

Fly & Drive, Walk & Discover

The Coast of the Sirens

Amalfi Coast & Cilento National Park

Option 1 : From the unknown Cilento to the dramatic Amalfi Coast

8-day Fly & Drive Tour with 4 different bases in beautiful hotels and agriturismo's



Spring & Autumn 2011

Local Organizer: Genius Loci Travel – Salerno (Italy)

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

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Introduction

The regions of Amalfi and the Cilento have been known as a paradise on earth from ancient times on. The Greeks built some of their most impressive temples here and under the Romans they formed part of 'Campania Felix' or the Happy Land. When travelling here, one easily becomes overwhelmed by the well-known cultural and natural attractions of the famous 'Costiera Amalfitana' with its towering cliffs and picturesque coves. However also the Cilento region south of Salerno, now one of Italy's biggest National Parks where the coastline bulges out into an expanse of mountainous landmass, is well worth a visit.

The Amalfi Coast hardly needs an introduction and has been described by many authors and artists as the world's most beautiful coast. The landscape is immensely varied and surrounded by infinite ever changing views. It can be typical Mediterranean, intoxicated by wild perfumed herbs, with myrtle shrubs, thyme, rosemary and mastic trees, or almost alpine with meadows and bare rocks. And there's cultural heritage abound! Man has created a stunning mosaic terraced landscape, which nothing can compare with. And beautiful little churches, ruins of castles and old farmhouses are found all over... The 'Costiera Amalfitana' is definitely Europe's most dramatic stretch of coastline!

During your stay you'll have the time to visit the villages which are a must to see: Amalfi itself, but also Atrani, wonderfully preserved through the centuries, Ravello with its magnificent villa's, the quiet Praiano and of course the scenic and fashionable Positano. You will have the opportunity to walk along well maintained footpaths, often paved alleyways, through attractive countryside, with wonderful terraced lemon groves, vineyards and cultural treasures like rural chapels, ancient farm houses, old water mills and wonderful villa's and villages, where you can sit down and relax with a drink.

The Cilento coast is fairly rocky territory, with the shoreline lapped by a crystal sea. There is a wild kind of beauty here; rocky ridges set between small picturesque inlets and richly scented pinewoods backing onto wide sandy beaches. Aleppo pines loom over multi-coloured undergrowth of myrtle and prickly pear; whilst huge, centuries old, olive trees grow right down to the shore. Inland the Cilento is largely undisturbed by the 21st century and you will enjoy visiting medieval and quaint fishing villages where the traditional way of life is still evident. You will have the opportunity to walk or cycle through pristine natural areas, like beech and oak forests and mountain meadows, beautiful river valleys, impressive canyons and great mountain scenery. But as well you may enjoy attractive countryside, with vineyards and olive groves and all its cultural treasures like rural chapels, ancient farm houses, old water mills and charming medieval villages.

During your stay you'll not only visit the Cilento's main cultural highlight such as the world famous Greek temples of Paestum, the Greek town of Velia and the Certosa-abbey at Padula, but you will also have the opportunity to see some of the nicest mediaeval villages of the area, where the traditional way of life is still evident. And you'll enjoy visiting some of the Cilento's most unknown cultural treasures, like the rock churches of Magliano, St. Michael's cave church in Sant'Angelo a Fasanella, the ruins of Roscigno Vecchia and the castles of Laurino and Sicignano.



For this tour we offer several different options in which you can decide independently the skill level of your excursions. Walks and bicycle rides follow easy routes without any real technical difficulties and are feasible for all with some walking or cycling experience and in a good physical condition. Walking and cycling times: approx. 2 to 5 hours a day.

DAY-TO-DAY PROGRAMME

During this tour you have the choice of several different options, as well as being able to opt for a possible extension either in the Cilento region or along the Amalfi Coast. For culture and nature lovers who have never before visited the Amalfi Coast, we warmly suggest some more days in one of the many beautiful hotels or agriturismo's along the coast, to better discover the uncountable natural and cultural treasures of this beautiful part of Italy.

