

### Italy: THE AMALFI COAST

Tour code: JAM

Revised: November 09

Take a spring or early summer and autumn walk in the Mezzogiorno – “The land of the midday sun” - along Italy’s stunning Amalfi Coast. A land where the mountains, marquis pastures and villages meet the sea. A place where you could be strolling on a rugged trail for one moment and then in the next be winding down through a vineyard or citrus grove then through a pleasant village towards the blue waters of the Mediterranean, gelati in hand. The region is a deeply romantic place; the golden light making the cliffs glow creamy gold, while the waters below graduate into an aquamarine haze. Then there are the greens of the cliff tops being speckled with the spring flowers and herbs of the Mediterranean “Macchia” shrubland. The towns, villages and towers that cling to the cliffs, can be a riotous mix of vibrant colours and tempered pastel shades. There is so much history, the Greeks settled here in the eighth century B.C. and looking down you can almost imagine the Argonauts rowing by enroute to tackle some Titan.

We walk through this spectacular region using the extensive web of footpaths and mule tracks that thread along the cliffs and a wealth of natural and cultural treasures can be reached relatively easily. We pass close to beautiful monasteries, caves and ancient farmhouses, visit nature reserves and ruins of paper mills, whilst enjoying spectacular views during all the walks.

We also walk through the historic towns of Amalfi, Atrani, Ravello, Praiano and Positano, all little pearls set in a fantastic landscape. You could extend your stay with a number of walks on the “Finis Terrae” (Land’s End) of the Sorrentine Peninsula, the marine nature reserve of Punta Campanella, and on the famous island of Capri, of which we will show you the unknown parts.



#### Travel Information

**Travel:** Nearest airport: Naples. From the UK we use scheduled services from London Gatwick to Naples on British Airways. But if flying from the U.K you could take advantage of cheaper Easyjet services from Stansted. You need to book these yourself, and bear in mind that with the budget airlines, services and itineraries can change at short notice.

**Arrival:** Taxi direct to Amalfi from the airport can be organized for around Euro 130 if you are short of time (for up to 4 passengers). But there is a regular bus service from the airport to Sorrento from where you can catch buses to Amalfi or taxis from the airport to Naples Central Railway station from where you take the train to Salerno, approximately 1 hour. From there a ferry may be taken in season up the coast for 30 minutes to Amalfi or there is a regular bus service is running along the beautiful coast taking approx 1 hour. The hotel is close to the ferry point and the bus terminal.

**End of Tour:** 50-minute bus journey to Sorrento followed by 1-hour train journey back to Naples. This journey can be broken to visit Pompeii, which is ‘en route’. If you are in a

hurry, a taxi can also be organized for you for about 130E

**Season:** Any date January – November. Mid July and the whole of August is just too hot and too busy so only book this period if you have no other choice and book early.

#### Level of Difficulty

**Grade: Moderate**

This tour is suitable for those who have had some experience of walking and are in good general physical condition. There are lots of ascents and descents on stepped trails, although most days are not too long, but some people will find this tiring in warm weather. Please note you can expect to walk in high temperatures in late June, July and September.

#### Waymarking

Only a very small part of the route is waymarked: elsewhere it is necessary to follow the route descriptions provided together with the maps.

## General Information

**Baths:** it is not normal for your room to have a bath, the main reason being that it takes up a lot of space, some hotels/guesthouses may have a separate room in the house where a bath is available to guests, but in the main it is showers.

**Breakfast:** in countries such as Italy usually consist of coffee and croissant, sometimes, bread rolls, yoghurts, ham and cheese as well. If you want more for breakfast then we would suggest you purchase some food the night before. It is important for you to tell us if you have any dietary requirements when you book your holiday so that we can inform everyone that you are staying with.

**Single Supplements:** are payable on most of our tours. The single supplement guarantees the privacy of your own room, however, rooms can at times be small and in some places may not enjoy the same facilities as double/twin rooms.

**Language:** that you will not necessarily come across people speaking English. Remember you have left home to find things different bring a phrase book, try to learn a bit of Italian!

**Luggage:** When staying in hotels, sometimes your luggage may have been taken to your room awaiting your arrival. However don't be surprised if your luggage is waiting for you to take it up to your room please politely ask someone if you need assistance.

## Accommodation & Meals

Accommodation is on a bed and breakfast basis in 3 or 4 star hotels and all rooms have ensuite facilities. You will be free to organize your evening meal from the wide choice of restaurants in the area. No picnic lunches are included in the tour, but these can be prepared for you on request, for an extra charge, at your overnight accommodation or materials for picnics can be purchased in the villages where you stay.

**Nights 1, 2 & 3:** These are spent at Amalfi, the ancient capital of the Amalfi Coast, in a welcoming and comfortable 3 star hotel, centrally located, within walking distance of all the main monuments of the medieval town centre, and close to the bus and boat services.

