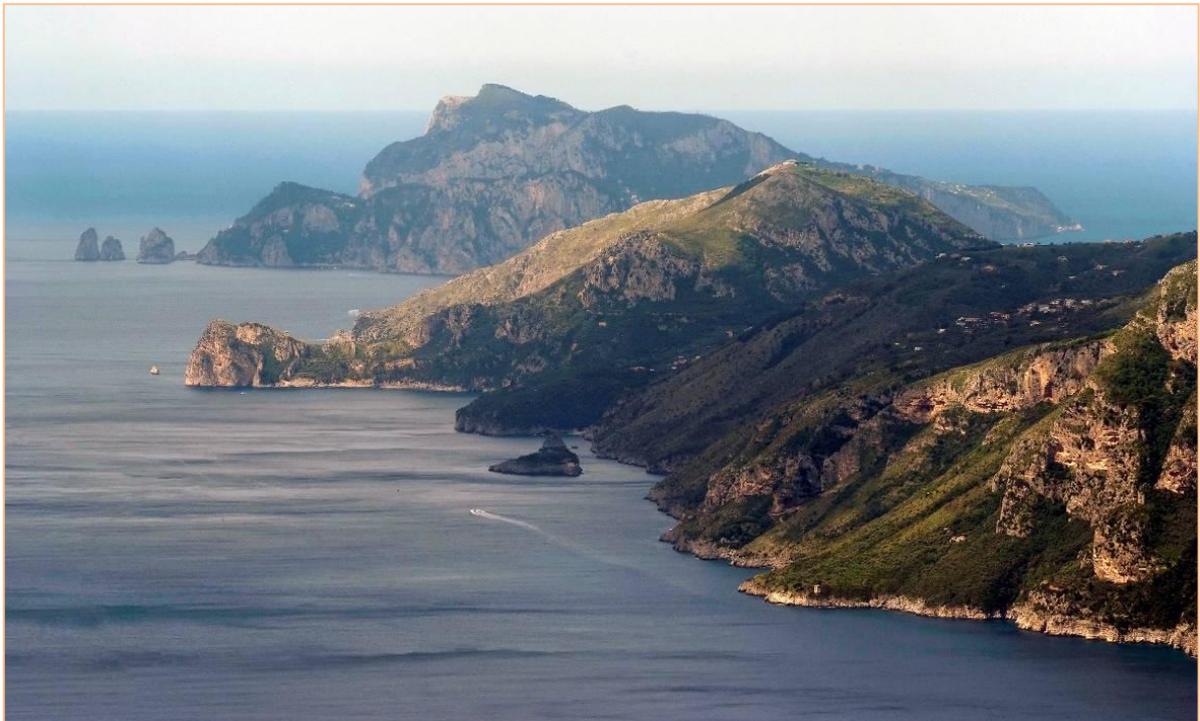




# Charming Amalfi Coast

## with Pompeii & Vesuvius

*Highlights & Hidden Corners of the World's Most Beautiful  
Coastline - from Cava dei Tirreni to Amalfi & Positano*



## TRIP NOTES 2019

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## INTRODUCTION

The Amalfi Coast is probably Italy's most beautiful coastline, with a stunning combination of sea, picturesque coastal towns and mountains, an abundance of both culture and nature. The landscape is immensely varied and surrounded by infinite ever-changing views. It can be typically Mediterranean, intoxicating with its wild perfumed herbs, with myrtle shrubs, thyme, rosemary and mastic trees, or almost alpine with meadows and bare rocks. And cultural heritage abounds! Man has created an incomparable mosaic-terraced landscape. Beautiful little churches, ruins of castles and old farmhouses are found all over the place... The *Costiera Amalfitana* is definitely Europe's most scenic and dramatic stretch of coastline! And the best thing is, everything can be discovered on foot!

There are thousands of footpaths here, some of which are famous, such as the "Sentiero degli Dei" (the "Footpath of the Gods"), or are at least a thousand years old, like the "Maestra dei Villaggi" – the 'main road' of the Republic of Amalfi. But there are unknown trails which are just as beautiful as well! 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.

A large part of this tour is along the coast, and of course it touches all the famous coastal villages which are must-see attractions: Amalfi itself, but also Atrani, Ravello, Praiano and of course the scenic Positano. But you will also walk through real mountainous scenery, past amazing sheer drops, through chestnut forests and attractive countryside, with wonderful terraced lemon groves and vineyards. And you see cultural treasures like rural chapels, ancient farmhouses, old watermills and, every now and then, a herd of goats on your path! Walking in this area lets you enjoy some of the most splendid views on the Amalfi Coast and the Bay of Naples, while immersed in an almost alpine landscape. You will surely enjoy the rural scenery as well, which makes you feel like you're far away from the glamour of some of the fashionable places along the coast.

This tour shows you the paths most guides don't know about and most books don't tell you about! You will discover that the Amalfi Coast has become Italy's most famous coastline with good reason, but also that there are still places where you can be all by 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, some of them just recently restored by the local authorities. Parts of the paths are 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. You are met by a taxi and brought to your beautiful and quiet hotel in the charming hamlet of Corpo di Cava, beautifully located just above a stunning Benedictine Abbey. If you arrive early you can go for a walk into the mountains above Cava dei Tirreni already.