Option 1 : From the unknown Cilento to the dramatic Amalfi Coast

Day 1 & 2 The South Coast of the Cilento

Hotel/agriturismo in Pisciotta/Marina di Camerota

The first two days of your tour you will stay in a beautiful hotel in Pisciotta or in Marina di Camerota. These wonderful medieval villages nicely situated in the middle of centuries old olive groves are the ideal spots from where to discover the many faces of this part of the Cilento Coast. After your day's trip you will enjoy sauntering through the quiet back alleys of the hamlets where you are staying and have a cold drink or '*aperitivo*' on the terrace of a lively local bar.

When staying in this part of the Cilento, you have the opportunity to walk along the unspoilt rocky coast to the very scenic '*Porto degli Infreschi*' Bay. You may follow the ancient mule track of Sant'Iconio on the rocky cliffs high above the sandy beaches to the charming village of Camerota, situated on top of a dramatic vertical rock face. You may climb up to the top of Mount Bulgheria enjoying the fragrant wild alpine flowers and orchids. Or you take an easy stroll over the shadowy footpaths crisscrossing the pine woods covering the Palinuro Cape.

Cyclists will enjoy a short trip on the spectacular coastal road hemmed in between the sandy beaches and the high rocky cliffs between Pisciotta and Marina di Camerota, passing through the Mingardo River valley on the way back. Or they may choose to make a longer and more demanding trip around Mount Bulgheria or in the hills behind Pisciotta, visiting on the way the abandoned village of San Severino, situated on a rocky cliff high above the Mingardo Canyon, or stopping at the pre-Greek archaeological site of Roccagloriosa.

Your stay here simply has to include a short boat trip along the spectacular coast full of tiny inlets, many sea grotto's and high towering cliffs. You can set sail from the tiny harbour of Palinuro for a visit to the cape, or you may wonder at the various spectacular rock formations along the *Infreschi* Coast. The fitter visitor can explore the coast by sea kayak as well.

From Pisciotta and Marina di Camerota many of the main highlights of the southern Cilento are easily reached by car. You may opt for a visit to the enormous Certosa Abbey at Padula in the inland of the Cilento. You could ride to Morigerati and visit the WWF oasis where the waters of the River Bussento re-emerge noisily from a deep burrow. Or you can wander from village to village admiring the tiny charming medieval hamlets and their many ancient churches, old '*palazzzi*', ruined castles and twisting back alleys.

Day 3 Velia, Monte Gelbison and Monte Stella

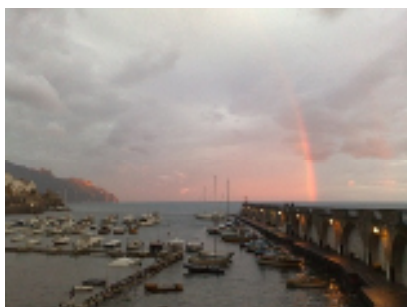
Hotel/agriturismo in Pioppi/Casalvelino

Today you have a wide choice of walking or cycling excursions, and cultural options. Also during your day's trip do not forget to stop for lunch in one of the many *'trattorie'* along your way and taste the many local food and drink specialties. Before going out for dinner again in the evening, you should take a refreshing dip in the crystal clear water of the Mediterranean and enjoy an hours' sunbathing on the white sandy beach.

Well trained lovers of long walks can head for Mount Gelbison in the wild mountainous inland of the Cilento. Here you can start out from Novi Velia where a century old pilgrim's path takes you up to the Sanctuary situated on the top of the mountain. An easier walk near Moio della Civitella takes you to the remains of a pre-Greek fortified hamlet, situated on top of a low hill.

Cyclists will enjoy the panoramic ride around Mount Stella, passing through the many tiny villages dotting its slopes. Here you will discover the real Cilento, untouched by the coasts' mass tourism. In these villages time seems to have stood still and the locals are sure to greet you as a welcome guest.

Culture lovers should make sure to pay a visit to Velia. This archaeological site preserves the remains of the 6th century BC Greek town of Elea, birth place of the philosophers Zeno and Parmenide, and origin of one of the oldest medical schools in Europe. Here you can admire the ruins of the ancient harbour, of the Greek and Roman bath houses, of several temples and public buildings, and of the so called *'Porta Rosa'* or Pink Gate, one of the oldest examples of the use of the arch in Greek architecture.



