



Paestum & the Cilento National Park

Walking along the pristine coast of southern Italy



TRIP NOTES 2021

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INTRODUCTION

The region of Campania marks the real starting point of southern Italy. It has been sought after since Roman times when it was labelled the Campania Felix, or 'happy land', hardly a surprise considering the fact that it includes the great city of Naples, beautiful countryside, Roman ruins, small islands and stretches of spectacular coast. On the southern side of the Sorrento Peninsula, the Costiera Amalfitana is probably one of Europe's most well-known and dramatic stretches of coastline, with its towering cliffs and picturesque coves.

But Campania's real secret is located south of Salerno, and immediately south of the wonderful Greek temples of Paestum. Here the coastline bulges out into an expanse of mountainous landmass known as the Cilento, now a National Park with World Heritage listing. It stretches from the Tyrrhenian coast to the foot of the Apennines, and it includes the peaks of the Alburni Mountains, Mt. Cervati and the coastal buttresses of Mt. Bulgheria and Mt. Stella. The extraordinary naturalistic richness of the heterogeneous territory goes hand in hand with the mythical and mysterious character of a land rich in history and culture: from the nymphs Leucosia and Kamaraton, to the beaches where Palinuro left Aeneas, from the ruins of the Greek colonies of Elea and Paestum to the wonderful Certosa of Padula. Inland the Cilento is largely undisturbed by the 21st century and you will enjoy visiting medieval and quaint villages where the traditional way of life is still evident.

The Cilento coast is fairly rocky territory, with the crystalline sea lapping at the shore. 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 the multicoloured undergrowth of myrtle and cactuses; whilst huge, centuries-old olive trees grow right down to the shore. A large part of this tour is along the coast, intimately linked to the mythical Siren Leucosia and the nymph Kamaraton. This mythical atmosphere, and the marvellous landscape make this area a really enchanting place to visit in every season of the year. In wintertime the clear sky offers you superb views over the Amalfi Coast, Cape Palinuro and Calabria; in springtime the flowering brooms cover the hills in a golden-yellow hue, and during the summer you can swim in the very clean sea. In autumn the sea temperature is still warm and on clear days you can take relaxing walks. You'll walk through pristine natural areas and attractive countryside, with dotted with cultural treasures like rural chapels, ancient farmhouses, old watermills and charming medieval villages. During the tour you also visit some of the nicest old fishing villages, like Agropoli, Santa Maria and San Marco di Castellabate, Marina di Camerota and Acciaroli.



Please note: this is a moderately easy tour which is suitable for those who have some experience of walking and a good general physical condition. Most of the walks are on good paths, parts of them waymarked. Elsewhere you have to follow the route notes provided together with the maps. Average walking times: from approx 4 to 5 hours each day.



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DAY-TO-DAY PROGRAMME

Day 1 – Arrival in Paestum

Arrival at Paestum by train. Settle in your hotel, located only a few hundred meters from the amazing Greek temples, which are among the best-preserved in Europe. Leave your luggage at the hotel and take your time to pay a visit to the archaeological site. Then walk back to the hotel to enjoy a typical dinner of local cuisine.

Accommodation: Paestum - Hotel * - HB**

Day 2 – From Agropoli along Punta Tresino to Santa Maria di Castellabate

Today you first make a short train ride to Agropoli, where you start a wonderful walk along the headland of Punta Tresino, one of the last remaining stretches of pristine coast. You walk through a genuine Mediterranean landscape, through forests and scrubland, along wonderful beaches and an ancient Roman harbour, with beautiful views over the sea. You reach the abandoned village of San Giovanni, where some very good white wine is still produced today (optional tasting possible). Then you descend to the large sandy beach of Castellabate, where it's worth continuing all the way down the beach until you get to the charming little fishing harbour of Santa Maria. From here you are picked up – perhaps after a swim and a nice *gelato* on the beach – and you are brought to your charming hotel in the fortified village of Rocca Cilento.

