



The Coast of the Sirens: Amalfi Coast & Cilento National Park

Discovering the Amalfi Coast and the Cilento National Park



TRIP NOTES 2018

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INTRODUCTION

The regions of Amalfi and Cilento have been known as a paradise on earth since ancient times. 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, 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 too.

The Amalfi Coast hardly needs an introduction and has been described by many authors and artists as the most beautiful coast in the world. The landscape is immensely varied and surrounded by infinite ever-changing views. It can be typically Mediterranean, intoxicating with wild perfumed herbs, myrtle shrubs, thyme, rosemary and mastic trees, or almost alpine with meadows and bare rocks. And cultural heritage abounds! 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 place... The ‘Costiera Amalfitana’ is definitely Europe’s most dramatic stretch of coastline!

During your stay you’ll have the time to visit the must-see villages: Amalfi itself, but also Atrani, wonderfully preserved through the centuries, Ravello with its magnificent villas, the quiet Praiano, and of course the scenic and fashionable Positano. You will have the opportunity to walk along well-maintained footpaths, paved alleyways, through attractive countryside with wonderful terraced lemon groves, vineyards and cultural treasures such as rural chapels, ancient farmhouses, old watermills and wonderful villas and villages, where you can sit down and relax with a drink.

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 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, with beech and oak forests and mountain meadows, beautiful river valleys, impressive canyons and great mountain scenery.

During your stay you’ll not only visit the Cilento’s main cultural highlights 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 in 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 choose the difficulty level of the excursions yourself. Walks and bicycle rides follow easy routes without any real technical difficulties and are feasible for those who have some walking or cycling experience and are in a good physical condition. Walking and cycling times: approx. 2 to 5 hours a day.



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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 visited the Amalfi Coast, we recommend some more days in one of the many beautiful hotels or agriturismos along the coast to better discover the countless natural and cultural treasures in this beautiful part of Italy.

‘Discovering the Amalfi Coast and the Cilento National Park’

Day 1 & 2 The Southern Cilento

Hotel in Morigerati

During the first two days of your tour you will stay in a charming country house in Morigerati, situated in the mountains high above the Gulf of Policastro. From here you will have ample opportunity to explore both the inland and the coast of this largely unknown, but pristine part of the Cilento region.

From Morigerati you can walk to the local WWF oasis where the waters of the River Bussento re-emerge noisily from a deep burrow. You can go for a long walk through the beech forests and alpine meadows of the Cervati Mountains, the highest peak of the Cilento, coloured in spring by the numerous fragrant alpine flowers and wild orchids. Or you can walk around the giant sinkhole of Vallivona and discover the canyon of the Calore River near Laurino. Towards the sea you have the opportunity to walk along the unspoilt rocky coast to the very scenic ‘Porto degli Infreschi’ Bay. Or you can enjoy the wide panoramic view from the Ciolandra Plateau before walking down to the Marcellino Valley.

For the average cyclist the rolling country around Morigerati can be quite taxing, but this is easily forgotten when admiring the wonderful views you will find along your way. Easier cycling trips are possible along the coast near Marina di Camerota and in the Mingardo Valley, or around Mount Bulgheria. Here you can visit the abandoned village of San Severino, and the archaeological site of Roccagloriosa. Experienced mountain bikers can explore the Cervati Mountains, climbing up to the very top, and enjoy the exhilarating descent from Pruno to the isolated hamlet of Rofrano.

Culture lovers can easily reach the Certosa Abbey at Padula, one of the largest and richest in southern Europe. Also the coastal town of Maratea in nearby Basilicata is only a one-hour car journey away. Of course you can simply wander along the quiet country roads passing through the many charming medieval villages and stopping frequently to admire their many ancient churches, old ‘palazzoni’ and narrow 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. Don’t 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 waters of the Mediterranean and enjoy an hour’s sunbathing on the sandy white beach.

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 centuries-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 coast’s mass tourism. In these villages time seems to stand 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, birthplace 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, the Greek and



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Roman bath houses, several temples and public buildings, and 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 The Alburni Mountains and the Calore Valley

Agriturismo in Felitto/Bellosguardo/Corleto Manforte

The next two days you will stay in a charming agriturismo in the Calore Valley, where your hosts will do their best to make you feel more than welcome. Indeed staying in an agriturismo in the inland of the Cilento means being part of the household more than a simple guest. You will enjoy copious meals based on local honest cuisine, accompanied by robust red wines.

In this part of the Cilento, the convinced hiker will find themselves in paradise. You can opt for a long walk through the thick beech woods and past bizarre rock formations, deep underground limestone caves and sinkholes of the high plateau of the Alburni Mountains, climbing up to its very top at Mount Panormo. Or you can explore the valleys below the mountain's slopes, walking through the spectacular canyon of the Calore River near Felitto. You can wander from the abandoned village of Roscigno Vecchia, the 'Pompeii of the 20th century' to the spectacular Sammaro Canyon, and further on to the medieval village of Sacco, situated under the high limestone rock faces of the Cervati Mountains. From your agriturismo you can also walk to the spring of the Auso River near Sant'Angelo a Fasanella, and visit the nearby church of St. Michael, built into a cave.