Day 4 & 5 Paestum and the Calore Valley

Hotel in Paestum

During your stay at Paestum you will have ample opportunity to visit the Cilento's main cultural attraction, the world famous Greek temples and the archaeological museum (UNESCO World Heritage). You will however, also have the time to explore the coast and the mountainous inland of this part of the Cilento. In the evening you can enjoy a cool *'aperitivo'* on a terrace with view of the temples, or you can taste the locally produced buffalo milk ice cream, during a short visit to a mozzarella farm.

Those interested in walking have the choice of several very nice excursions. You could walk through the fragrant Mediterranean *'maquis'* along the peninsula of Punta Tresino to the abandoned village of San Giovanni, passing some of the Cilento's most famous vine yards on the way. Or you walk from the tiny fishermen's port of San Marco di Castellabate to the enchanting coast of Punta Licosa with its curiously

formed pine trees sculpted by the incessant blowing wind. Closer to Paestum you climb up to the villages of Capaccio and Trentinara, situated on a tall vertical rock cliff high above the plain, and you walk along the remains of Capaccio Vecchia to the top of Mount Vesolo. You can as well head further inland and take a long walk over the high plateau of the Alburni Mountains, through thick beech woods and along bizarre rock formations and deep underground limestone caves and sink holes. In the valley underneath the mountain's high slopes you can explore the canyon of the Calore River near Felitto, or walk through the abandoned village of Roscigno Vecchia, the 'Pompeii of the 20th century' to the spectacular Sammaro Canyon.

Trained cyclists have the opportunity to rent a good quality road racing bicycle at Capaccio near Paestum, and may opt for a long trip through the Calore Valley and around the Alburni Mountains. Several dirt tracks both near the coast at Punta Tresino and in the inland of the Alburni Mountains, are ideal for some mountain biking. Those wanting to enjoy cycling through the area at an easier pace can explore the many quiet country roads around the archaeological site of Paestum.

The coast between Agropoli and Castellabate and the peaceful valleys at the foot of the Alburni Mountains offer many opportunities for an interesting car journey as well. You may visit the splendid medieval centre of Castellabate with its imposing castle, or you travel between the villages and hamlets dotting the Calore Valley. Here you may visit the mysterious limestone caves of Castelvità or Pertosa, or you halt for a short break near the medieval bridge over the Calore River at Felitto. Further inland you can visit the abandoned villages of Roscigno and Sacco Vecchia and you admire the Sammaro Canyon from on top of the high bridge spanning it. You may halt for lunch at one of the many agriturismo's along your way, tasting delicious '*antipasti della casa*' and feast on '*mozzarella di bufala*', handmade pasta and tasteful grilled meat dishes. In the afternoon you still have plenty of time to admire the wonderful little church of Sant'Angelo a Fasanella, built in a cave, and maybe ride up to the astronomical observatory high in the Alburni Mountains.

Day 6 & 7 The Amalfi Coast

Hotel in Cetara

The last two days of your tour you will be staying near the tiny fishermen's village of Cetara along the Amalfi Coast. From your hotel you have plenty opportunity to visit this authentic Italian paradise. Possibly you may want to extend your stay here with a couple of days to better explore the many cultural and natural treasures of the '*Costiera Amalfitana*'.

Those interested in exploring by foot, will find a dramatic landscape made of vertical rock cliffs rising from the sea, and high mountain peaks overlooking deep lush valleys. You may walk from Cetara to the Avvocata Sanctuary, situated on a highly panoramic terrace 700m above the sea, before clambering back down the seemingly endless stairs to the town of Maiori. Or you can hike through little charming hamlets to the '*Valle delle Ferriere*' (Iron Valley) and through the '*Valle dei Mulini*' (Mill Valley). There is the opportunity to walk over the '*Sentiero degli Dei*' (Path of the Gods), easily the most famous of the many paths along the Amalfi Coast and without doubt one of Italy's finest, with its breath taking views on the '*Costiera*' and on the isle of Capri. You could also follow the century old mule track of the '*Via Maestra dei Villaggi*', which connected the 10th century Sea Republic of Amalfi with its many hamlets. Here you will walk through colourful lemon groves and along old churches and lofty palaces.

