The incomparable beauty of the Amalfi Coast has enchanted visitors from all corners of the earth. The lush green terraces, suspended over a sparkling sea, the wealth of art and the architectural characteristics, make it one of the most celebrated places on earth. Wild, daring and romantic, the Coast is an obligatory stop in any journey to Italy. From a geographical point of view the “coast of the Sirens” is the southern slope of the Sorrentine Peninsula, which in the north closes the Gulf of Salerno. The scenery is characterised by mighty cliffs that drop into the sea, rich with bays and caves like the splendid Emerald Grotto at Conca dei Marini and the Fjord (Fjord) di Furore. Amongst vertiginous slopes, sheer drops and precipitous cliffs, there are places where nature is still uncontradicted, like the Valley of Port of Capo. The little villages that dot the “divine coast” are all to be explored, enjoying a clear blue sea, the strolling views, the artistic treasures and the lively high society life. Shopping is also a venerated activity in the characteristic boutiques of “Positano Fashion”, the ceramic shops of Vietri or sampling a delicious meal of traditional cuisine.

The Lattari Mountains Regional Park

The Lattari Mountains Regional Park comprises the Sorrento-Amalfi Peninsula and separates the Gulf of Naples from that of Salerno, in terrain that descends from over 1000 mts high to a wild, craggy shore. Those who enjoy hiking will find a system of 34 signposted trails that traverse the entire area, the most evocative of which linking the “Selvatico degli Dei” (Thall of the Gods).

The mild climate to be found in all seasons and the uncontaminated environment favours land and sea animal life, as well as lush vegetation into which cultivation (Veilamphs, olive groves and citrus groves) are admirably integrated.

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famous travellers

The Day of Judgement, for those amalfitans that go to heaven, will be a day like any other.

Renato Fucini, 1878
art and archaeology

- Cathedral of Amalfi
- Cathedral of Ravello
- San Giovanni del Toro (Ravello)
- Villa Rufolo (Ravello)
- Santa Maria de Olearia Complex (Maiori)

nature and parks

- Lattari Mountains Regional Natural Park
- Marina di Punta Campanella Natural Reserve
- Valle delle Ferriere State Natural Reserve

specialities

- Anchovies straining (Cetara)
- Amalfi lemons
- Minori pasta
- Cetara Red Tuna
- Amalfi Coast DOC wines

for young people

- Amalfi
- Maiori
- Positano
- Praiano

spas and fitness

- Beauty centres of the major hotels

shopping

- Ceramics of Vietri sul Mare
- Limoncello of Amalfi
- Positano Fashion
- Wine

outings with children

- Amalfi Paper Museum
- Positano
- Valle delle Ferriere State Natural Reserve
- Beaches of Maiori

not to be missed

- Cathedral of Amalfi
- Positano
- Cathedral of Ravello

the coast in 1 day

- Amalfi
- Positano

the coast in 3 days

- Amalfi
- Ravello
- Positano
- Fiordo di Furore
- Vietri sul Mare
- Archipelago Li Galli

events

- April - October: _Positano Art Festival_ (Positano)
- June or July: _Regatta of the Four Maritime Republics_ (Amalfi, every 4 years)
- June - July: _Chamber Music on the Amalfi Coast_ (Amalfi Coast)
- September: _Ravello Film Festival_ (Ravello)
- June - July: _Arts Festival_ (Amalfi Coast and Nocera-Sarno Countryside)
- July: _Amalfi by Night_ (Amalfi Coast and Nocera-Sarno Countryside)
- July-August: _Jazz On The Coast_ (Minori)
- July: _A tutto tonno_ Tuna Festival (Cetara)
- July-October: _Positano Summer_ (Positano)
- August: _Pesce Azzurro_ (Sardines etc.) Festival (Atrani)
- October: _Landing of the Saracens_ (Positano)
- December: _Christmas and New Year in Amalfi_ (Amalfi)

music

- Festival Canto del Mar (Positano)
- Festival Positano (Positano)

Photography

- Isola Di Dino (Positano)
- Vietri sul Mare (Minori)
Set into the mountain, surrounded by rich mediterranean vegetation, Positano is so picturesque as to seem a spontaneous stage setting. Seen from the sea it looks like a huge nativity scene, a waterfall of little multicoloured houses clinging onto its sides.

