



# Paestum & the Cilento National Park

## -Best Value Tour-

*Inn-to-inn cycling through one of Italy's last unspoilt landscapes: from the Greek temples of Paestum into the amazing landscapes of the Cilento, along the coast and into the heartland*



## TRIP NOTES 2022

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## INTRODUCTION

*The region of Campania has been known as a paradise on earth since ancient times. The Greeks built some of their most impressive temples here and under the Romans it became known as 'Campania Felix', or the Happy Land. When travelling through this region, one becomes overwhelmed by its wealth of cultural and natural attractions, from the great city of Naples to the well-known Costiera Amalfitana, with its towering cliffs and picturesque coves.*

*But Campania's real secret is located south of Salerno. Here the coastline bulges out into an expanse of mountainous landmass known as the Cilento, now one of Italy's biggest National Parks, with World Heritage listing. This is an area of amazing natural beauty, where crystal-clear water laps at uncontaminated rocky coasts, and wild untamed forests cover high mountain peaks.*

*This tour brings you into the real 'Heart of the Cilento', from ancient Paestum up to the impressive Alburni Mountains and down to the pristine coast near Monte Stella again. Inland the Cilento is largely undisturbed by the 21st century and you will encounter few other tourists along your way. You will cycle past world-famous cultural sites, through pristine natural areas and dreamy coastal scenery. Your trip will take you on small country roads passing through rough mountain scenery, as well as attractive countryside, with vineyards and olive groves.*

*At the beginning of your tour you will pass the archaeological site of Paestum, visit a genuine mozzarella farm, and climb up to some nice viewpoints on the coastal plain. You will then cycle on through the Calore Valley, located in the very heart of the Cilento National Park. Here you'll visit some of the nicest medieval villages in the area, where the traditional way of life is still evident. And you'll enjoy visiting some of the Cilento's greatest (but unknown) cultural treasures, like St. Michael's cave church in Sant'Angelo a Fasanella, the ruins of Roscigno Vecchia and the castle of Laurino.*

*You then turn towards the coast again, passing through the rolling foothills around lovely Ceraso, where you visit the Greek site of Velia. You then continue along the coast of Monte Stella, dotted with several typical medieval hamlets and tiny fishing villages, such as Acciaroli and Pioppi, on your way to San Marco di Castellabate. Here you have time to explore the peninsula of Punta Licosa, and you can climb up to the medieval village of Castellabate with its imposing castle, offering wonderful views over the coast. We are sure that during this tour you will learn to know and love the Cilento area, discovering its many natural and cultural treasures. Even more so you will be pleasantly surprised by the hospitality of its people, who will make you feel like a welcome guest.*



*Please note: this is a moderate tour which is suitable for all those who have some experience of bicycle touring and are in a good general physical condition. On some of the inland stretches you may encounter some steeper climbs. Average cycling times: approx. 3-5 hours each day.*



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## DAY-TO-DAY PROGRAMME

### Day 1 – Arrival at Paestum

After arriving at the Paestum train station you will be picked up for your private transfer to your hotel near the world famous Temples of Paestum. Your bicycles will be waiting for you at the hotel. In alternative you can go pick up your bikes yourself and ride to your hotel. This short trip takes you through part of the River Sele plain and past the temples and city walls of Greek Paestum. Your luggage will be transported to the hotel for you. You can take your bikes down to the beach for a quick dip before turning in and getting settled in at the hotel right next to the archaeological site. In case you have arrived early you can visit the temples already, leaving more time for a longer trip tomorrow. In the evening you enjoy a nice dinner based on local specialties in your hotel.