Accommodation: Rocca Cilento - Boutique Hotel - HB

Total walking distance: 14,5 km. Approx. walking time: 5 h. (shorter options and several extensions possible)

Day 3 – The Valle dei Mulini from Rocca Cilento

Today you make a circular walk from Rocca Cilento. This walk brings you through some of the most interesting villages in the area and into the so-called 'Valle dei Mulini' (the Valley of the Mills). Parts of the walks follow the old route that used to connect this valley to the Greek cities of Paestum and Velia. First you walk down along the ridge, with wonderful views to both sides, to the tiny village of Lustra, with its very well preserved medieval village centre. Then you start to descend into the Valley of the Mills, along a beautiful, recently restored footpath. Here you'll notice the remains of at least 17 mills! These are dispersed along the path of the stream which, though being small, had enough water to supply all these mills before flowing into the *Fiumara* River, which you'll cross. Then you'll climb up to the charming little hamlet of Valle Cilento, with its beautiful bell towers. The path then descends into the valley again and goes past the intriguing abandoned village of Massacanina. A short but steep climb leads you onto the ridge again and, past the monastery of Mercato Cilento, you take a panoramic dirt road, which will then lead you back to Rocca Cilento, dominated by its fine castle where views over the area are unrivalled. Take some time to relax on the panoramic terrace before your dinner based on local specialties.

Accommodation: Rocca Cilento - Boutique Hotel - HB

Total walking distance: 13,5 km. Approx. walking time: 4,5-5 h. (several extensions possible)



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Day 4 – Along the ‘Alta Via’ of the Monte Stella

Today you will have a very panoramic walk along the ridge of Mt.Stella, which is still the geographic and cultural centre of the area, surrounded by a ring of charming medieval villages. A short transfer brings you to Perdifumo, where you start the walk in the chestnut forest. Once you reach the ridge views range from the island of Capri and the Amalfi Coast to Capo Palinuro, and sometimes even to the island of Stromboli in Sicily! Parts of the walk lead through the maquis and bare rocks, other parts through thick chestnut forests. You pass the historical ‘Castelluccio’, an abandoned fortress, probably dating back to the pre-Roman period. Then, still following the ridge, you reach the chapel of the Virgin of Monte Stella, the spiritual centre of the area, and still a place of worship today. Then you make a long descent towards the coast and you’ll pass through several beautiful historic villages. The first one is the tiny medieval Galdo, followed by Celso, Pollica and Cannicchio, all beautifully located on the hills with nice views over the sea. Then you go down to Acciaroli, a characteristic fishing village with a beautiful sandy beach, one of Ernest Hemingway’s favourite places. Here you can enjoy a swim before you take the public bus to the small village of San Marco di Castellabate, where you stay in a comfortable family-run hotel.

Accommodation: San Marco di Castellabate - Hotel* – BB**

Total walking distance: 17km. Approx. walking time: 5-6 h. (shorter options possible)

Day 5 – Punta Licosa, the *Finis Terrae* of the Cilento

You start a circular walk straight from your hotel, passing through typical Mediterranean maquis onto the Monte Licosa headland. This is the point where Cilento reaches furthest out to sea, like a miniature reproduction of the Monte Stella peninsula. It is full of marine charm, a place where the sea breeze makes the trees dance, bound to Ulysses’ myth: people say that the Siren Leucosia drowned herself here after failing to bewitch Ulysses. You first walk up to the ridge through the pine forest. From here you’ll enjoy superb views over the whole area, both the coast and inland, the bay of Salerno and even Calabria! You then descend towards the coast near Ogliastro Marina, and from here you follow a coastal trail to the very tip of the headland. Also along the coast you can see the ruins of several watchtowers and you will be captivated by the magic of the dancing trees. Of course there are several opportunities for a swim. From Punta Licosa you then continue along the coast and a beautiful path brings you back to the nice harbour of San Marco. In the evening you are free to arrange your own dinner from a wide choice of restaurants in the near surroundings.