**Night 4 & 5:** We stay in the little town of Praiano, which has a few nice little beaches in natural inlets. For those who want to relax a day longer, this is a great spot. We use several accommodations here, but our usual one has great sea views above the old coastal watchtower and marina. 3 star hotel.

**Nights 6 & 7:** Your last two nights are spent in the lively village of Positano, with its characteristic vertically stacked houses clinging to the edge of the mountains. Positano's charming little streets are a must. 4 star hotel.

**Optional extension: Nights 8,9,10:** If you book the extended tour, the last three nights are spent in a 3 \* hotel in Sorrento. **Please note that there is a baggage transfer included between Positano and Sorrento (for those on the 11 day tour), you however will need to make use of local (public bus or ferry) transport or take a taxi as the vehicle moving your luggage is not licensed for passengers.**

## Outline Itinerary

**Day 1:** Arrival in Amalfi. Short visit to the town centre and maybe a swim to wash off the tiredness of the journey. Visit St. Andrew's Cathedral, which claims to also be his resting place, and the interesting Arabesque cloister.

**Day 2:** The first part of the walk today takes us into the "Valle dei Mulini", the valley of the watermills, with its ruins of Europe's most ancient paper factories, dating back to the 11<sup>th</sup> century. The path then takes us up to the little village of Pontone and the Torre dello Zirro, which is a marvellous picnic area, with spectacular views of Amalfi to one side and the Atrani to the other side. From here it's about an hour's walk to Ravello, another highlight of the Amalfi Coast. Then along the Dragone valley we walk down to Amalfi, passing through the beautiful town of Atrani, with the chance to look around the narrow white little streets of the town centre. The last short stretch to Amalfi is very scenic and has beautiful viewpoints of the city centre.

**Distance: 11km approx, 5 hours walking. Ascent/ Descent: 640 metres approx**

**Day 3:** Short transfer by bus to Scala (or optional strenuous - steep walk). From Scala we walk into the Valle delle Ferriere, one of southern Italy's most beautiful nature reserves. We see some spectacular scenery, walking over comfortable footpaths underneath the towering cliffs, and passing close to some little waterfalls. The path then gradually descends through the forest towards the little village of Pogerola. From here a beautiful medieval stepped mule track curves down to Amalfi, amidst lemon groves and marquis.

**Distance: 10km approx 5 hours walking. Ascent: 300 m / Descent: 550 m approx.**

**Day 4:** From Amalfi we start walking along one of the oldest streets of the area the "Maestra dei villaggi", or highway of the villages, an old paved mule track dating back to the 9<sup>th</sup> century. We pass the little villages of Lone and Vettica, before arriving at the imposing monastery of Santa Rosa (there is also the possibility to take a bus to here to avoid the rest of the walk). The route descends to the coast again passing some charming churches beautifully located above the rocky shore. We then descend steeply to the spectacular fjord of Furore and then ascend above this natural inlet. From here we walk past the church of Sant'Elia into the Valley of Praia, and then into the coastal town Praiano, with an optional descent to the very picturesque inlet of Marina di Praia, the old little harbour of Praiano. Praiano is spread out over about 3 km with upper and lower parts.

**Distance 10 km - 5 hours or 13km - 5.5 hours walking, depending on where you are staying in the town. Ascent / Descent: Approx: 820 metres.**

**Day 5:** We walk from our hotel through the streets of Praiano uphill towards the little church of San Luca, the old heart of Praiano. From here on an easy path above the village, we walk into the Valley of Praia, a beautiful green valley with many vineyards clinging to the cliffs. We then climb up to the caves of Santa Barbara; another short section uphill brings us to the beginning of the famous "Sentiero degli Dei" (Footpath of the Gods), a walk with unrivalled views. After a very panoramic stretch with views as far as the island of Capri, we start the descent to Praiano, passing over centuries old steps.

**Distance: 11km - 5 hours walking. Ascent / Descent: 660m approx.**

**Day 6:** Along an old pilgrims' path, with all the Stations of the Cross, we walk uphill towards the monastery of San Domenico, set in stupendous scenery, dominating the coast from its hilltop. Here we can take a little rest before going uphill for another stretch, through spectacular scenery with bizarre rock formations and luxurious vegetation, We then

follow the last stretch of the “Footpath of Gods”, which really lives up to its name, through unique scenery to the hamlet of Nocelle. Passing another attractive valley we arrive in the little village of Montepertuso. After Montepertuso it's only a short walk down to Positano itself, one of the most charming villages of the coast.

**9km approx 4.5 hours walking Ascent / descents: 645m approx**

**Day 7:** We take the local bus up to Montepertuso, where we start the walk all around the valley of Positano. Following ancient footpaths through the forest and along marvelous viewpoints we climb towards Santa Maria al Castello, the old fortress defending the narrow valley between the Amalfi and Sorrentine side of the peninsula. From here we oversee both of the Gulf of Salerno and the Gulf of Naples. Through a nice wooded area in a park like landscape we then take an easy trail to the Caserna Forestale, the foresters' house. The walk continues through the forest and with a number of zigzags descends down to Montepertuso. Along another medieval mule track we then descend down to Positano.

