

Amalfi Coast: Positano And Amalfi

The Amalfi Coast is a beautiful stretch of mountainous coastline situated on the Sorrento peninsula between Sorrento and Salerno. It runs for about 50 kms.

The Amalfi Coast is dotted with small picturesque villages and towns that cling precariously on steep, rocky cliffs that plunge directly into the Mediterranean Sea. Examples of such settlements are Positano (perched dramatically on a steep hillside) and Amalfi.

The Amalfi Coastal Drive is a spectacular coastal road. The road winds along high cliff tops and offers frequent fantastic panoramic views. At some places the road is so narrow that two vehicles can hardly pass and, for some sections of road, tunnelling was necessary.



Figure 1



Figure 2

Tourism is the main industry in the area today and the area has numerous accommodation and leisure facilities providing many employment opportunities.

The settlement of Amalfi has a beautiful cathedral that stands at the top of a great flight of steps that lead up from the main square. In this magnificent cathedral are the remains of the Patron Saint of Amalfi, Saint Andrews (who is also the Patron Saint of Scotland).

Amalfi is the largest town here. The white, pink and yellow houses are surrounded by whitewashed courtyards that are immaculately kept. Many winding alleyways make a walking tour a most pleasant experience (**despite the steep gradients!**). Many buildings in the town have terraces with lemon trees and grape and olive vines.

A visit to the Amalfi coast will provide many spectacular photographic opportunities. As well as the precipitous coastline and the attractive settlements, look out for the limestone scenery as well. This dazzling creamy white rock, with its bedding planes and joints, provides a splendid backdrop to the whole area. The highest point on the Sorrento Peninsula is Mont Saint Angelo a Tre Pizzi at 1443m high.

The vegetation too is typically Mediterranean, able to survive the long drought periods of the summer months. Adaptations to reduce moisture loss include thick, waxy, glossy leaves and fruits that have thick skins. Many trees are coniferous, their small needles minimising water loss.

Capri

The Isle of Capri lies a short distance off the Sorrento coast (5 kms). Capri is perhaps the best known of all of the islands that lie off this shore.



Figure 4

Capri is a most beautiful island and it has attracted the rich and famous. Some well known residents have included Elizabeth Taylor, Kirk Douglas, Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis, Sophia Loren, Greta Garbo, Rita Hayworth, Jack Lemmon, Grace Kelly, Charlie Chaplin...

To reach the Isle of Capri a short ferry crossing is involved – either on a conventional ferry or on a twin hulled fast service. As the Sorrento Coast goes by and then recedes (with its sheer cliff walls and small beaches enclosed in little coves), the outline of the Isle of Capri grows on the horizon. Capri measures about 6kms long by 3 kms wide.

On arrival in the harbour, there are various activities to be enjoyed. Small coaches can be used to transport your group up to the town centre of Capri. There is also a funicular rail service that does this (it takes all of three minutes!).

For the more adventurous, however, it is perfectly possible to walk up to the town of Capri from the harbour; yes, the walk is steep, very steep in fact, but with frequent stops (to take in the views, naturally – as well as to regain your breath!) then this is a most delightful way in which to begin to fully appreciate Capri. You pass along winding lanes, pass hidden houses and enjoy the Mediterranean gardens (and their orange and olive trees, for example).



Figure 5

Herculaneum (Erculano)

Herculaneum was destroyed along with Pompeii in 79 AD. Herculaneum wasn't rediscovered until 1709.

Herculaneum was a residential town with many villas of very wealthy Romans. This is quite a contrast to the settlement of Pompeii.

Pompeii had much more of a commercial function with many trades and businesses.

When the catastrophe of 79 AD occurred, Herculaneum was buried by a pyroclastic flow and a hot mudflow that eventually hardened into a soft tufa rock.

