman/Arab style. There are two extremely important bronze doors at the entrance which were cast in 1179. The nave has a superb mosaic covered pulpit and a 12th century ambo with mosaics representing Jonah and the Whale. The small museum in the crypt houses a beautiful marble bust of Sicilgaida, a Norman princess, together with sculptural fragments, mosaics and reliquary of extreme beauty.
- **Villa Rufolo** was built in the 13th century by the Rufolo family and became the residence of the Angevine king Charles d'Anjou. Wagner fell in love with it and resided there for one year while composing The Parsifal. There is a Moorish courtyard of great charm, which used to be a cloister in the 11th century. Also original is the 11th century tower overlooking the villa and its gardens. From the terraces there is a beautiful panorama. Spectacular classical concerts of high quality are given in Villa Rufolo's gardens. Enquire about this season's programme with the concierge.
- **Villa Cimbrone** is reached along a charming alley from the central square. After visiting the cloister and refectory next to the entrance, take the wide alley which leads to the Belvedere, adorned with a series of marble busts and affording a splendid panorama, perhaps one of the most famous in the world.



PAESTUM

2 hours from Positano.
Tour time: 2 - 3 hours.

Paestum is one of the most important archeological sites of Italy. It was founded around 600 BC by Greek colonists from Sibari, under the name of Poseidonia.

- **Museum:** This includes the famous Methopes, low reliefs in the Doric style of the 6th century BC, which formed part of a small temple, near the Temple of Hera at the mouth of the Sele River. Also of extreme importance are the funerary paintings found in numerous tombs, the most famous of these being the Tomb of the Diver.
- **Temples and Monuments:** Reached through the "Sacred Way", the **Temple of Hera** (Juno), built in the 6th century BC, the peristyle of which comprises 50 archaic fluted columns; the **Temple of Neptune** (the Greek Poseidon) dating from the mid 5th century BC, in an admirably pure Doric style; the **Forum**; the **Roman amphitheatre**; and the **Temple of Caeres**.



THE CARTHUSIAN MONASTERY OF PADULA

2 1/2 hours from Positano.
Tour time: 1 hour.

- This is one of the most important monuments of Southern Italy. It was founded in 1300 and is the result of huge works of several generations. It includes **splendid cloisters**, some in baroque style, and the **famous spiral staircase** leading to the library.

THE CAVES OF PERTOSA AND CASTELCIVITA

2 1/4 hours from Positano.
Tour time: 2 hours.

Already referred to by Seneca, these caves have mile long sequences of galleries, huge halls and atriums with extra-ordinarily lace-like concretions of different shapes and colors. These two sites are of extreme interest to speleologists.

SALERNO

1 1/2 hour from Positano.

On the return journey to Positano from either site.
1 hour from Positano.
Tour time: 1 hour.

- The **Duomo of Salerno** founded by the Normans in 1080, is a monument of great historical importance. The church is preceded by an attractive arcaded atrium and houses two exquisite ambos of the 12th century. Also of great importance are the bronze doors, which were cast in Constantinople in the 11th century. The Crusaders used to have their arms blessed in this church before their departure.