To admire the dramatic cliffs rising from the sea, interspersed with tiny inlets and wonderfully located, often partly hidden fishermen's villages, there is no better way than by boat. You can choose from a guided excursion leaving from one of the main towns along the coast, or you can enjoy the view from the ferry boat when turning back to your hotel after your day's trip. For those who feel like it, it is possible to glide along part of the coast by sea kayak, admiring the most bizarre rock formations and pausing for a refreshing dive or a lazy picnic lunch on a small beach in one of the many tiny hidden inlets along the coast.

Culture lovers, city trippers and shoppers will find many a suitable spot along the Amalfi Coast. You can choose to visit the 'provincial' metropolis of Salerno, with its imposing castle, its well preserved medieval city centre and its magical botanical garden. Or you halt at Vietri sul Mare, famous for its colourful table ware ceramics, where you can spend hours in its many little shops. You will have the opportunity to visit splendid medieval Amalfi with its '*duomo*' and many '*palazzoni*' with clear Arabic influences. You may wander through the back alleys of Ravello, dramatically situated on a vertical limestone cliff high above the coast, and visit its

wonderful villa's and their beautiful gardens. Or you walk down the many stairs to the wide beach of mundane Positano, famous for its many VIP visitors, where you enjoy a 'gelato' while lounging in the sun. You can as well take the ferry boat from Amalfi for a visit to Capri, the favourite holiday resort of the Roman emperor Tiberius.

Day 8 End of your tour

Your tour finishes this morning after breakfast.



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TOUR DETAILS

ACCOMMODATION & MEALS

All nights are spent in beautiful hotels and agriturismo's (generally 3-star). All rooms have en-suite facilities.

Dinners are not included in the tour price. You have an ample choice of good typical restaurants in the towns where you are staying. The agriturismo's in the Cilento inland often offer the opportunity to eat dinner in the restaurant on their premises.

No picnic lunches are included in the tour price, but these can be prepared for you by the accommodation holders, or materials for picnics can be purchased in the villages where you will be passing through.

Nights 1 & 2: The first two nights are spent in a beautifully located hotel, either at Pisciotta or in Marina di Camerota.

Night 3: This night you stay in a nice hotel or agriturismo in the fishermen's village of Pioppi or in nearby Casalvelino.

Nights 4 & 5: The next two nights are spent in a charming hotel near the Greek temples of Paestum.

Nights 6 & 7: The last two nights you stay in a beautiful hotel near the fishermen's village of Cetara along the Amalfi Coast.

ON THIS INDIVIDUAL FLY & DRIVE TOUR WE PROVIDE YOU WITH:

- Accommodation: 2 nights Pisciotta/Marina di Camerota, 1 night Pioppi/Casalvelino, 2 nights Paestum, 2 nights Cetara; all nights in good 3-star hotels or agriturismo's.
- Meals: 8 breakfasts
- Extensive route notes, with description of the route & tourist information
- Topographical Maps for walking and cycling excursions
- 24/24 h local assistance

Not Included

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

LEVEL OF DIFFICULTY

Easy/moderate (2/3): Easy to moderate walks and cycling/kayaking trips without any real technical difficulties. Remember you decide yourself the level of difficulty of your excursions.

Fitness: All walks and bicycle/kayaking trips are feasible for all with some walking or cycling/kayaking experience and in a good physical condition. You should be able to walk or cycle for some hours a day also in hot dry weather conditions.

ARRIVAL & DEPARTURE

Arrival: The tour starts in PISCIOTTA/MARINA DI CAMEROTA. By car you reach the South Coast of the Cilento from Rome (daily flights, also low-cost, from all major European cities) in around 4 hours. From Naples (daily flights, also low-cost, from all major European cities) it will take you around 2,5 hours.

Departure: The tour ends after breakfast on day 8 in CETARA. From here you can reach Naples in 1 hour, Rome in 3 hours.

TOUR VARIATIONS

EXTRA NIGHTS

It is possible to extend your tour with a few days at Salerno, along the beautiful Amalfi Coast or at Naples. Details and prices on request.

UPGRADE

It is possible to book an upgrade in some of the places en route. Details and prices on request.

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