The town develops vertically. The homes, one on top of the other, are characterised by arched porticos that give onto the sea, and are painted in pastel colours, giving it the look of a multifaceted precious stone. It is not for nothing that Positano is called “the gem of the divine coast”.

The narrow streets, lined with boutiques, run downhill between the houses flowing onto the Spiaggia Grande, a wide beach. From here there is a beautiful view of the sea, as well as of the town as it climbs up the mountainside. On the main square of Positano is the parish church of Santa Maria Assunta, there since the year 1,000. The great coloured majolica cupola is visible from all over town. The little beaches of Positano are charming, and easy to get to on foot or by boat: Fornillo, Fiumicello and Arienzo.

Positano is a holiday destination appreciated for VIP vacations. Around 1940 Irene Kowaliska, a painter who lived here in Villa Sette Santi, used Positano as inspiration for her paintings on cloth. The Villa Stella Romana has been host to, among other things, Pope John Paul II, fashion moguls and screen stars love to come here to relax.

A few miles from the coast are Li Galli, or “Sirenuse”, a tiny archipelago made up of three islets: the Gallo Lungo, the Rotonda and the Castelluccio, considered the ancient dwellings of the enchanting Sirens. Positano is not just about the sea: pleasant walks will take you to visit the evocative areas around Lattari Mountains, like Montepertuso, so-called because it is said that the Madonna appeared here in a hole in the cliff (“pertuso” stands for hole). A staircase of 1,700 steps takes you to Nocelle. It is from here that the famous Trail of the Gods (Sentiero degli Dei) begins, with beautiful views over the entire coast. Or you can reach the beautiful coastal Punta San Pietro, where there is a little church on a precipice over the sea.

Positano is synonymous with summer fashion. In the labyrinth of alleys the miracle of “made in Positano” fashion was realised: dozens of boutiques show off their whimsical summer-wear, by now known the world over. Textiles and colours lay down the law in the world of beachwear: pareus to bikinis, casual and “grangala” evening wear, even characteristic wedding dresses. The hand-made leather footwear can be ordered to size. On sale are the colourful local ceramics, the paintings by the many artists that propose views of the enchanting gulf, and a wide range of typical products.

From Positano to Amalfi

shopping in Positano

Positano is in every tourist's itinerary and shopping is a must. The shops show the best of summer fashion, clothing, shoes, leather and accessories, with a special focus on handmade products.

famous travellers

Positano bites deep. It is a dream place that isn't quite real when you are there and becomes beckoningly real after you have gone. Its houses climb a hill so steep it would be a cliff except that stairs are cut in it. The small curving bay of unbelievably blue and green water lips gently on a beach of small pebbles.

John Steinbeck, 1953

the myth of the Sirens

The Sirenuse archipelago (now known as Li Galli) in front of Positano, these solitary rocky islets, were considered to be the dwellings of the Sirens, mythical figures that profiled seafarers with theirchants, often causing them to wreck. The myths probably served as warnings, the islets were meant to be a reference point for the sailors, if they got too close to land they would end up on the rocks. In 1924, on the island of Gallo Lungo, the Russian dancer and choreographer Leonide Massine built a villa (restructured in 1927 by the architect Le Corbusier) that was eventually bought by Rudolf Nureyev in memory of these artists: the Positano International Award for the Art of Dance is presented every year.

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On a slope cultivated with vines and olive trees one finds Furore. The ancient name for the entire area was Terra Furoris, for the deafening noise made by the sea and the wind during tempestuous nights as they echoed among the high walls of the sheer fjords that come straight down from the plateau of Agerola. A steep set of steps takes you to the bottom. The attraction of this piece of coast is irresistible, with the fjords wedged between vines and cliffs, tiny houses and the sea.

Praiano, halfway up the promontory of Capo Sottile, was the summer residence of the Doge of Amalfi, a precious sign of the future of the village toward becoming a relaxing holiday resort. The lower part of town goes towards Marina di Praia, a beach carned between two high rock walls. Guarding over this marina is one of the many watch-towers that dot the coast.

