

## *Vakantiehuizen/Agriturismo Amalfikust met zwembad*

Italian Residence biedt een scala aan bijzondere agriturismo's, betaalbare vakantiehuizen, eenvoudige budgetvilla's of luxe vrijstaande villa's met privé zwembad in deze regio. Campania en de Amalfikust hebben veel te bieden, o.a. het heerlijke klimaat, zodat het hier vanaf begin april tot ver in oktober goed vertoeven is.



De stad Napels, met zijn prachtige vergezichten over de baai en de Vesuvius, de musea en paleizen en de historische stadswijken met zijn heerlijke restaurants waar je verrukkelijke pizza's kunt eten, is zeker een bezoek waard. Maar vergeet u ook deze plaatsen niet te bezoeken: Pompeii, Sorrento en de andere fraaie plaatsjes aan de Amalfi kust. Een van de mooiste tochtjes is een boottocht naar het romantische Capri en Ischia.

Dit Unesco wereldnatuurgebied met zijn prachtige panorama's en bijzonder fraaie zonsopgangen, strekt zich over 50 km tussen Sorrento en Salerno uit. Een prachtige bochtige weg met schitterende vergezichten slingert langs de kust en langs diverse zeer fraaie kustplaatsjes, zoals o.a. Positano. Na een jarenlange zoektocht door Italië vond ik hier voor u de mooiste privévilla's, agriturismo's, vakantiehuizen en hotels. Alle locaties zijn persoonlijk en zorgvuldig geselecteerd op hun bijzondere ligging en hun authentieke Italiaanse karakter.

Italian Residence is al ruim 15 jaar de meest gespecialiseerde aanbieder van agriturismo's, vakantieappartementen, budget en/of luxe vakantievilla's in Italië.



## Tips en wetenswaardigheden Amalfi kust

De Amalfi kust is een prachtig stukje Italië en vanwege het heerlijke klimaat kunt u hier al vroeg in het seizoen genieten van een heerlijke vakantie. We hebben enkele te bezoeken plaatsen voor u op een rij gezet, echte aanraders voor als u in de buurt bent.

### Ravello

In addition to glorious views of the surrounding wooded valleys and down to the crinkly line of the Amalfi Coast below, Ravello has three key sights: the Duomo (cathedral) and two sumptuous gardens—Villa Rufolo and Villa Cimbrone—open to the public.

#### [Duomo \(Piazza Duomo, tel. + 39 089 857 657\)](#)

Ravello's Romanesque cathedral was built in 1076, the central bronze doors cast in 1099 at Constantinople and featuring disarmingly simple low relief panels of archers, warriors, and Bible scenes.

Inside are a pair of gorgeous 12th-century ambones, or pulpits, carved of marble and carried on the backs of lions. A detail from the other pulpit in the Ravello Duomo. The ambones' panels are inlaid with mosaics of swirling designs, Christian symbols (look for the whale swallowing Jonah, pictured to the right), and fantastic mythical beasts.

In the small, attached museum (adm) are some Renaissance busts, late Imperial cinerary urns, and more medieval carvings and bits of mosaic.

#### [Villa Rufolo \(www.villarufolo.it – dagelijks geopend\)](http://www.villarufolo.it)

Gardens of the Villa Rufolo in Ravello. (Photo by JosefLehmkuhl) The villa itself was started by the powerful Rufolo family in the 11th century and added to for generations in Saracen and Norman styles. The rooms of the restructured central villa are now used for art exhibits.

The surrounding grounds—filled with intimate flowering gardens set into the extensive villa ruins above a spectacular view down the eastern Amalfi Coast—are the backdrop for excellent outdoor concerts.

This is only appropriate, since upon seeing this tropical paradise in 1880, composer Richard Wagner exclaimed "The magical garden of Klingsor has been found!" and, inspired, went on to complete his Parsifal. (To see live music al fresco here, see the "concerts under the stars" section, below.)

#### [Villa Cimbrone \(aan het einde van de Via S. Chiara – dagelijks geopend\)](#)

"The most beautiful place I have ever seen in the world is the landscape of the Belvedere of Villa Cimbrone in a bright winter day, when sky and sea are so vividly blue that it is impossible to distinguish the one from the other" (Gore Vidal).

The parts of the 1904 villa you can explore are full of crypt-like nooks and cloistered crannies.

The grounds are a huge playground of palms, magnificently spreading umbrella pines, ivy-clad walls, hidden flower gardens guarded by statues, panoramic terraces lined with busts, and vertigo-inducing cliff-top vistas from tiny temple-like gazebos.