**Hotel \*\*\*\* - Cava dei Tirreni**

### Day 2

Today you'll see two 'highlights' of the area: you'll make a stunning walk to the top of Mt. Vesuvius, may be the world's most famous volcano and you'll visit Pompeii, Italy's most famous archaeological site, situated under the looming mass of the Vesuvius volcano. The walk to the top of Mt. Vesuvius will also bring you into some lesser known, and therefore less crowded areas of the National Park, which makes you feel in a completely different world! You'll walk through the 'Valley of the Giant' and the 'Valley of Hell', impressive lava flows, which separate the actual main crater from Mount Somma, the remaining part of the ancient crater. There are numerous interesting volcanic phenomena to be seen around the crater: lava and ash flows, pumice fields and grotto's. The walk will be culminating in a stroll round the edge of the impressive crater at the top! From here you'll enjoy marvellous views over the whole Bay of Naples, a panorama which embraces the area from Sorrento and Capri, to Ischia and Naples. You then travel down by local bus to the Roman ruins of Pompeii. Here you take your time to visit the extensive excavations and learn about how the Romans lived almost 2000 years ago. After the visit to the archaeological area you can opt for a stroll through 'modern' Pompeii, definitely worth a visit too – the church is one of the main pilgrimage destinations in Italy - before travelling back to your hotel.

**Hotel \*\*\*\* - Cava dei Tirreni**

*Distance: 2 km. Approx. 2 h. walking*

### Day 3

Today's walk will take you straight from your hotel, along one of the most famous pilgrim routes in the area, to the Madonna dell'Avvocata, situated on a spectacularly panoramic balcony high above the Amalfi Coast. From the Benedictine Abbey of Corpo di Cava you first walk up through the golden chestnut woods to the little clearing of Cappella Vecchia or Old Chapel. From here you enjoy a wonderful view over Vietri sul Mare and Salerno to the south, and the ridge of Monte Avvocata to the west. A well-trodden and relatively easy footpath leading through the *maquis* then takes you to the Avvocata Sanctuary. From here you can see as far as Paestum and the mountains of Calabria to the south, while views of the Amalfi Coast reach as far as Ravello and Conca dei Marini. This is definitely one of the most beautiful 'belvederes' of the entire coast, unknown to most, if not all foreign tourists! After visiting the sanctuary you will then start walking down towards Cetara on the Amalfi Coast proper. Here you will pass through grass and shrub land coloured with numerous wildflowers. Along the winding footpath you will also see some nice examples of local rural architecture. Towards the end of the path you will then enjoy the most wonderful view of the little fishing village of Cetara. A short bus ride along the main coastal road then takes you to Amalfi.

**Hotel \*\*\*/\*\*\*\* - Amalfi**

*Distance: 12 km. Approx. 5,5 h. walking*

### Day 4

Today you can either walk or take the local bus to the charming historic village of Ravello, another highlight of the Amalfi Coast. We recommend walking the very scenic first stretch to the beautiful little village of Atrani, with great views of the village centre. Atrani is probably the best-preserved village on the Amalfi Coast, with narrow little streets and a serene village square. Then you can follow the Valle del Dragone, or Valley of the Dragon, up to Ravello. The French novelist André Gide once described this village as being 'closer to the sky than the seashore', and indeed you'll have to climb a number of steps. Ravello is still one of the most exclusive villages on the Amalfi Coast, and boasts two magnificent villas – the superb 11<sup>th</sup>-century Villa Rufolo, once a papal residence and later the home of Wagner, and Villa Cimbrone, a sumptuous 19<sup>th</sup>-century mansion with fabulous gardens and unequalled views over the Gulf of Salerno. It has been sought after by writers, artists, musicians and travellers from Northern Europe over the centuries due to its lofty position and sunny, dry climate. Boccaccio, DH Lawrence and Richard Wagner are among the more notable guests who have succumbed to its spells. You can trace your way back to Amalfi by walking back to the beautiful little village of Atrani through the vineyards



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and lemon groves, or opt for a longer walk through Scala, Minuta and Pontone, possibly visiting the Torre dello Ziro, a medieval watchtower dominating Amalfi and Atrani from above. Either way, the last short stretch to Amalfi is very scenic and has many beautiful viewpoints.

**Hotel \*\*\* /\*\*\*\* - Amalfi**

*Distance: 6 km. Approx. 5 h. walking*

**Day 5**

From Amalfi you walk up to the little village of Pontone, where you have the possibility of visiting the medieval defence system of the Amalfi Republic, located on a narrow ridge. The main point of interest is the marvellous Torre dello Ziro, where you enjoy a dramatic view over both Amalfi and Atrani. Then you walk into the Valle delle Ferriere, one of southern Italy's most beautiful nature reserves. You will see some spectacular scenery, walking on comfortable footpaths underneath the towering cliffs. The path then descends into the Valle dei Mulini, the Valley of the Mills, an almost fairytale landscape with its ruins of some of Europe's most ancient paper mills, dating back to the 11th century. From here a beautiful medieval mule track brings you down to Amalfi, through lemon groves and maquis. You also have the possibility of walking up a bit further into the valley and admiring the impressive waterfalls and abundant nature. The last part of this extra section is a bit harder, steeply uphill.