The nearby Conca dei Marini is a fishing village hemmed in by a marine loop that offers a stunning slice of panorama. The two extremes of this magnificent bay are Capo di Conca, dominated by the Torre di Conca (erected in the 1500's) testimony to the terrifying incursions of pirates, and the Emerald Grotto. The waters breaking into the grotto take on an intense green hue, caused by light filtration. This grotto is full of stalactites and stalagmites, often fused together to form limestone columns of up to 10 meters. From Conca you can get to the plateau of Agerola (650 mt), passing through woods and fields. The area, blessed with flowering fields renown since antiquity, is famous for its dairy products and for the exceptional views of the coast from above.

The heart and soul of the coast is Amalfi. In the serene blue of the sky and sea, Amalfi, guarded by its port, seems held in the palm of a hand. Above, the scenic drapery of the mountains, livid like a backdrop, dotted with houses; below, a picturesque weaving of alleys and steps, all the way to the Piazza, where the Cathedral dominates from the top of its majestic stairs. A unique scene, where historic memory intertwines with unforgettable natural beauty. Suspended between the slopes of Lattari Mountains and the sea, the picturesque alleys of Amalfi today host a large number of tourists, but there was a time, when the powerful Marine Republic had its moment of maximum splendour between the 10th and 12th centuries, that they kept the outsiders (Longobards and Saracenes) at bay. Rich and populated Amalfi enjoyed lively contact with the Orient. In memory of its ancient power every four years, in June, Amalfi holds the “Historic Regatta of the Marine Republics”.

The town of Amalfi, clinging to the slopes of the coast, is characterized by the famous Duomo (9th century). Its scenic position at the top of steep stairs, that open up among the houses gathered around the small square, gives a particular flavour to Amalfi’s historic centre. The imposing polychromatic façade of the church, illuminated by gilded and enameled mosaics, is impressive. Traces of the middle ages are to be found in the elegant Cloister of Heaven, with its arabesque lines. From the cloister go to the Crucifixion Chapel, where the Diocesan Museum is hosted. In this chapel is the entrance to the crypt, dating back to the 1200’s. The complex is one of the best examples of Romanesque architecture of the Amalfi coast. An exploration of Amalfi that desires the inclusion of the less known places should make a stop at the Antichi Arsenali, where famous galleys, with over one hundred oars, were constructed and destined to commerce with the Orient.

There are many “votive kiosks”, tiny chapels of majolica tiles or with frescoed walls, spread around Praiano. They are spontaneous testimonies to popular devotion, placed on walls of houses or on the borders between properties, they begged for divine protection.

The “votive kiosks” of Praiano.

Amalfi paper

There is no documentation about the origins of paper production. In 1220 Frederick II, however, prohibited the notaries of this kingdom, especially those from Amalfi, from using “bambagina” paper (as it was then called) for the writing of Acts, because it was considered more perishable than parchment. Hence the loss, its spread could not be arrested, and the art of paper-making was diffused all over the Coast, especially after the Council of Trent decreed the obligation of recording all the sacramental acts, deaths and religious events. In the 15th century the fame of Amalfi paper was such that many foreign authors demanded to be published in Naples to be able to use the prized material. Even today, in a reduced manner, the paper-makers of Amalfi, the oldest in Europe, still handmake this precious paper for use by artists or limited editions.
The Tabula Amalphitana is preserved in Palazzo Morelli, seat of the municipality and of the Civic Museum. It was the first code of naval law, established in the times of the Republic and valid for the entire Mediterranean Sea. The famous “drifts” of Domenico Morelli, one of the most famous painters of the 1800s, from which the mosaics which adorn the church were created, can be admired. Amalfi is also famous as the home of handmade paper.

The first workshops were opened along the Valley of the Mills, where the Paper Museum is. This area, crossed by the Canneto River, and that of the nearby Valley of the Ferriere, a charming natural environment, constitute a Natural Biogenetic Reserve. The ascent from Amalfi is tiring but fascinating. The remains of the mills that brought the water to the paper workshops are discovered, and the walk in nature that hides secret charmes, is rewarded with springs and waterfalls, and glimpses of the sea between the lush Mediterranean scrub.

Almost tied to Amalfi, Atrani preserves in the intricacy of its little streets, stairs and overpasses, its medieval texture. During the Republican era of Amalfi, Atrani was inhabited by noble families. Here Doges were crowned and buried.