#### Tips while visiting Ravello

- Concerts under the stars: The gardens, villas, and churches of Ravello are perfect settings for the series of chamber music, orchestra, and soloist concerts that run throughout the year. The Villa Rufolo, in particular, hosts a noted concert series from late March through October under the auspices of the Ravello Concert Society (tel. +39-089-858-149, [www.ravelloarts.org](http://www.ravelloarts.org)) and the April–June Ravello Festival (tel. +39-089-858-422, [www.ravellofestival.com](http://www.ravellofestival.com)). In July especially, they celebrate the music of Richard Wagner (another Ravellophile) with performances by the likes of Plácido Domingo conducted by Zubin Mehta and backed by world-class orchestras from Israel, London, Moscow, etc. Ask at the tourist office for details.
- For more information you can ask details about excursions and visits in the city at the Ravello Tourist Info (via Roma 18bis, Ravello). For questions and more information: +39-089-857-096 or [www.ravellotime.it](http://www.ravellotime.it)

### **Pompeii**

A travel guide to visiting Pompeii, the ancient Roman ghost town buried by Mt. Vesuvius

#### The last days of Pompeii

Though the ancient Oscan city of Pompeii, founded before the 6th century BC, had its ups and downs, by the AD 1st century it was a Roman colony of 20,000 and a thriving, bustling seaport. It occupied a prime stretch of coastline southeast of Neapolis (Naples), just on the other side of that huge mountain called Vesuvius.

After 14 years of hard work, Pompeii was just getting back on its architectural feet following the massive earthquake of AD 63. The columns of the forum had been re-erected, and villa owners had piled lime next to the last walls that needed replastering. They thought the worst was over.

At noon, August 24, AD 79, the peak of Mt. Vesuvius exploded, sending a mottled black-and-white mushroom cloud 12 miles into the air at twice the speed of sound, raining ash and light pumice down on the region. For 12 hours, the sheer force of the eruption kept that cloud aloft, and the lucky one among the Pompeiians fled. The more than 2,000 people whose bodies have been uncovered at Pompeii must have thought the enormous cloud hanging over Vesuvius was just smoke, for they stayed to sit it out. Then, the cloud collapsed, and the horror engulfed the city before anyone could run more than a few feet. Pompeii was buried by a pyroclastic flow, a superfast rush of hot ash and pumice with an undercurrent of rock and burning gasses, all of which came barreling down the mountain like a tidal wave, the force ripping the doors and roofs off houses, fusing metal house keys to skulls, and dismembering human bodies.

"Though our carts were on level ground, they were tossed about in every direction.... The sea appeared to have shrunk, as if withdrawn by the tremors of the earth...and many sea creatures were beached on the sand.

In the other direction loomed a horrible black cloud ripped by sudden bursts of fire, writhing snakelike and revealing sudden flashes larger than lightning. And now came the ashes, but at first sparsely. I turned around. Behind us, an ominous thick smoke, spreading over the earth like a flood, followed us.... [W]e were enveloped in night—not a moonless night or one dimmed by cloud, but the darkness of a sealed room without lights. To be heard were only the shrill cries of women, the wailing of children, the shouting of men. Some were calling to their parents, other to their children, others to their wives.... Some wept for themselves, others for their relations. There were those who, in their very fear of death, invoked it. Many lifted up their hands to the gods, but a great number believed there were no gods, and that this was to be the world's last, eternal night." —Pliny the Younger, describing the panic in Misenum, a town on the far side of the bay from Vesuvius, during the AD 79 eruption.

The 17-year-old Pliny the Younger was across the bay at the time, and he described what he could see of the catastrophe—including "a cloud of unusual size and appearance...like an umbrella pine"—in a letter to the historian Tacitus. His uncle, the famed writer Pliny the Elder, fared worse. When he saw the volcano go, he took some boats to try to evacuate friends from a village on the shore below the mountain. The elder Pliny dictated his impressions to a scribe as they sailed, but the great author succumbed to the poisonous gasses while ashore and suffocated.

### Exploring the Ancient City

Pompeii was not buried entirely; in fact the top floors of many houses poked above the new ground level. But between survivors returning to dig for personal belongings, the inevitable looters, and later farmers plowing their fields over the site, these building tops were shorn off. Within a few generations, incredibly, Pompeii was forgotten. In 1594, the architect Domenico Fontana was building an aqueduct through the area when he struck the ruins of Pompeii quite by accident. Most of the excavations have been carried out since the 18th century.

The archaeological site is now enclosed, and takes a good, full day to explore. At the very least, it takes three to four hours to pop into the major sights. The roads are made of stone slabs, rutted deep with centuries' worth of wagon wheels. At most intersections are crosswalks of raised stepping stones—so citizens wouldn't have to step in the mucky, muddy streets.

Besides the public buildings and mansions I'll highlight below, Pompeii is full of buildings that may be more pedestrian, but are just as fascinating for the insight they offer into daily life in an ancient Roman city. Poke around to find the shops with counters still in place and paintings describing the wares sold, bakeries with millstones and brick ovens in the backyard, even fast-food parlors with deep bowls set into the counters where prepared food were kept hot.