**Distance: 11km – 4.5 hours walking. Ascent / descent: 450 m.**

**Day 8:** After Breakfast, return to Naples by bus and train, or taxi for flight.

## SORRENTO EXTENSION

**Please note that there is a baggage transfer included between Positano and Sorrento (for those on the 11 day tour), you however will need to make use of local (public bus or ferry) transport or take a taxi as the vehicle moving your luggage is not licensed for passengers.**

**(Euro 3 bus per person, Euro 15 ferry per person (limited season), or take a taxi Euro 60 for up to four people). These are all approx prices. Remember when traveling on a Sunday taxis are more expensive.**

**Day 8: Positano – Sorrento.** Today you first travel to Sorrento, from where you can take the local train to Pompeii, for a whole day's visit without your luggage in tow. This is the world's most intriguing Roman excavation. A full visit will take at least half a day. In the afternoon take some time as well to visit the historical town centre of the 'new' village of Pompeii, with its famous cathedral, which is one of southern Italy's most important pilgrims' destinations before returning to Sorrento, to stroll through its charming little streets with fabulous views of the Bay of Naples. Accommodation: Hotel 'Capri' or 'Del Corso' – Sorrento.

Or:

First travel to Sorrento, from where you can go on short walk and do some relaxing on the seashore. This walk today takes you to the Roman villa of Pollio, beautifully located above a small natural inlet, with wonderful views over the Bay of Naples. The Villa has a natural spring, known as the baths of Queen Margherita, an ideal place for a swim. Accommodation: Hotel 'Capri' or 'Del Corso' – Sorrento.

**Day 9: Termini - Punta Campanella – Termini**

Total time: 2 h 20 min. + 20 + 1 h 20 min.

(Nerano - Ieranto and back 80 min.) Nerano - S. Costanzo 40 min. S. Costanzo - Punta Campanella 40 min. Punta Campanella - Termini 50 min. Termini - Nerano 10 min.

By local bus you go from Sorrento to Termini, the last village of the peninsula. From here you walk up to the

small chapel of San Costanzo, and then take a beautiful path running along the impressive cliffs of the 'Finis Terrae' (the end) of the Amalfi peninsula. In some parts the path is a bit demanding, but never tough. The return, between Punta walk is on a more comfortable path, which can be to get to Punta Campanella, walking the same path forwards and backwards. A little extension can be planned from the charming village of Nerano to the Bay of Ieranto, one of the most beautiful and unspoilt bays of the area, where you could have a swim.

**Things to be seen during the walk:**

**Punta Campanella:** is only 5 Km from Capri. Here was the Greek Temple of Athena (Athenaion) later dedicated to Minerva. The few remaining visible ruins belonged to a Roman villa of the I-II century.

A few meters downhill is the Minerva tower, built in 1334 and restored in 1567.

**Monte San Costanzo:** Is also possible extension from Nerano. It is the highest hill in the area and has two peaks. On the top of the eastern one, the small white chapel of San Costanzo stands out. From there you can enjoy great views over both Gulfs (Salerno and Naples) and the Monti Lattari.

**Baia di Ieranto:** It represents the central area of the Natural Marine Reserve. Very interesting flora; the area is owned by a private trust (F.A.I.) but the access is free.

Walking details:

Total time: 2 h 20 min. + 20 + 1 h 20 min.

(Nerano - Ieranto and back 80 min.) Nerano - S. Costanzo 40 min. S. Costanzo - Punta Campanella 40 min. Punta Campanella - Termini 50 min. Termini - Nerano 10 min.

**Day 10:** By boat you go to Capri, an island famous since Roman times for its beautiful nature and healthy climate. You can make a beautiful circular walk, which of course brings you to some famous spots as the 'Piazzetta', where the international jet-set gathers, the three rocky islands of the Faraglioni and the narrow streets of the village centre. But the walk takes you also along to the Villa of the Emperor Tiberius, the natural arch and some grottos, and the Monastery of San Giacomo, and ends in the gardens of Augustus, with some time left to relax or do some shopping.

This is a day which really lets you feel the charm of the island, without getting trapped in mass tourism. By boat you return to Sorrento or Marina del Cantone, from where you go back to the hotel.

**Distance: 10km – 4 hours walking**

**Day 11:** After Breakfast, return to Naples by bus and train. Depart Naples.

## Escorted departures 2010

**EJAM06** Sun 6 June - Sun 13 June (8 day)

**EJAM26** Sun 26 Sep – Sun 3 Oct (8 day)

**IMPORTANT NOTE:** On the escorted tour only, 1 evening meal is included and there is an upgrade to a 4 star hotel when you spend 2 nights in Praiano.

## Books

A really good guide on the walks on the Amalfi Coast is written by Julian Tippett, and printed by Sunflower books. We can recommend the Lonely Planet Guide to “Walking in Italy,” which has a section on Amalfi coast.