The quiet country roads of the Calore Valley and the roads around the Alburni Mountains form a spectacular backdrop for several short or longer cycling trips. The experienced cyclist could descend into the Diano Valley and visit the limestone caves of Pertosa, before turning back to the agriturismo by circling the Alburni Mountains, while the mountain biking enthusiast will immediately feel at home on the many dirt tracks crisscrossing the Alburni Plateau. The average cyclist could set out for a trip through several of the charming little villages dotting the Calore Valley, admiring the historic centres of Roscigno, Sacco, Felitto, Magliano, Ottati and Aquara.



Of course you are free to discover this beautiful part of the Cilento by car as well. You can wander freely along the many little hamlets of the Calore Valley and the Alburni Mountains, stopping whenever you fancy to admire the charming little medieval hamlets and their many ancient churches, old 'palazzini', ruined castles and twisting back alleys. At lunchtime you can drive up to an agriturismo for a copious meal of delicious 'antipasti della casa' and feast on 'mozzarella di bufala', handmade pasta and tasteful grilled meat dishes. A short drive through the valley takes you to the archaeological site of Paestum, where you will visit the Cilento's main cultural attraction, the world-famous Greek temples and the archaeological museum (UNESCO World Heritage).



Day 6 & 7 The 'back roads' of the Amalfi Coast

Agriturismo in Agerola

The last two days of your tour you will stay in a nice family-run agriturismo in Agerola, high above the Amalfi Coast. From your agriturismo you will have plenty of opportunities to visit this authentic Italian paradise. If you have never visited the *'Costiera Amalfitana'* before, we warmly recommend that you extend your stay here by a couple of days to better explore the many cultural and natural treasures of this part of the region.

Those interested in exploring by foot will find a dramatic landscape made up of vertical rock cliffs rising out of the sea, and high mountain peaks overlooking deep lush valleys. From Agerola you can walk along highly panoramic paths over Mount Murillo through the *'Valle delle Ferriere'* (Iron Valley) and the *'Valle dei Mulini'* (Valley of the Mills) to Amalfi. You will have the opportunity to walk 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 breathtaking views of the *'Costiera'* and the isle of Capri. You could also follow the centuries-old mule track of the *'Via Maestra dei Villagi'*, which connected the 10th century Republic of Amalfi with its many hamlets. Here you will walk through colourful lemon groves and past old churches and lofty palaces. Or you can head for the highest peak of the Sorrento Peninsula and admire Positano from the top of Mount Sant'Angelo a Tre Pizzi at 1500m.

To admire the dramatic cliffs rising up from the sea, interspersed with tiny inlets and wonderfully located fishing villages hidden out of sight, 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 as you turn 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 will have the opportunity to visit splendid medieval Amalfi with its *'duomo'* and numerous *'palazzini'* with clear Arabic influences. You can wander through the back alleys of Ravello, dramatically situated on a vertical limestone cliff high above the coast, and visit its wonderful villas and their beautiful gardens. Or you walk down the many steps to the wide beach of mundane Positano, famous for its many VIP visitors, where you enjoy a *'gelato'* while lounging under the sun. You can also take the ferry from Amalfi for a visit to Capri, the favourite holiday resort of the Roman Emperor Tiberius. From Agerola you can easily reach the other side of the peninsula as well, where you can visit the seaside resort town of Sorrento, built on high vertical cliffs above the sea, as well as driving on to the charming villages of Massa Lubrense and Termini on the very tip of the peninsula.

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 agriturismos (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 agriturismos in the Cilento inland often offer the opportunity to have 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 which you will be passing through.

Nights 1& 2: The first two nights are spent in a beautifully located country house at Morigerati in the mountains above the Gulf of Policastro.

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

Nights 4 & 5: The next two nights are spent in a charming agriturismo in Felitto/Bellosguardo/Corleto Monforte in the Calore Valley.

Nights 6 & 7: The last two nights you stay in a beautiful agriturismo in Agerola, high above the Amalfi Coast.

LEVEL OF DIFFICULTY

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

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

FOOTPATHS & WAYMARKING

Most paths are relatively 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 (partly by us); elsewhere it is necessary to follow the route descriptions provided together with the maps. With these it is always possible to find your route. In case you don't feel confident a local guide can be provided for some trails.



INCLUDED ON THIS INDIVIDUAL DRIVE & HIKE TOUR WE PROVIDE YOU WITH:

- Accommodation: 2 nights Morigerati, 1 night Pioppi/Casalvelino, 2 nights Felitto/Bellosguardo/Corleto Monforte, 2 nights Agerola; all nights in good 3-star hotels or agriturismos.
- Meals: 7 breakfasts
- Extensive route notes, with description of the route & tourist information
- Topographical Maps for walking and cycling excursions
- 24/7 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

ARRIVAL & DEPARTURE

Arrival: The tour starts in MORIGERATI. 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 in AGEROLA on day 8. From here you can reach Naples in 1 hour, Rome in 3 hours.

TOUR VARIATIONS

One of the main characteristics of a Genius Loci Travel 'Drive & Hike, Walk & Discover' Tour is the freedom you have in putting together not only your own daily programme, but also the length of the tour and the places to visit. The above programme is only an example of what is possible. It is a well-balanced programme, which shows you the great variety of this part of Sardinia, both the authentic inland areas, as well as the stupendous coastline. However, according to your interests we can easily adapt the programme to your demands. More mountains, more sea, more culture, more relax.... You decide!

EXTRA NIGHTS

It is possible to extend your tour with a few days in Salerno, along the beautiful Amalfi Coast or in 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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