Between alleys, arches, courtyards, little squares and with its typical small stairways, it seems like a naively licked by the sea. Atrani faces the sea with the characteristic profile of the Maddalena Church (1274) that is topped by a belltower and cupola that is covered with vividly coloured majolica. The neoclassic church of San Salvatore del’Irleto, on piazza Umberto I was founded in 1840. It was in this church that the election ceremonies and inaugurations of the new Doges of the Republic were held. The Grotto of the Saints can be reached by the state road. Here the ruins of the ancient benedictine monastery of Santi Quirico e Giulitta, founded in 986, are visible. The little grotto is decorated with byzantine style frescoes that date to the 12th century.

The aerial precipice of Amalfi is immersed in a network of pure colours that does not repeat the nauseating and lazy colours of certain famous tropical seasons along the route of the great journeys. Here is the garden that we are eternally and uselessly searching for, after the perfect places of our childhood.

Salvatore Quasimodo, 1966

The stairs of the Coast

What would the Amalfi Coast be without its stairs? They are everywhere: a characteristic of its villages, agile and indispensable communication system to overcome unpredictable height differences. It does not take long to become accustomed to them, one soon learns to appreciate its picturesque and, above all, ecological aspect, useful also in disintoxication from stress and city noise.

The Wine Trail of the Amalfi Coast

The Road twists amidst terraces that hold hanging vineyards on precipices over the sea, suddenly opening with marvellous views, between the valleys and gorges where the splendid architecture of the coast clammers upwards. The traditional wines are cultivated here, and are rewarded by the locals, like Falanghina, become Bianca Zita (white girl), Biancolella, become Bianca Tenera (tender white) and Lia, Solasiscose, Olivella. The wines produced are all Costa d’Amalfi and Riviera Cose wines (www.sinregione.campania.it/agricoltura/home.htm)
One of the gems of the Amalfi coast is **Ravello**, 350 meters above sea level, where the light effects and magical architecture create a vision of rare intensity. Its name is immortalized in Boccaccio’s *Decameron*. Famous for its tranquil and serene atmosphere, Ravello offers architectural gems of rare elegance. The 11th century **Duomo**, dedicated to San Pantaleone, is rich with artistic treasures like the grand bronze central door adorned with 54 panels. To the right of the Cathedral a square tower marks the entrance to **Villa Rufolo**. Immersed in a verdant park of exotic and mediterranean flora, the original structure dates back to the 13th century, and even today some of its arab-siculian architecture is evident. The polychromatic arabesque colonnade is splendid. The garden is one of the most beautiful in Campania. Nature and man’s touch combine to create a highly evocative atmosphere: villas lined by lime trees and cypresses, cascades of fountains. From the belvedere the sea seems infinite. Each summer, in the gardens of the villa, the concerts of the Ravello Festival are held. Wagner’s inspiration for the Klingsor Garden, in his opera Parsifal, came from the gardens of Villa Rufolo.

**Villa Cimbrone** was, originally, a simple hut. It was bought in 1904 by Ernest William Beckett, who transformed it into an exceptionally fascinating Villa. It has hosted many celebrated personalities, from Winston Churchill to Greta Garbo. There is a very special feeling in the cloister of the villa, still showing elements of the ancient arab-siculian style it was built in. The belvedere is a terrace that gives on to infinity, and has no equal in the world.

San Giovanni del Toro and Santa Maria a Gradillo churches, both built in the 12th century, also merit a visit. The San Giovanni del Toro church has a pulpit rich in mosaic decorations. The **Coral Museum**, which exhibits coral, cameo, decorated mother-of-pearl and shells from Roman times to the 1900s, is also interesting. Scala is close to Ravello, one of the most picturesque sites of the coast. Its Cathedral has a wooden Deposition from the Cross dating back to the 1000s. A charming seaside village, **Minori**, with its little pink houses over the beach, also offers splendid scenery. For its lovely position along the coast, it was where the ancient Romans dedicated themselves to relax, as witnessed by the many ruins, amongst which the **Villa Romana**, from the 1st century BC, a 2,000 sq mt archaeological complex combining a virdarium (garden), a nymphaeum-triclinium, and the splendid mosaics. At the **Antiquarium Museum** there are mosaics dating back to the 1st century BC. In the centre of the village, near to the little port, is the **Basilica of Santa Trofimena**, patron of the city, built in the 12th century. Many other little churches and towers dot the area.