Accommodation: San Marco di Castellabate - Hotel* – BB**

Total walking distance: 15km. Approx. walking time: 5 h. (several extensions possible)

Day 6 – Roundwalk Palinuro

From San Marco you’ll be picked up by your private taxi for the transfer to Palinuro, where you can leave your luggage at your hotel and then start a great roundwalk. This walk starts directly from your accommodation, and brings you onto the mythical promontory of Cape Palinuro, named after one of the mates of Aeneas who drowned here. From the little fishermen’s harbour you walk up to the light house on top of Capo Palinuro. You will walk through shady pine woods and fragrant Mediterranean shrub lands along well-maintained paths and gravel roads. From the light house you enjoy a magnificent view on the village of Palinuro and the Cilento Coast and part of the inland, with views reaching as far as the headland of Punta Licosa and Monte Stella. You then descend to the beautiful sandy beach of Marinella, a favourite among locals, where you can have lunch and a swim. Strong walkers may consider extending the Capo Palinuro walk to include the Molpa Hill, on which you’ll come across the ruins of a medieval castle, from where the view over the surrounding area is stunning. Also could you continue to the Arco Naturale, making this into a whole day excursion. But of course you should also consider to take a boat tour to the beautiful ‘Grotta Azzurra’, perhaps not as famous as the one in Capri, but arguably more beautiful (and definitely less costly & less touristy!).

Accommodation: Palinuro - Hotel** – BB**

Total walking distance: 8-15km. Approx. walking time: 3-6 h. (several options possible)



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N.B. In case you want to visit the excavations of the Greek city of Velia and do a beautiful roundwalk there, you can do this today – and travel on to Palinuro in the afternoon. Then we'll book an extra night for you in Palinuro.

Day 7 – From Palinuro to Marina di Camerota

Today you'll head for your next accommodation, in the charming seaside village of Marina di Camerota. Straight from your accommodation you first walk a short stretch through olive groves and along the river, then you start climbing up into the first hills above the coast between Palinuro and Marina di Camerota. This is a beautiful walk, with great views over the blue Mediterranean. You'll walk partly through forest and Mediterranean scrubland, partly through farmland. You walk along the ruins of old farmsteads and past the medieval chapel of Sant'Iconio. Along a stunning trail you descend back to the coast again. The last stretch to the charming village of Marina di Camerota is along the coast again. There are several nice beaches in isolated inlets, so perhaps there is the option for a swim. Or you can opt to go for a stroll in the village itself, with its clear South American influence.

Accommodation: Marina di Camerota - Hotel* – HB**

Total walking distance: 11–18 km. Approx. walking time: 4-6 h. (several shorter options/extensions possible)

N.B. In case you want to stay in Palinuro it is also possible to 'skip' this walk and have a transfer to Marina di Camerota, to do the daywalk to Porto Infreschi (day 8), after which you return to Palinuro. This shortens your journey with one day.

Day 8 – Along the 'Costa degli Infreschi'

Today you'll enjoy a coastal walk along one of the most unspoilt stretches of coastline in southern Italy, with the chance to enjoy its perfectly clean seawater (Blue Flag). This is the so-called Costa degli Infreschi, named after the Roman harbour of Porto degli Infreschi, where you can find a freshwater spring in a grotto.

The walk starts from the charming harbour of Marina di Camerota, where you can make a short coffee stop, buy picnic supplies and make arrangements for your (optional) return by boat. Then there absolutely superb sightseeing on the ancient footpath which connects the village of Marina di Camerota to the ancient Roman harbour. The walk starts directly from your hotel in Marina di Camerota. First you walk along its harbour, then, past a series of grottos and beaches, you reach the first medieval watchtower. Afterwards you have to climb a short stretch and continue through olive groves and scrubland. Then you descend to the next little inlet, which is reminiscent of the desolate beaches on a tropical island. Another hour along a beautiful trail brings you to the Porto degli Infreschi. Upon arrival on the beach here a lunch can be cooked by the local fishermen (optional). Return either on foot or by boat to Marina di Camerota. In the evening you are free to arrange your own dinner.

Accommodation: Marina di Camerota - Hotel* – HB**

Total walking distance: 10 km. Approx. walking time: 3 -3,5 h. (several extensions possible)

Day 9 – Departure

After breakfast you are brought to the train station. From here you return by train to Naples (centre or airport), Salerno or Rome.