### The top sights in Pompeii

The Forum at Pompeii. A few blocks up from the entrance and you'll stroll into the Forum, the central square of any Roman city. Around the edges you'll see that there was once a two-story colonnade, its 470-foot length oriented so that, ironically, "scenic" Mt. Vesuvius serves as a natural backdrop. At the northern end of the eastern edge is a small room with a countertop embedded with bowl-shape depressions of increasing sizes. The Forum was also a central marketplace, and to forestall arguments between buyer and seller, these were used as the city's standards of measure.

Just past the measuring table is an enclosed building in which you'll see plaster casts of bodies. During the early excavations, archaeologists realized that the ash had packed around dying Pompeians and hardened almost instantly. The bodies decayed, leaving just the skeletons lying in people-shaped air pockets under the ground. Holes were drilled down to a few and plaster was poured in, taking a rough cast of the moment of death. Some people writhe in agony. A dog, chained to a post, turns to bite desperately at his collar. One man sits on the ground, covering his face in grief.

Exit the Forum onto Via dell'Abbondanza, detouring left down Via del Teatro to see the Teatro Grande, a 2nd-century BC theater that could seat 5,000. Under the stage lay a reservoir so that the scena could be flooded for mock naval battles (some suggest the water also helped amplify the acoustics during performances). Nearby on Via Stabiana is the Odeon or Teatro Piccolo, a much smaller theater (seating 1,000) used mainly for concerts. The House of Menander has painted scenes from the Trojan cycle in some rooms, and a floor mosaic of the Nile in the peristyle (the family who lived here were all found together, huddled in one room, killed when the roof caved in on them).

Past the intersection with Via Stabiana, long Via dell'Abbondanza marks the site of the "New Excavations," undertaken since 1911. Many of the houses on both sides of this street retain their second stories, and while those on the north/left side haven't been excavated much beyond the facades, those on the right have and—unlike in much of the older, more famous excavations (north of the Forum; we'll get there in a minute)—as many of the frescoes, mosaics, and statuary as possible have been left in place rather than shipped off to a museum.

Among the houses along this street, be sure you pop into the House of D. Octavius Quartius, with lots of good frescoes and replanted gardens; and the House of the Marine Venus, with a large wall painting of the goddess stretched out on a clamshell. Near the end of the street, turn right to walk through the Great Palestra—a huge open space shaded by umbrella pines where the city's youths went to work out and play sports (many came here seeking shelter from the eruption; their skeletons were found huddled in the corner latrine)—to the Amphitheater. Built in 80 BC, this is the oldest amphitheater in the world, and could hold 12,000 spectators who, according to the records, were just as wont to break into a brawl in the stands as watch the gladiators fighting on the field below.

Return down Via dell'Abbondanza to Via Stabiana. On the northwest corner sit the *Thermae Stabiane*, a series of baths with stuccoed and painted ceilings surviving in some rooms and a few glass caskets with more twisted plaster cast bodies of Pompeii victims. Head up Vico del Lupanare on the other side of these baths to the acute intersection with the overhanging second story, the Lupanar. This brothel left nothing to the imagination. Painted scenes above each of the little cells inside graphically showed potential clients the position in which the whore of that particular room specialized. Until a few decades ago, only male tourists were allowed in to see it.

### Modern Pompei & tips

Down in modern Pompei, you can take an elevator 265 feet up the cathedral bell tower (entry off the church's left aisle and through the gift shop) for a view across the ruins of the nearby archaeological park to Vesuvius, including an excellent bird's-eye view of Pompeii's amphitheater in the foreground. It's open Saturday to Thursday 9am to 1pm and 3:20 to 6pm

(5pm in winter). Continuing north to the heart of the Old Excavations, be sure to stop by the House of the Vettii, one of the most luxurious mansions in town (it belonged to two trading mogul brothers) and in a wonderful state of preservation. Behind a glass shield at the entrance is a painting of a Priapus, a little guy with a grotesquely oversized male member—here shown weighing the appendage on a scale.

Some frescoed chambers—like this one at the Villa dei Misteri—survived the ages intact. This was not meant to be lewd, but rather was a common device believed to ward off evil spirits and thoughts. Painted putti and cherubs dance around the atrium while the rooms are filled with frescoes of mythological scenes and characters. Don't miss the "Sala Dipinta," where a black band around the walls is painted with cherubs engaging in sports and in the various trades in which the Vettii probably had investments.

Though the House of the Faun is huge and famous, most of its treasures were long ago shipped off to Naples' Archaeological Museum, including the Alexander Mosaic and the namesake bronze statue in the atrium's fountain (here replaced by a copy). The House of the Tragic Poet is closed, but between the bars of the gate you can still see the most famous mosaic in Pompeii: a fearsome chained dog with a spiked collar and the epithet Cave Canem ("Beware of the Dog").

