



*Independent walking tour (AMA4)*

# The unknown Amalfi Coast

*Between the charming fishing villages and impressive monasteries of the world's most beautiful coastline*



## TRIP NOTES 2024

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## INTRODUCTION

*This is an exclusive tour along the eastern part of the well-known Amalfi Coast, one which only Genius Loci Travel, the Amalfi Coast specialists, can offer you. This tour lets you discover some of the real highlights that are still ignored by foreign tourism, despite the fact that (too) many tour operators worldwide now offer walking holidays along this coast. You start from Salerno, the provincial capital and a beautiful city by itself, and then walk along Vietri sul Mare, Cava dei Tirreni, do the pilgrimage to the 'Madonna dell'Avvocata', and walk on to Cetara and Maiori. You will then enjoy a few days in the green valley of Tramonti, 'in between the mountains', where you can taste the best wines of the area, walk through virtually untouched landscapes and stay in unique accommodations, completely 'off-the-beaten-track'. From Tramonti you will then walk back down to the coast, and spend the final nights in the charming small village of Minori (with an optional extension to Ravello & Amalfi).*

*You will enjoy some spectacular coastal scenery, some of the most picturesque hamlets on the Amalfi Coast, just above the well-known Vietri sul Mare, the charming fishing village of Cetara and the great abbey of Cava dei Tirreni, once one of the most powerful abbeys in southern Italy. You'll walk across a variety of landscapes in real mountainous scenery, through chestnut forests, mountain meadows and bare rocky wilderness, terraced lemon groves and broad sandy beaches.*

*The tour starts from Salerno, a beautiful little city at the entrance to the Amalfi Coast. It was once a powerful city, as demonstrated by the fact that it boasted Europe's first medical university. But many other traces from its glorious past are also visible today. Its historical centre is full of interesting things to see, starting from its amazing Duomo.*

*Along the eastern coastline, as elsewhere on the Amalfi Coast, man has created a beautiful mosaic-terraced landscape, with vineyards and lemon groves. But here you will also find large areas of forest, both chestnut and evergreen oak varieties. And everything can be discovered on foot here too! The footpaths here are perhaps not as famous as elsewhere on the coast, but they are just as beautiful! Going from the sea to the mountains, or vice versa, there are always stupendous views, and you'll walk through little villages, vineyards and olive groves, Mediterranean scrub and woods, living rocks and chestnut woods. This special tour shows you the paths most guides don't know about and most books don't tell you about!*

*This walking tour can be considered an extra treat for those who have already done the 'classic' tours along the Amalfi Coast, and already visited all the famous coastal towns and villages. If you have never been there you can also consider this tour as a good introduction and extend the tour with one of our others along the coast. On this tour you will discover that the Amalfi Coast has become Italy's most famous coastline, with good reason but also that it only takes a small effort to get 'off the beaten track' and discover real hidden treasures or find yourself surrounded by nature*



*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. 5 to 6 hours each day.*



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## DAY-TO-DAY PROGRAMME

### Day 1 – Arrival in Salerno

Arrival in Salerno (train station). Your hotel is only a short bus ride away (optional taxi). After settling in at your hotel you can take your time to discover the beautiful town centre of Salerno and stroll along the 'lungomare' with views of both the Amalfi Coast and the Cilento National Park.

**Accommodation: Salerno - Hotel/B&B \*\*\***

#### *Optional extra day – Salerno & its castle*

*Directly from your accommodation right in the heart of the city, you start a great and rewarding round walk through the city centre, touching of course – but not only!- the most interesting 'highlights', such as the Duomo, the theatre, the narrow alleys of the medieval town centre, with its many noble palaces and churches with IX and X century fresco's. The literal highlight of today is the amazing Arechi castle, named after the Lombard prince who established his capital at Salerno in the 8th century. Views over the Amalfi Coast and the whole bay are stunning from here. Back down in town you'll discover the beautiful gardens of Minerva and the roots of the 'Scuola Medica Salernitana', Europe's most important medical 'university' in medieval times. The walk also brings you through quiet parks and the ideal end of the day is a stroll along the sea shore boulevard with a drink at the harbour.*