This pyroclastic flow (a very hot flow of ash and volcanic ejecta rushing downslope at 500 °c) that washed over Herculaneum destroyed most of the buildings (unlike in Pompeii) but most of the objects that were inside the houses were saved. The volcanic rock, tufa, preserved many of the wooden parts of houses and household objects. Because of this, perfectly preserved objects can now be seen from Herculaneum e.g. furniture, ornaments, papyrus and wooden objects (although they have been carbonised – blackened). Looking at these objects helps to explain the habits and daily life of a population that lived almost 2000 years ago.

A large portion of old Herculaneum is still buried under the modern town. When you visit Herculaneum you will see present day buildings surrounding the excavated areas – but who knows what (or whom!) still lurks buried in the tufa rock.

Today excavations are still going on to discover what treasures may lie buried under the rock.



Figure 7



Figure 8



Figure 9

Useful websites for further investigations include:-

<http://www.italyheaven.co.uk/campania/herculaneum.html>
<http://www.pbs.org/wnet/secrets/investigating-herculaneum/116/>
<http://www.theplumber.com/pom.html>
<http://www.schools1.cic.ames.cam.ac.uk/pdfs/herculaneum.pdf>

Pompeii

Following the eruption of the volcano, Mount Vesuvius, in the year 79 A.D. Pompeii lay buried and forgotten for hundreds of years. The town is high on the list of Wonders of the World and the excavations begun in the 18th Century are still being carried out today.

A guide can take you slowly through some of the ancient streets of Pompeii where you can see bath houses, the Forum and villas built by the prosperous Romans along with the fabulously preserved frescos that adorned their walls and floors. Even if your interests do not lie in history, this is an archaeological site that cannot fail to impress you.

In 79 A.D. Vesuvius erupted and buried this ancient Campania town with a seven-meter high blanket of ash and lapillus (finer fragments of volcanic ejecta). The many archeological digs that have been going on for decades have discovered many of the monuments that survived the disaster, such as the Antiquarium (where the casts of the inhabitants buried under the ash are kept), the Temple of Apollo, the Temple of Vespasian, the Slaughterhouse, the Temple of Jupiter, the Thermal Spa Bath-house and the Surgeon's House. Digs are still ongoing and recently work has been carried out to uncover all the parts of the Casa del Bracciale d'oro (the house of the golden bracelet), including the fountains in what was once the garden of this Roman domus, and the fragments of the numerous frescoes



Figure 12



Figure 13

Useful websites for further investigations include:-

- <http://www.jhauser.us/pictures/history/Romans/Pompeii/civicAndTheaterAreas.html>
- <http://www.harcourtschool.com/activity/pompeii/>
- <http://touritaly.org/pompeii/pompeii-main.htm>
- http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/ancient/romans/pompeii_portents_01.shtml
- <http://www.eyewitnesstohistory.com/pompeii.htm>

Vesuvius (Vesuvio)



Figure 19

Vesuvius is part of a vast volcanic complex that is made up of major and minor volcanic centres with their associated lava flows and pyroclastic flows. The oldest rock from this volcanic area is about 300,000 years old.

Vesuvius is perhaps Southern Italy's greatest natural attraction. Its height is presently 1,281m (although this is subject to change!).

WHY IS THERE AN ACTIVE VOLCANO HERE?:

Like all major volcanoes of the world, Vesuvius (●; see map below) lies beside one of the world's major continental plate boundaries. Plate boundaries are the edges of the gigantic crustal plates upon which the continents sit (and above which the world's oceans and seas float!).

The map below shows the major continental/crustal plates and plate boundaries:-

- The crustal plates are constantly moving;
- The large blue arrows on the map opposite show the direction of this movement;
- In some locations the crustal plates move away from each other (i.e. diverging; e.g. at D – see map opposite);
- In other locations the crustal plates move towards each other (i.e. converging; e.g. C – see map above).