The nearby Forum Baths retain ribbed stucco on some ceilings and a strip of tiny telamons along one wall. Walk north along Via Consolare to exit the ruins (hold on to your ticket) and follow the path for five minutes to the suburban Villa dei Misteri (Villa of the Mysteries), which you get into on the same ticket. Built around the 2nd century BC, this villa was converted into a center for the Dionysian cult, and the walls are gorgeously and skillfully painted with life-size figures engaging in the Dionysian Mysteries of an initiate (though these paintings have helped modern scholars guess at the nature of these rites, we still don't know exactly what was involved). The scenes play out against a background of such deep, intense red that the color used is still called "Pompeian red."

### Tips while visiting Pompeii

- Pompeii takes a good, full day to explore. At the very least, it takes three to four hours, minimum, to pop into the major sights (it's a city, remember, so there's a lot of walking to be done).
- The Pompeii archeological site is open daily Apr–Oct 8:30am to 7:30pm, Nov–Mar 8:30am–5pm. The last entry is 90 minutes before closing.
- Visiting both Herculaneum and Pompeii? Admission to each costs €11 and is good for only one day, but you can also buy a combined ticket for both (plus three other ancient sites in the area) for €20 that's valid for three days.
- Be prepared for crowds, especially on weekends (they average 4,700 visitors a day, up to 22,000 people on holidays).
- Bring bottled water, a hat with a brim, and sun block—it's hard to escape the sun at Pompeii, and the dust is everywhere.
- The map the ticket office hands out is pretty good for finding every site in the ruined town, but Pompeii is one place where investing in a nice guidebook full of color photos at the gift shop before you explore is worth your while to get detailed background. The ticket booth at the archaeological site will give you the free map and all you really need to explore Pompeii. There's also a tourist office in modern Pompei at Via Sacra 1 (tel.

+39-081-850-7255; [www.pompeisites.org](http://www.pompeisites.org)), open Monday to Friday 9am to 2:30pm, Saturday and Sunday 9am to 2pm.

- Book a tour: Consider booking a tour from Rome or Naples—either a simple shuttle, or a full guided tour—with our partners at Viator.com or Context Travel.
- Grab an audioguide at the entrance for €6.50 (two can share one for €10). There's even a kiddie version written for youngsters (at last check it cost €4). With these, you can either follow one of several set itineraries, or just use it on a sights by sight basis as you wander through the ghost city, punching up the background info on just the bits that interest you.
- If you have a large family or small group, you may want to splurge on hiring a registered guide. Groups of 8–25 people pay around €100 (2008 prices). I recommend Gaetano Manfredi ([www.pompeitourguide.com](http://www.pompeitourguide.com); [gaetanoguide@hotmail.it](mailto:gaetanoguide@hotmail.it) or [3387255620@tim.it](mailto:3387255620@tim.it)) —though he's in high demand, and actually now has imposters posing as him (odd form of flattery). Call him directly at tel. +39-081-863-9816 (though it's easier to reach him on his cell phone: tel. +39-338-725-5620).
- Traveling to Pompeii en route elsewhere? The bar in the train station will let you leave your luggage for a small fee until 6pm. From Naples, take the half-hourly private Circumvesuviana train toward Sorrento and get off at "Pompei Scavi-Villa dei Misteri" (27–40 min.). En route, this train passes through Ercolano (17 min.). (Note: There are four Circumvesuviana lines and a bit of confusion: one of the two lines headed to Sarno diverges just before the site and also features a stop called "Pompei," but this is for the modern town, not the archaeological site.)
- Don't want to bother, or simply want to take a Pompeii day trip from Rome? Look into taking a direct shuttle, or go with a group bus tour through Viator ([www.viator.com](http://www.viator.com))—which offers both a Pompeii-and-Naples day trip from Rome as well as a popular Pompeii-Amalfi Coast trip—or some outfit like Enjoy Rome ([www.enjoyrome.com](http://www.enjoyrome.com)) or Green Line ([www.greenlinetours.com](http://www.greenlinetours.com)). It'll take all day and include lunch. Expect to leave early (around between 6:30 and 7:30am) and not be back in Rome until between 7pm and 9:30pm.

### Restaurant bij Pompeii

- For a quick lunch, on either side of the site entrance you'll be wooed by a phalanx of orange-wielding panino stand owners trying to sell you an overpriced spremuta (fresh-squeezed juice) or soggy sandwich. Actually, the food truck parked directly across from the ruins' entrance is the best of the lot, offering huge panini stuffed with tasty fresh ingredients plus a drink for under \$15.
- **Zi Caterina** (Via Roma 20, tel. 081-850-7447, or 081-863-1263. [www.zicaterinapompei.it](http://www.zicaterinapompei.it). Closed Tuesday). Among the countless glorified pizza joints with polyglot menus on modern Pompeii's main drag, Zi Caterina stands out for its solid cooking and reasonable prices. Not that it's not still touristy—anything near the ruins in Pompeii is guaranteed that—just that it's a cut above the rest. The cavernous single room, antiques with lots of wood, can get noisy as it fills up and the strolling troubadour starts strumming his guitar. The delicious risotto alla pescatora is heavily laden with shellfish, calamari, and shrimp, and the gnocchi alla sorrentina is also good. Secondi tend to be fishy as well, with a beach platter saute di frutti di mare (clams, oysters, and mussels) or baccalà (dried salt cod), but landlubbers can always order coniglio alla cacciatora (rabbit stewed with tomatoes and mushrooms).