**Accommodation: Salerno - Hotel/B&B \*\*\***

### Day 2 – The Ceramics of the Amalfi Coast

Today's walk takes you from the charming town of Vietri sul Mare, the gateway to the Amalfi Coast to the little hamlet of Corpo di Cava situated on the mountain slopes high above the valley of Cava dei Tirreni, on the other side of the Lattari Mountains. Indeed today, as well as during the next few days of your tour, you will be walking on paths largely unknown to the 'trekking' crowd. After strolling through the oldtown centre of Vietri sul Mare, and extensively browsing its many ceramics shops, you will walk down its little alleys to its marina, before heading up towards splendid Raito with its wonderful views of the coast. After a coffee break at Raito you then continue uphill to yet another charming little village – Albori. From here the path takes you inland towards the valley of Cava dei Tirreni. After passing Iaconti and the church of San Vincenzo you will walk through shaded chestnut woods to your day's destination near the millennium-old Benedictine Abbey of Corpo di Cava. On your way you could have a look at one of the hidden marvels of this area, the remains of a Roman aqueduct still standing 20m tall! Finally you arrive at the hotel and have the time to freshen up and get ready for a hearty dinner on the hotel's premises.

**Accommodation: Cava dei Tirreni - Hotel \*\*\*\***

*Total walking distance: 7 km. Approx. walking time: 3 h. Ascent & descent: + 400 m./- 100 m.*

### Day 3 – Along the ancient pilgrim routes between Corpo di Cava and Cetara

Today's walk is a more challenging walk, along one of the most famous pilgrim routes in the area. It will take you straight from your hotel to the Madonna dell'Avvocata, set in a spectacular spot, high above the Amalfi Coast. From the Abbey of Corpo di Cava you first walk up through the chestnut woods to the Cappella Vecchia, the 'Old Chapel'. From here you enjoy a views of Vietri sul Mare and Salerno to the south, and the crest of Monte Avvocata to the west. A well-trodden and relatively easy footpath leading through the *maquis* then takes you to the hermitage of the Avvocata. From here one can see as far as Paestum and the mountains of Calabria to the south, while views of



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the Amalfi Coast reach as far as Ravello and Conca dei Marini. This is definitely one of the most beautiful belvederes on the entire coast, unknown to most, if not all foreign tourists!

After visiting the convent you start walking down along a beautiful scenic path down towards Cetara, one of the most charming villages of the Amalfi Coast. You will pass through grass and shrub land dotted with numerous wildflowers. Along the winding footpath you will also see some nice examples of local rural architecture. Towards the end of the walk you will enjoy the most wonderful view of the little fishing village of Cetara. You'll end up in the heart of the village and have the choice to settle right away in your room or you can go for a swim first. At night you have plenty of choices to enjoy a great meal in the village centre.

**Accommodation: Cetara - B&B \*\*\***

*Total walking distance: 14,5 km. Approx. walking time: 5,5 h. Ascent & descent: + 600 m./- 900 m.*