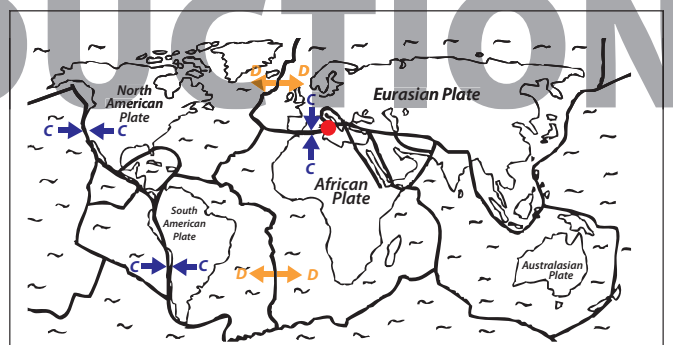


Figure 20

Vesuvius stands at a convergent plate boundary. In this case, the African Plate is moving northwards towards the Eurasian Plate. As this happens (at an average rate of about 5cms per year), the African Plate goes beneath the Eurasian Plate.

As a result of this, the rocks of the African Plate sink into the mantle and melt (1 - see diagram opposite).

This produces plumes of magma (2 - see diagram opposite).

These magma plumes (because they are very hot) rise upwards through weak points in the crust. When these plumes of magma find a weak spot in the earth's crust then they burst through to produce volcanoes (3); Vesuvius is an excellent example of a volcano produced in this way.

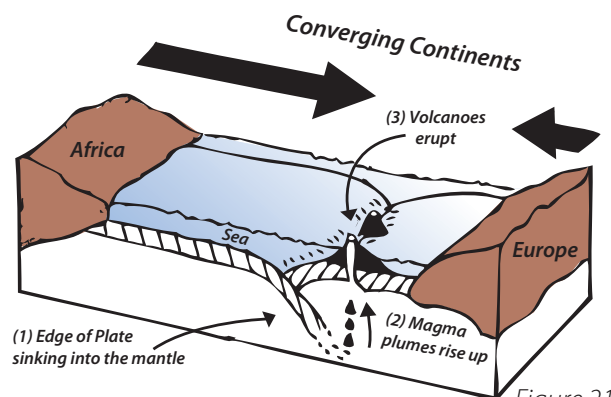


Figure 21

Fondo Galatea



Figure 27 Fondo Galatea Farm

Beneath the shade of the ancient orchards and olive groves you'll have the chance to sample some of the delicious local produce of meats, cheeses, jams and olive oil. Whilst at the farm see demonstrations of local cheese production and learn how to make the perfect pizza using home grown basic Mediterranean ingredients of olive oil, mozzarella and tomatoes.

This peaceful and tranquil location can be found on the hills of Piano di Sorrento. Established over four generations, the family run farm still uses traditional methods to produce typical Mediterranean produce.

A guided tour of the farm gives the opportunity to see the cultivated terraces of lemon trees and olive groves and to meet some of the livestock of cattle, pigs, rabbits and chickens, whilst working farm systems are explained. This agro-tourism project is a great example of farm diversification

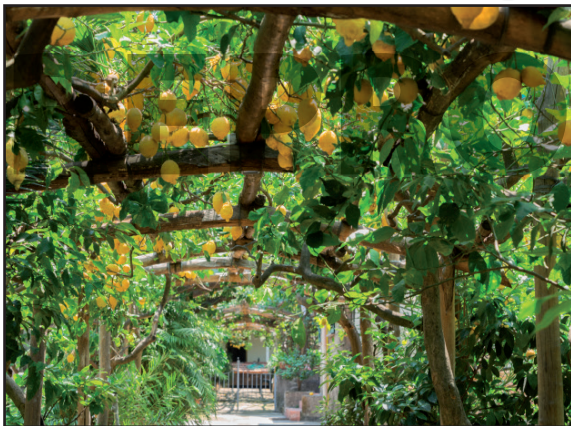


Figure 28 Fruit Trees



Figure 29 Pizza making

Conclusion

This Destination Guide has provided you with a brief outline of your tour and the various types of excursions, visits and activities that may be incorporated into it. The remainder of this Handbook contains a few blank pages that can be used for extra note taking whilst on site visits and/or as a diary of your tour events.

On your return to the UK you may wish to use the provided websites to assist you in delving deeper into particular aspects of your tour that have interested you most.

CIAO!