## Capri

Capri is an island of seduction. It is four square miles of sharp lava blanketed with lush green foliage, white cube houses, and walls spilling over with bougainvillea. This Eden of oleander and jasmine is surrounded sparkling deep blue and green waters and eerily lit sea grottoes. Capri's sheer physical beauty and dreamy laid-back lifestyle has attracted sun-seekers for millennia, from Roman emperors to latter day hedonists.

### How to pronounce Capri

The island in Italy is pronounced CAH-pree, with the stress on the first syllable. Those modish tight pants that stop at mid-calf with a tiny flare and slit? You can call those cah-PREES if you want—just don't say the island's name that way.

Homer certainly chose his spot well when he designated this island to be the home of the mythical Sirens, beautiful but monstrous flesh-eating women who lived on the offshore rocks and sang an irresistible song to lure ancient sailors to their doom.

Capri's allure today is still almost as strong, though the only doom you're likely to face these days is financial (case in point: the famed Blue Grotto has among the highest admissions of any sight in Italy).

### Spend the night on Capri

The vest pocket-sized Piazzetta square, social hub of Capri town. Most visitors pop over on the ferry in the morning, fork over the euros for a quick row through the Blue Grotto, gawk at the obscene prices in Capri boutiques, and if they're lucky hike out to explore the ruins of Tiberius' Villa. Capri by day, especially in summer, experiences a tourist crush that veritably sucks the magic right out of the island. If at all possible, spend the night.

As the day-trippers leave on the 5pm ferry, the cloying sounds and scents of Capri creep out of hiding along with the local population. They reclaim the island, restoring some of its Mediterranean mystery and a great deal of its charm and seductiveness. Take your extra day to visit the mountainside village of Anacapri, hike the undeveloped side of the island, or ride the chairlift up Monte Solaro for a panoramic sweep of the Bay.

### The lay of the land on Capri

Most people arrive on Capri at Marina Grande, the busy, touristy main port. A bus or funicular from here takes you up to Capri, the main town—which, to avoid confusion, I'll refer to as "Capri Town"—and home to most of the boutique shopping, posh hotels, chichi nightlife, and Beautiful People (Tom Cruise, Nicole Kidman, and Julia Roberts all visited just while I was on the island researching this—not kidding). The center of Capri Town is Piazza Umberto I, called by everyone the Piazzetta. Out the other side of Capri Town is Marina Piccola, a smaller yachting port consisting of several restaurant/beach establishments.

Capri and the ports occupy the narrowest part of the island, from which a mountain rises in either direction. Halfway up the larger of these, Monte Solaro, sits the village of Anacapri, Capri town's historic rival but today the cooler, calmer, cheaper, and slightly less crowded and developed of the two towns—if any of village life survives on this touristy island, it's in Anacapri.



### Tips while visiting Capri

- Planning your time: As I said above, though you could spend only an hour or three on Capri (and many thousands of tourists per year do), it really deserves an overnight stay. Spend two nights and you can actually feel like you're having a bit of vacation—rather than just making your way to the island one day, then away from it the next. More than three days, though, and you'll likely start to get bored.
- Capri Visitor Information: If you pop into the little Capri tourist office along the right side of the ferry dock at Marina Grande (tel. +39-081-837-0634), there's no real need to visit the similarly tiny offices in Capri—Piazza Umberto I 1, open Monday to Saturday 8:30am to 8:30pm, Sunday 9am to 1pm and 2:30 to 6pm (tel. +39-081-837-0686)—or in Anacapri, Via G. Orlando 19a (just off Piazza Vittoria), open Monday to Saturday 9am to 3pm (tel. +39-081-837-1524).
- The free map they all hand out is fine for most visits, but if you plan on a lot of hiking and exploring, you'll want to buy the more detailed map; it's worth the investment.
- The Capri tourist office operates a very useful website at [www.capritourism.com](http://www.capritourism.com). Also useful is the Anacapri comune's website section on tourism: [www.comunedianacapri.it/it/turismo](http://www.comunedianacapri.it/it/turismo). Also handy: the private sites at [www.capri.net](http://www.capri.net) and [www.capri.it](http://www.capri.it).
- Luggage storage on Capri: If, however, you're just over to Capri for the day and want a place to leave your bags—or perhaps you are, say, taking the ferry here from Naples to spend the day then take another boat on to Sorrento—there are two luggage deposit offices.
- Festivals: The festival of Capri's patron saint San Costanzo traditionally opens with an all-out procession behind a silver reliquary bust of the saint (people stand on their balconies and strew flower petals on the bust as it passes) on May 14, with a repeat procession from Marina Grande up to Capri on May 16 (this date may vary), and there are concerts and other community-sponsored events all week.
- Anacapri throws its own version to honor St. Antonio di Padova on June 13.
- The first week of January, folklore groups perform on the main piazzas of Capri and Anacapri.
- The Villa Axel Munthe hosts free "sunset concerts" June to August Fridays at 7:45pm (tel. +39-081-764-0737).