**Day 4 – Into the unknown valleys of the Amalfi Coast**

This morning you will first walk through the old centre of Cetara, one of the most authentic villages of the Amalfi Coast. Then you walk on to the little hamlet of Erchie (optional bus), from where the 'Sentiero dei Monaci', (the 'Path of the Monks' starts. This beautiful panoramic track is a real highlight, a second 'Path of the Gods', but without the crowds. You will enjoy beautiful views of the Amalfi Coast and have many surprising views of the little valleys and bizarre rock formations of this part of the coast – including the so-called Capo d'Orso (Bear Cape), and the 'Uomo a Cavallo' (Man on a Horse!). Halfway the day you'll arrive in the tiny hamlet of Badia, with the stunning church of Santa Maria dell'Olearia. Shortly before arriving at Maiori, you will climb up again from the hamlet of Salicerchie towards the castle of San Nicolo de' Thoro Plano. Your path now follows one of the ancient pilgrim routes leading up from Maiori to the Avvocata Sanctuary. From here you can see into the valley of the Reginna Maior leading up to Tramonti, and you will understand why this castle has been so important for the defence of the coastal area. After heading down to the town centre, you could relax for a bit on Maiori's broad sandy beach, one of the area's finest. From here you are being picked up by your private taxi and brought to Tramonti.

**Accommodation: Tramonti - Agriturismo or Guest House**

*Total walking distance: 11 km. Approx. walking time: 4,5 h. Ascent & descent. +/- 200 m.*

**Day 5 – Roundwalk Tramonti – 'inbetween the mountains'**

Today you start a circular walk right from your hotel, that will give you the opportunity to discover an area relatively unknown to most travellers. Enjoy your breakfast and get ready to experience the pleasure of being a real traveller, in an area where virtually no other hikers go. You will pass through several small rural hamlets, all with their own charm. The area of Tramonti also boasts a production of excellent local wines, made with autochthonous grapes, grown on centuries old grapevines. You will be therefore be walking through impressive ancient vineyards, typical of this area (on request we can arrange a wine tasting for you). And finally you will have the chance to walk an incredibly scenic part of the 'Alta Via dei Monti Lattari', the long distance trail that follows the whole ridge of the Sorrento Peninsula, high above the Amalfi Coast. Last-but-not-least: Tramonti is also famous for being the place where – according to many - the pizza was invented. What is sure, is that the local people still bake their own bread in a wood oven – and the pizzas are simply delicious here.

**Accommodation: Tramonti - Agriturismo or Guest House**

*Total walking distance: 17 km. Approx. walking time: 6 h. Ascent & descent: +/- 500 m. (shorter options available)*





## Day 6 – Down to the Amalfi Coast

Today you have several options for a shorter or longer walk. The longer walk brings you first through several charming hamlets belonging to the Comune of Tramonti, all with their own identity. Then you climb gradually up into the mountains through a beautiful mountain landscape, with great views over the valley of Tramonti and Maiori, on a trail with virtually no other tourists. For the shorter option you first go down into the valley, after which you start climbing up into the mountains. After a beautiful stretch uphill you reach the saddle between the valley of Maiori and that of Minori. Along the ridge you walk to the beautifully located church of San Nicola, a nice spot for a short break. Then you start descending, first through lemon groves and after through a wonderful terraced landscape. You reach Minori, passing through the hamlet of Torre, and with a series of steps you walk down to the village centre. The walk is relatively short so you have ample time to discover the village and possibly visit the remains of the luxurious Roman villa, or go for a swim. In alternative you could opt to walk down to Maiori along the 'Path of the Lemons' and then walk to Minori along the coast. In the evening you can go out and pick a restaurant of your choice.

### **Accommodation: Minori - Hotel \*\*\***

*Total walking distance: 12 km. Approx. walking time: 4 h. Ascent & descent: + 300 m./ - 650 m.*