**Accommodation: Paestum - Hotel \*\*\***

*Distance : 6,5 km. – Cycling time : 0,5 h.*

### Day 2 – From Paestum to Felitto

If you didn't visit the archaeological site of Paestum (UNESCO World Heritage) on the previous day you should take your time to do so before leaving Paestum, heading for the Calore Valley. Make sure you visit the museum as well to have a look at the so called 'Tomba del Tuffatore' (Diver's Tomb), a unique example of Greek funeral painting. After your visit you will cycle through the Paestum plain in the direction of Capaccio, passing by several mozzarella farms where you can see grazing buffaloes and taste delicious fresh buffalo mozzarella. After a first climb up to Capaccio, you continue underneath the slopes of Monte Soprano to the charming village of Trentinara, spectacularly situated on top of a high near-vertical cliff, making this an amazing viewpoint over the plain and coast. After a short break for a cup of coffee or a cappuccino, you pedal on over quiet roads, snaking through the lush countryside to arrive at medieval Monteforte Cilento, and then you cycle through sister towns of Magliano Vetere and Magliano Nuovo. Make sure to climb up to Magliano Nuovo – a challenging ride, rewarded by awesome views over the canyon of the Calore River. You then descend into the Calore Valley. You cycle past the hamlet of Felitto, where you might stop in the old town and again near the medieval bridge over the river, where you can walk through the impressive gorge. Then ride the last few km. until you arrive at your agriturismo. In the evening you eat a hearty dinner based on local specialities.

**Accommodation: Felitto - Agriturismo**

*Distance: 50 km. – Cycling time (no stops included): 3,5 h.*

### Day 3 – Calore Valley roundtrip

Today you have the choice of several different roundtrips exploring the Calore River valley. You can cycle to Castelcivita for a visit to the impressive 5 km-long limestone caves. Or you could visit the church of St. Michael at Sant'Angelo a Fasanella, built inside a cave. You could wander through the abandoned village of Roscigno Vecchia, known as "the Pompeii of the 20<sup>th</sup> century", and visit its small museum. You can also cycle to Sacco, situated underneath the high rock cliffs of the Cervati Mountains, and descend into the spectacular Sammaro Canyon. You might stop at the Calore River and, with a bit of luck, see rare otters swimming about in the water. Here you cycle over quiet peaceful roads in the middle of fragrant 'maquis' and tall chestnut and beech woods, through olive groves and vineyards. In the evening you turn back to your agriturismo and enjoy a glass of robust red wine and *la mamma's* traditional, honest cuisine.

**Accommodation: Felitto - Agriturismo**

*Distance: 40/65 km. – Cycling time (no stops included): 3/5 h.*



### Day 4 – Felitto to Ceraso

Today you will cycle from the Calore Valley to a cosy agriturismo in the rolling hills above the Alento plain in the central part of the Cilento. From Felitto you first head south. If you wish you can make a short detour for Laurino, where, during a stroll through the historical centre, you can admire several small churches, old 'palazzi' and the village's castle. From here a quiet country road running through thick woods takes you to the tiny hamlet of Stio. You then continue through the woods to Gioi, beautifully located on a hilltop. You then continue with great views to Moio della Civitella, where you can visit the remains of a pre-Greek fortified town. You could climb up to the little church on the very top of the hill where you admire a beautiful panorama of this part of the Cilento. This is an ideal spot for a picnic lunch. From Moio you continue to Vallo della Lucania, the largest town in the central Cilento. From here you then head for Massascusa and Ceraso. This nicely preserved medieval village certainly merits a short visit – and a drink in the town square - before you continue mostly downhill to your agriturismo where you will settle for the night. You'll enjoy a nice dinner made from local produce here.

#### Accommodation: Ceraso - Agriturismo

Distance: 60 km. – Cycling time (no stops included): 4,5 h.

### Day 5 – Ceraso to San Marco di Castellabate

During your ride today from Ceraso to the fishing village of San Marco di Castellabate, you will enjoy splendid views of the pristine Cilento coast at the feet of Monte Stella. From your agriturismo you descend towards the coast, where you can visit the remains of the Greek town of Velia, birthplace of the philosophers Zeno and Parmenides, and origin of one of Europe's most ancient medical schools. You can admire the old port, the Greek and Roman baths, different temples and the famous 'Porta Rosa', one of the earliest examples of the use of the arch in Greek architecture. After your visit you cycle through the plain of the Alento River to Marina di Casalvelino. From here you follow the coastal road through the charming seaside fishing villages of Pioppi, once home to Ansel Keys, father of the so-called 'Mediterranean Diet', and Acciaroli, where Ernest Hemingway once spent his holidays. You could stop for a refreshing swim and have your lunch on a deserted beach. From Ogliastra Marina you can visit the peninsula of Punta Licosa with its grotesquely curved pine trees, before turning in at your hotel at San Marco di Castellabate. The fitter cyclist can opt for a detour through the hamlets of Celso and Galdo, nicely situated in the hills below Monte Stella. After a refreshing shower in the evening you have time for a stroll through the little village of San Marco to find a nice restaurant for your evening meal.