### **Amalfi coast**

To get anywhere in this region, you have to go through Naples—the only city in Italy where even Italians fear to drive. It would be a mistake to tackle the Amalfi Coast by car as well.

Good thing there's an extensive public transport system. You can travel by bus, by ferry, by private transport (car service), or take a private car tour of the coast, or a coastal cruise. If you want to use the bus (probably the most popular way to go), first you have to get to Sorrento.

### Getting to the Amalfi Coast from Naples

Follow signs for the "Circumvesuviana" regional commuter line, which runs underneath Naples' train station. Your first order of business is to get from Naples to Sorrento, the gateway to the Amalfi Coast.

If you're arriving in Naples by rail, the Napoli Centrale station is where most trains arrive. From here, you have two choices:

1) Crossing the vast (and pickpocket-infested) piazza outside the station to the far side and catching the (pickpocket-prone) no. 1 tram down to the confusing Molo Beverello docks for a ferry to Capri or Sorrento and the coast (this is not too hard to do...provided you've done it before; not advisable for newbies); or

2) The twice-hourly Circumvesuviana train (tel. +39-081-772-2444, [www.vesuviana.it](http://www.vesuviana.it)), a clattering old suburban rail line out to Sorrento (1 hr. 10 min., €3.20), from which it is far simpler to catch buses and ferries onward.

However, finding the Circumvesuviana, which runs underneath Napoli Centrale train station, is a bit tricky.

### [From the airport to Sorrento](#)

If you're arriving by air, the cheapest (€ 6,-) and easiest way to get from the Naples airport to Sorrento is to take the Curreri bus service (tel. +39-081-801-5420), which leaves six times daily from 9am to 7pm, makes several stops along the way, and arrives at Sorrento in an hour. Head toward the train station's main exit, but just before you get there, look to the left for stairs leading down. Follow "Circumvesuviana" signs, but partway along the hall stop at the ticket windows on your left to purchase your tickets.

Note: Several different commuter lines will use the same platform, so ask around to be sure the train pulling in is bound for Sorrento before stepping on board. (Over the years, I've probably stopped at least 50 fellow tourists from getting on the wrong train—and those were just the people standing next to me on the platform.)

Beware of pickpockets every step of the way (the Naples train station is the black hole of Italian pickpockets, and they love to work the tourist-packed Circumvesuviana train as well).

Book a tour: Consider booking a tour from Rome or Naples with our partners at Viator.com:

- Private Tour: Sorrento, Positano, Amalfi and Ravello Day Trip from Naples
- Pompeii and Amalfi Coast Small Group Day Trip from Rome

### [Getting to the Amalfi Coast from Sorrento](#)

Our partner, Viator, offers private transfers from the Naples airport to various Amalfi Coast destinations (for about \$26–\$32), as well as a private day all-day tour of the coast (for about \$60):

- Private transfer to Sorrento
  - Private transfer to Amalfi
  - Private transfer to Positano
  - Private transfer to Ravello
  - Private tour of Sorrento, Positano, Amalfi, and Ravello from Naples
- To get to Amalfi, Praiano, or Positano, you'll need to head to the south side of Sorrento's peninsula along the undulating Amalfi Drive, otherwise known by its official handle, the SS163.

This white-knuckle thrill ride is one of Italy's greatest wonders, 30 miles of narrow, S-curve roadway strung halfway up a cliff with the waves crashing below, green slopes all around, medieval pirate watchtowers on the headlands, and colorful villages tucked into the coves.

The last thing you want to do is deprive yourself of gawking at every postcard-perfect curve by driving this route yourself.

### Ferries on the Amalfi Coast

A Metro del Mare ferry stops at Positano on the Amalfi Coast. Since the ride back hugs the cliff and not the drop-dead views, a fast ferry ([www.metrodelmare.com](http://www.metrodelmare.com)) makes more sense—especially if you find you can't stomach the twisting bus ride. Ferry frequency varies with the season, but there are roughly six daily between Amalfi and Positano (20 min., €6), four daily between Amalfi and Sorrento (1 hr., €7), and five daily between Amalfi and Naples (1 1/2–2 hr., €10). Some Metro del Mare lines leave from (or arrive at) Naples' Molo Beverello docks, others the Mergellina docks in Naples.

There are three other ferry companies serving the Naples Bay area and surrounding region: [www.caremar.it](http://www.caremar.it), [www.consorziolmp.it](http://www.consorziolmp.it) and [www.alilauro.it](http://www.alilauro.it). Since you probably don't care which company you use (you just want a convenient departure time at the lowest ticket price), check many at once using the aggregator site [www.traghetti.com](http://www.traghetti.com).