### **Optional extra day – Up to Ravello**

*This morning you walk from Minori along ancient footpaths and stepped alleys up to Ravello, one of the highlights of the 'classic' Amalfi Coast. You will follow a very scenic path past a number of medieval churches, climbing up to the small hamlet of Torello and then to Ravello itself. When you arrive at Ravello, once described by the French novelist André Gide as being 'closer to the sky than the seashore', you have to visit its two magnificent villas – the superb 11th-century Villa Rufolo, which once was a papal residence and later the home of Wagner, and Villa Cimbrone, a sumptuous 19th-century mansion with fabulous gardens and unequalled views over the Gulf of Salerno. Indeed Ravello's lofty position and sunny, dry climate has made it an appealing place for writers, artists, musicians and travellers. Boccaccio, DH Lawrence and Richard Wagner are among the more notable guests who have succumbed to its spells. Wagner composed parts of his opera 'Parsifal' while staying here. After visiting Ravello you have the choice of several different, but all equally beautiful paths leading down to the medieval town of Amalfi, once a powerful maritime republic and still the crown of the Amalfi Coast. You can opt to follow the Dragone Valley down to Atrani and then climb up again over the headland separating it from Amalfi, or you can choose to first walk to the hamlet of Pontone, with the magnificent Torre dello Ziro watchtower dominating both Atrani and Amalfi from above, before heading down into the centre of Amalfi. From Amalfi you then take a public bus back to Minori.*

### **Accommodation: Minori - Hotel \*\*\***

*Total walking distance: 5 km. Approx. walking time: 3 h. Ascent & descent: + 400 m./ - 50 m.*

## Day 7 – Departure

End of the tour. Return to Naples/Salerno by taxi, boat or bus.



## TOUR DETAILS

### ACCOMMODATION & MEALS

Accommodation is mainly on bed and breakfast basis in 3/4-star accommodations. All rooms have en-suite facilities.

Dinners are included on day 2, Day 4 and day 5. On the other days you have a wide choice of little restaurants. No picnic lunches are included in the tour price. Picnic supplies can be purchased in the villages where you'll be staying or you can ask your accommodation holder to prepare a packed lunch for you.

### UPGRADE/CHANGES IN ACCOMMODATION

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

### INCLUDED

- 6 nights accommodation in BB & HB
- 1 night Hotel\*\*\* in Salerno - BB
- 1 night Hotel\*\*\*\* in Cava dei Tirreni - HB
- 1 night B&B\*\*\* in Cetara - BB
- 2 nights Agriturismo in Tramonti - HB
- 1 night Hotel\*\*\*\* in Minori - BB
- Extensive route notes with description of the route & tourist information
- Maps at 1:25.000 scale or more detailed
- GPS tracks of each walk
- Luggage transfer on day 2 & day 3 & day 4 & day 6
- Private transfers as specified
- 24/7 assistance

### NOT INCLUDED

- Departure taxes & Visas
- Travel Insurance
- Tourist tax - if requested
- Drinks and meals not mentioned in the itinerary
- Optional additional tours or activities

### LEVEL OF DIFFICULTY

**Moderate:** Some difficult walks, which include some longer sections uphill, sometimes on paths with rough surfaces. Most of the trails are well maintained. Parts of the walks can be shortened and some longer options are available.

**Fitness:** High standard of fitness is not necessary but clients should be able to walk for up to 5 hours a day, even in hot and dry conditions. Some shorter and longer options are available.



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## FOOTPATHS & WAYMARKING

**Footpaths:** 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:** 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. In case you don't feel confident a local guide can be provided for some of the trails.

## ARRIVAL & DEPARTURE

**Arrival:** The tour starts in SALERNO. Regular trains run between the town and most major Italian cities (Naples, Rome, Milan).

**Departure:** The tour ends in MINORI. From here you can travel by bus to Salerno again. A taxi transfer from Minori can be arranged on request.

## TOUR VARIATIONS

### EXTRA NIGHTS

It is possible to include extra nights in any of the towns en route. Extra walking or sightseeing options can be provided as indicated in the day-to-day programme.

### EXTENSIONS

*Especially recommended is the 1-day extension in Salerno, which brings you up to the dramatic Arechi castle, in a stunning position high above the Gulf of Salerno, overlooking both the city, the Amalfi Coast and the Cilento National Park.*

It is possible to extend the tour with one or more nights in Amalfi or any other town along the Amalfi Coast. This tour can also be extended with one of our more famous tours in the 'Heart of the Amalfi Coast' (Amalfi, Ravello, Positano & the famous 'Path of the Gods').

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