**Hotel \*\*\* /\*\*\*\* - Amalfi**

*Distance: 7 km. Approx. 4 h. walking*

**Day 6**

Today you walk all the way along the coast towards beautiful Praiano, the 'Heart of the Amalfi Coast', halfway between Amalfi and Positano. From Amalfi you start walking along one of the oldest streets in the area: the so-called 'Via Maestra dei Villaggi', or Highway of the Villages, an old paved mule track dating back to the 9th century. You pass the little villages of Lone and Vettica, before arriving at the imposing monastery of Santa Rosa (there is also the possibility of taking a bus here to avoid walking about 250 m. uphill). The route then descends towards the coast again past some charming churches, beautifully located above the rocky shore. You then descend into the spectacular Fjord of Furore, where a charming little hamlet is nestled in the rocky cliffs. From here you walk up again, past the church of Sant'Elia into the Valley of Praia, and then head to the coastal town of Praiano, with an optional descent to the very picturesque inlet of Marina di Praia, Praiano's little old harbour.

**Hotel\*\*\* – Praiano**

*Distance: 10 km. Approx. 5 h. walking*

**Day 7**

Today you start walking from the picturesque whitewashed alleys of Praiano. Then, along a medieval pilgrim route, you walk uphill towards the monastery of San Domenico, set in stupendous scenery, dominating the coast from its hilltop. Here you can have a little rest before continuing the climb uphill, through spectacular scenery with bizarre rock formations and luxurious vegetation. Shortly after, you reach one of Italy's most famous footpaths, the Sentiero degli Dei ("Footpath of the Gods"). This path really lives up to its name, with gorgeous views of the Amalfi Coast, Capri, and the Cilento. Towers of limestone rocks in a vertiginous setting of yellow and green; the azure sea seems close enough to touch! The path leads through variegated countryside with vineyards, chestnut trees, oak woods, shrubs and broom bushes. Moreover, you can also see some old examples of traditional architecture complete with wooden roofs. Throughout the seasons there is the most wonderful flowering of the local flora, and you can smell many of the aromatic herbs used in Italian cooking, which grow here. Through this unique scenery, with its unrivalled views, you reach the tiny hamlet of Nocelle and shortly after the little village of Montepertuso. After Montepertuso it's only a short walk down to mundane Positano, one of the most charming villages on the coast. You can do this either by bus or on foot, but we recommend the latter because of the grottos and charming little streets of Positano.

**Hotel\*\*\* – Praiano**

*Distance: 8 km. Approx. 5 h. walking*

**Day 8**

After breakfast you return by boat or by bus and train to Naples, and then by shuttle bus to the airport. An extra night in a hotel can be booked upon request.



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## TOUR DETAILS

### ACCOMMODATION & MEALS

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

Only on the first night your evening meal is included (on the premises of the hotel). All other evenings you are free to choose from the wide choice of restaurants in the area. Your accommodation holder can give you good tips. On some occasions you can also choose to eat at the premises of the hotel.

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. On some occasions you have the option of having your lunch in a restaurant along the way.

**Nights 1 & 2:** These nights are spent in a beautifully located, comfortable 4-star hotel in the hamlet of Corpo di Cava, high above the little town of Cava dei Tirreni. From the hotel it is only a short stroll to the millennium-old Benedictine Abbey.

**Nights 3, 4 & 5:** These three nights are spent at Amalfi, the ancient capital of the Amalfi Coast, either in a welcoming and comfortable 3-star hotel, or a beautiful 4-star hotel in the heart of town (or in Atrani). All hotels are centrally located, at walking distance from the sea and all main monuments of the medieval town centre.

**Nights 6 & 7:** The final couple of nights you stay in the little village of Praiano, in a good 3-star hotel with a few nice little beaches at walking distance. For those wanting an extra day's relaxation a longer stay can be arranged.

### ***UPGRADE/CHANGES IN ACCOMMODATION***

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

### LEVEL OF DIFFICULTY

**Moderately easy (2-3):** Mostly easy walks, on well maintained paths, 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 relatively well maintained, but during the season some paths can get overgrown, especially the lesser used paths (*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.



## INCLUSIONS

- 2 nights in Cava dei Tirreni\*\*\*\* - one night HB / one night BB
- 3 nights in Amalfi\*\*\* - BB
- 2 nights in Praiano\*\*\* - 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.
- 24/7 assistance
- Luggage transfer
- Private transfers as specified

## NOT INCLUDED

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

## ARRIVAL & DEPARTURE

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

**Departure:** The tour ends after breakfast in PRAIANO on day 8. A frequent bus service can bring you to either Sorrento or Amalfi/Salerno, where you travel on to your next destination (Naples or Rome can both be easily reached). Taxi services are available to bring you directly to your next destination.

## 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

It is possible to extend the tour with one or more night in Amalfi or any other town along the Amalfi Coast. This tour can also be extended with one of our existing tours in the heart of the Amalfi Coast.

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