### A private tour of the Amalfi Coast

Explore the famous Amalfi Coast with your own English-speaking driver to chauffeur you from town to town on this private, full-day excursion from Naples (pick up at your hotel, the Naples train station, or the cruise port at 9:15am).

A standard tour includes visits to Sorrento, Positano, Amalfi and Ravello—though, since it's a private tour, you can customize it a bit with your driver. This eight-hour tour costs about \$60 with just a driver, or \$97 with a driver and a private tour guide.

### Amalfi history

Amalfi, a tiny coastal town that, believe it or not, was once Western Europe's gateway to the wider world. The whitewashed streets of the once-great maritime port of Amalfi are full of history, recalling a time in the Middle Ages when it rivaled Genoa, Pisa, and Venice as a trading behemoth. Most modern visitors look at this little fishing town by the sea and wonder how it ever could have laid claim to such fame, since cities like Venice and Genoa are clearly much larger. There's a reason for that. Amalfi used to be much, much bigger.

Amalfi's connections with the Orient stuffed its coffers with trade goods and made it the gateway to Europe for such Arab innovations as paper, coffee, carpets, and the compass—though Amalfi (all historical evidence to the contrary) still proudly claims they themselves invented that last one. They've even erected a statue in the middle of the piazza at the port of hometown boy Flavio Gioia said to have fabricated the first compass. (Patently untrue; he might have popularized it, but the compass was undoubtedly an Arab invention, introduced to the West by Arab sailors—conceivably, yes, via the busy port of Amalfi.)

Amalfi again entered history when a local monk, backed by Amalfitani merchants, founded a hospital in Jerusalem along with a benevolent order that later became known as the Knights of Malta—today the only surviving order of knights from the Crusader age.

At its height, Amalfi had a population of 70,000 and lorded it over the Tyrrhenian Sea. Then the troubles began. The Normans gave the town a whooping in 1131, and soon after Pisa swept in to trounce its rival twice. The final blow came in 1343, when a one-two combination of tidal waves and earthquakes slumped much of the grand city into the sea, erasing most of the city from existence and decimating the population. And I do mean "decimating."

That's an oft misused word. "Decimating" means, literally, the act of reducing to one-tenth the previous size. When an army of 1,000 sets out to battle and only 100 soldiers return, they have been "decimated." Well, Amalfi had nearly 70,000 inhabitants before the earthquake and tidal wave. Ever since, it has struggled to maintain a population of 6,000.

Amalfi is now a much reduced little resort town of 6,000 inhabitants, but left over from its glory days are a spectacular Duomo and the Tavole Amalfitane, the western world's first maritime code, a set of laws that continued to rule trade and the sea until 1570.

After you've ogled the Duomo while sipping cappuccino from a strategic cafe in the piazza, wander up the main drag Via Lorenzo di Amalfi into the Valle dei Mulini to watch the last paper-maker at work in his shop, and on your way back down detour off the main road to explore the marvelous maze of whitewashed tunnels and alleyways that make up the North African-style casbah of Amalfi's back streets.

#### Tips while visiting Amalfi

- Amalfi (the town) is the perfect spot to overnight on the Amalfi Coast. The cathedral is the only real "sight" of note, and can be knocked off in 20 minutes, but it is also one of the few noteworthy "sights" along the entire coast—plus the secondary sights are interesting, and the town is just large enough to keep the feeling that there's a bit of local life beyond the tourism, making it a joy to wander (the others—Positano and Ravello especially, may be more postcard-quaint and pretty, but Amalfi feels more real). Add to that the fact that (a) this is the coast's main town with the largest share of tourist facilities (hotels, restaurants, etc.), and (b) this is where you have to switch buses anyway, Amalfi makes for a convenient spot to spend the night.
- The Amalfi tourist office is at Via delle Repubbliche Marinare/Corso Roma 19—standing in the main harborfront square, Piazza Flavio Gioia, with your back to the sea, head right up the main coastal road 100 yards or so; it's on the left, hidden at the back left corner of a lovely little interior courtyard (tel. +39-089-871-107, [www.amalfitouristoffice.it](http://www.amalfitouristoffice.it)).
- Amalfi town is the turnstile for coastal public transportation. If you're traveling the Amalfi Coast by bus, you always have to get off in Amalfi at the main harborfront Piazza F. Gioia and switch to another bus to continue on, as this is the central terminus for buses from Sorrento and Positano to the west/north, Ravello up in the hills, and Vietri and Salerno to the east/south. If you're driving, there's public parking lot by the port.  
Hint: During regular hours (10am–6:45pm) the cathedral closes its main doors and you can only enter through the Cloisters of Paradise, and therefore must pay, but you can see

the Duomo for free (though not the adjacent cloisters and small museum) if you come to mass at 9am or after 6:45pm.