TOUR DETAILS

ACCOMMODATION & MEALS

Accommodation is mainly on a half-board basis (only the nights in San Marco and your final night in Marina di Camerota are on a bed and breakfast basis – see inclusions) in very good 3-star hotels and a comfortable guesthouse (comparable to a 3-star hotel). All rooms have en-suite facilities.

You will have most dinners included; on two evenings you will be free to organise your dinner from the wide choice of restaurants in the area.

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'll be staying.

Night 1: The first night is spent in Paestum in a nice 3-star hotel with a big garden & pool, just outside the Greek town walls, at walking distance from the temples.

Nights 2 & 3: You stay in the small village of Rocca Cilento, in a beautiful and comfortable 'village hotel', recently opened in the medieval setting of an old monastery, at walking distance from the town square and castle.

Nights 4 & 5: For two nights you stay in the small coastal village town of San Marco, on the southern side of a large sandy beach and at the edge of the beautiful promontory of Punta Licosa.

Night 6: For one night you'll stay in Palinuro, in a nice 3-star hotel right in the centre of town or (on request) in a beautiful 4-star sea side hotel with a private beach.

Nights 7 & 8: The last two nights are spent in a comfortable 'B&B' or a good 3-star hotel in the small coastal town of Marina di Camerota, gateway to the unspoilt 'Costa degli Infreschi'.

UPGRADE/CHANGES IN ACCOMMODATION

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

INCLUDED

- 1 night Hotel in Paestum*** - HB
- 2 nights B&B in Rocca Cilento – HB
- 2 nights in Hotel San Marco di Castellabate*** – 2 BB
- 1 night Hotel in Palinuro **** - BB
- 2 nights in Hotel in Marina di Camerota*** - 1 HB + 1 BB
- Extensive route notes, with description of the route & tourist information
- Maps at 1 : 25.000 scale
- 24/7 assistance
- Luggage transport
- Private transfers as specified



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NOT INCLUDED

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

LEVEL OF DIFFICULTY

Moderately easy (2-3): Mostly easy walks, though some include walking uphill, sometimes on paths with rough surfaces. On some days extensions or shortcuts are possible.

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

FOOTPATHS & WAYMARKING

Most paths are well maintained, but during the season some paths can get overgrown (*we are in continuous contact with local authorities to keep the paths clean – please help us by providing your feedback on the quality of the paths*).

Waymarking: Only a small part of the route is waymarked; elsewhere you have to follow the route descriptions provided together with the maps. With these you will always be able to find your route.

ARRIVAL & DEPARTURE

Arrival: The tour starts in PAESTUM; a pick-up service (not included) can be arranged from Capaccio train station, which can easily be reached from Naples, the nearest city with an international airport. The train journey takes about an hour.

Departure: The tour ends in MARINA DI CAMEROTA. A short transfer brings you to the station (included), where you travel on to your next destination (Naples, Salerno or Rome can all be easily reached). Several taxi services are available to bring you directly to your next destination.



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TOUR VARIATIONS

It is also possible to do only a part of this tour – or do the whole tour in two times:

- [Paestum & the Coast of Monte Stella](#) –northern Cilento, with Paestum, beautiful Castellabate and Acciaroli.
- [Southern Cilento Explorer](#) –a full immersion in the beautiful southern part of the Cilento.

CONTINUOUS COASTAL CILENTO WALKING ROUTE

This tour shows you the best parts of the Cilento Coast – those parts which are actually accessible on foot. There are plans for a continuous walking route all along the coast of the Cilento National Park, starting in Paestum/Agropoli and ending in Sapri, but unfortunately there are still many ‘missing links’.

If you are interested in walking this coastal route already in 2021, please [contact us](#). We will be happy to advise.

(a first part of this route, already described in the [Monte Stella Walking Guide](#) is mostly feasible)

EXTRA NIGHTS

It is possible to include extra nights in any of the accommodations en route. As well is it possible to extend your tour with a few days In Salerno, Naples, or along the Amalfi Coast. Details and prices on request.



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