#### Accommodation: San Marco di Castellabate - Hotel \*\*\*

Distance: 50 km. – Cycling time (no stops included): 3,5 h.

### Day 6 – San Marco di Castellabate to Paestum

Today a short ride takes you back to Paestum. If you didn't visit the peninsula of Punta Licosa the day before, you can cycle over the small paved path from San Marco to the small lighthouse at its very tip. After your visit to the peninsula you climb up to the medieval village of Castellabate, situated on a hill slightly inland. From here you enjoy a wonderful view of the coast. Take your time to visit the nicely preserved historical centre of the little town. You then continue to the hamlet of San Pietro where a quiet country road takes you to the magnificent Bay of Trentova near Agropoli. Here you can take a short walk on the paths leading through the fragrant 'maquis', high above the crystal-clear sea of Punta Tresino. Your next stop is the town of Agropoli, where the acropolis with its ancient town gates and imposing remains of the castle are well worth a visit. After a cup of coffee you cycle back to Paestum, where, after a nice hot shower at the hotel, you can enjoy an 'aperitivo' with views of the Greek temples. For dinner tonight you are free to choose one of the restaurants near the temples.

#### Accommodation: Paestum - Hotel \*\*\*

Distance: 30 km – Cycling time (no stops included): 2,5 hours.



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## Day 7 – End of the tour

Your tour ends after breakfast at Paestum.

***N.B. It is possible to include extra nights in any of the accommodations en route. Descriptions for extra rides and sightseeing options will be provided !!! It is also possible to extend your tour with a few days in Salerno, or with a few days cycling along the beautiful Amalfi Coast. Details and prices on request.***

## TOUR DETAILS

### ACCOMMODATION & MEALS

All nights are spent in characteristic hotels and agriturismo's (generally 3-star). All rooms have en-suite facilities. Dinners are included, except on the last two nights when you are free to make your own dinner arrangements at one of the restaurants in San Marco di Castellabate and Paestum. No picnic lunches are included in the tour price, but these can be prepared for you by the accommodation holders, or purchased locally.

**Night 1:** The first night is spent in a beautifully located 3-star hotel, just outside the archaeological site of Paestum, set in a stunning Mediterranean garden. On the premises of the hotel there is also a swimming pool.

**Nights 2 & 3:** These nights are spent in a wonderfully located agriturismo near the village of Felitto, in the Alburni foothills. Breakfast and dinner are based on local specialties.

**Night 4:** The next night you stay in an agriturismo in the heart of the Cilento, near the village of Ceraso, offering a taste of peaceful country life. After your day's cycling you can relax at the agriturismo's private swimming pool.

**Night 5:** Tonight you stay at a very nice hotel in the fishing village of San Marco di Castellabate. The little port and some nice beaches are only a short walk away.

**Night 6:** The final night you will stay in Paestum again. Upon request we can book a hotel on the beach.

### UPGRADE/CHANGES IN ACCOMMODATION

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



## INCLUDED

- Accommodation: 2 nights Paestum, 2 nights Felitto, 1 night Ceraso, 1 night San Marco di Castellabate; all nights in good \*\*\* hotels or agriturismos
- Meals: 6 breakfasts, 4 dinners
- Extensive route notes, with description of the route & tourist information
- Maps at 1 : 50.000 scale (or better) ; GPS waypoints and tracks (optional)
- 24/7 assistance
- Luggage transport
- Private transfers as specified

## 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
- Bicycle rental (available on request: [www.genius-loci.it/tour/rental-bikes](http://www.genius-loci.it/tour/rental-bikes) )

## LEVEL OF DIFFICULTY

**Easy to Moderate (2-3):** Mostly moderate rides but with some longer climbs. All roads are well paved and mainly quiet, with limited traffic except for some periods during summer and holidays near the coast. Extensions are possible on some days.

**Fitness:** Some experience of bicycle touring and a good general physical condition will certainly make your travel experience more enjoyable. You should be able to cycle for several hours a day even in hot dry weather conditions.

## ARRIVAL & DEPARTURE

**Arrival:** The tour starts in PAESTUM, which can easily be reached by train from either Naples or Salerno. Naples has an international airport. From Rome (and many other cities) Naples and Salerno, and thus Paestum, can easily be reached.

**Departure:** The tour ends in PAESTUM on day 7. A short transfer can bring you to the local train station where Salerno and Naples are easily reachable.

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