- Tourist information Sorrento: Via L. de Maio 35 (inside the Circolo dei Forestieri club, just down from Piazza S. Antonio) - tel. +39-081-807-4033 - [www.sorrentotourism.com](http://www.sorrentotourism.com).
- A private tour of Sorrento, Positano, Amalfi and Ravello can be booked at [www.viator.com](http://www.viator.com).

### **Glutenvrij dieet in Italië**

Mag u geen gluten en gaat u op vakantie in Italië? Als u op onderstaande link drukt vindt u allerlei goed tips die u kunt gebruiken tijdens uw vakantie.

[http://www.glutenvrij.nl/uploaded/FILES/03\\_NCVvakantie/2.04%20Italie\\_info.pdf](http://www.glutenvrij.nl/uploaded/FILES/03_NCVvakantie/2.04%20Italie_info.pdf)

## Italiaanse taal en hulpzinnen

Hieronder vindt u een lijst met Italiaanse zinnen die uw verblijf mogelijk vergemakkelijken. De meeste eigenaren spreken namelijk uitsluitend Italiaans. Mocht u taalproblemen met de eigenaar hebben dan kunt u zich wenden tot de Engelstalige agent ter plaatse. Dit nummer kunt u vinden op uw voucher. Lukt dat ook niet, dan kunt u Italian Residence bellen.

1. Goedemorgen, goedemiddag, goedenavond.  
**Buongiorno, buona sera, buona sera.**
2. Wij verwachten wat later aan te komen.  
**Aspettiamo di arrivare più tardi.**
3. Wij zitten momenteel in een file.  
**Siamo attualmente in un ingorgo /coda.**
4. Kunt u mij de weg naar.... wijzen, Links, rechts?  
**Mi può mostrare la strada per ...., sinistra, a destra?**
5. Hoe laat kunt u hier zijn?  
**A che ora sei qui?**
6. Alstublieft dit is de voucher van het reisbureau  
**Per favore questo è il voucher dell'agenzia di viaggi**
7. Het huis is vies kunt u het huis opnieuw schoonmaken?  
**La casa è sporca si può pulire la casa di nuovo?**
8. Dit is de borg voor het vakantiehuis  
**Questo è il deposito per la casa vacanza**
9. Kunt u mij de borg terug betalen van het vakantiehuis?  
**Puoi pagarmi il deposito di ritorno?**
10. Hoe laat kunt u hier zijn voor de sleuteloverdracht en teruggave van de borg?  
**A che ora siete qui per la consegna delle chiavi e restituzione del deposito?**
11. Tot hoe laat is de supermarkt open?  
**Fino a che ora è il supermercato aperto?**
12. Waar is de dichtst bijzijnde supermarkt, winkels, restaurant, dokter, ziekenhuis?  
**Dove si trova il più vicino supermercato, negozi, ristoranti, medico, ospedale?**
13. Kunt u mij aangeven hoe de oven, magnetron, tv, werken?  
**Prego di dirmi come d'usare,il forno, microonde, tv, lavo?**
14. Is het gas aangesloten voor het gasfornuis?  
**È collegato la stufa a gas?**
15. Is het warm water aangesloten?  
**È l'acqua calda collegato?**
16. Is de elektra aangesloten?  
**È l'energia elettrica collegati?**
17. Er is een lamp kapot, kunt u deze vervangen?  
**E rotta una lampadina, si può sostituire?**

18. De oven, tv, magnetron, ijskast, is kapot kunt u deze repareren?  
**Il frigorifero, forno, tv, microonde,, è rotto si può riparare?**
19. Kunt u vandaag het zwembad schoonmaken?  
**Riesci a pulire la piscina oggi?**
20. Kunt u het beddengoed vervangen?  
**Potete sostituire la biancheria da letto?**
21. Kunt u de handdoeken vervangen?  
**Potete sostituire gli asciugamani?**
22. Hoeveel kost een extra set beddengoed?  
**Quanto costa un extra set di biancheria?**
23. Wordt het beddengoed vervangen na een week?  
**Le lenzuola vengono cambiate dopo una settimana?**
24. Graag wat extra kopjes, borden, glazen, messen,vorken, lepels  
**Per piacere qualcosa in più tazze, piatti, bicchieri, coltelli, forchette, cucchiai**
25. Ik mis stoelen, tafel, ligbedden voor het zwembad  
**Mi mancano sedie, tavolo, sedie per la piscina**
26. Hartelijk dank voor uw hulp  
**Grazie per il vostro aiuto**
27. Ik spreek geen Italiaans spreekt u een andere taal, of kunt u iemand halen die ons wel verstaat?  
**Non parlo italiano si parla un'altra lingua, o puoi scegliere qualcuno che ci capisce bene?**
28. Wij willen graag een babybed, babystoel hebben, kunt u hiervoor zorgen?  
**Per favore, è possibile inserire un lettino baby, seggioloni?**