From Ravello to Vietri...

famous travellers

...close to Salerno is a coast looking out at sea, called by the locals the coast of Amalfi, covered with little towns, gardens and fountains, and men rich and profitable in the art of trade and other. Amongst the towns there is one called Ravello.

Giovanni Boccaccio, 1351

**artists in Ravello**

Other than Wagner, musicians, writers and artists have found in Ravello their inspiration, the inventions of Grieg’s Peer Gynt owe much to the woods of Ravello. Tosciani, Leonard Bernstein, Richter, Albee and Bruno Walter also spent relaxing time here. Miró, Escher, Turner, whose sumptuous of the area are to be found in London’s Tate Gallery, as well as the writer and art critic Ruskin, were also guests here. Further, the novelist of fiction with a life, describes parts of the town. David Herbert Lawrence wrote many chapters of *Lady Chatterley’s Lover* here, and André Gide set part of his novel *The Immoralist* here. Many more came here to enjoy the unique beauty, others settled here for good: Virginia Woolf, Paul Valéry, Graham Greene, Tennessee Williams, Rafael Alberti and Gore Vidal.
With its long beach and lovely shoreline, Maiori boasts the best hotels of the area. Ruins of castles and towers give testimony to its medieval splendour, when it was encircled and defended by walls and fortifications. The church of Santa Maria a Mare dominates the town, and on every year on August 15 festivities commemorate an event dating to 1204, when fishermen pulled a statue of the Virgin from the water after it had been dumped by a boat from Constantinople that was in trouble and had sought refuge in the Maiori bay during a tempest. On the main altar there is a wooden sculpture of the Madonna and Child, and a collection of art is cared for in the Sacristy Museum and the crypt below it. The popular sanctuary dedicated to the Madonna delle Grazie has medieval origins, but was restructured in the 1700s. The unusual stone complex of Santa Maria Olearia, a benedict abbey built around the year 1000 is worth a visit. In the buildings that hug the rock cliff, in one of the natural grottoes of the area, there are halls, chapels, and small frescoed porticos. A boat trip will take you for a visit to the Grotta Sulfurea and the Grotta Pandora. The first one is rich in sulfuric-magnesic water with therapeutic properties; in the second one the emerald-green scene, the stalactites and stalagmites create an unforgettable scenario. Also around Minori one can find many signs of the past, a lovely seaside resort as well as a grand Roman villa.

A few kilometres from Maiori is Erchie, with a tower on a boulder which separates the two beaches. The benedictine monastery Santa Maria de Erchie, founded in 980 and destroyed in 1491, gave this place its name. This small village with the characteristic white houses, the delightful beaches and the crystalline sea is ideal for a moment of relax in contact with nature.

Ferdinand Gregorovius, 1861

Thanks to the stream Farinola or Reginna Minor, which activated the mills, Minori has a flourishing pasta tradition. At the beginning of the 1900s its reputation was not second best to even the famous pasta of Gragnano in the province of Naples. The fusilli, made of semola, grain and water, are twirled with a thin iron rod.

I have never seen more gracious places. The first you find is Maiori… The solitary streets and tranquil trails enter into the mountain, from which clear and fresh waters spring. So much romantic solitude restores one’s soul and gives birth to the desire to live there in peace, or at least spend a summer.

Archibald Gogginovic, 1881

Just before Vietri is Cetara. This has always been a fishermen’s village and its name comes from the Latin word ‘cetaria’, or tuna fishing net. This village with its picturesque white architecture and its intimate beach is one of the jewels of the coast. In between the little square houses the church of San Pietro stands out with its majolica cupola and its bell tower from the 13th century. At the base of the Amalfi Coast, on the side facing the Gulf of Salerno, Vietri sul Mare dominates from the small Valle di Bonea above, erected on the bastions of limestone and sloping down to the coast. With its small churches, their majolica-covered domes, and the small tile-covered houses, Vietri seems suspended between heaven and earth. In ancient times the town was Etruscan, but it was later dominated by the Saracens, the Lucanians and finally by the Romans. The church of San Giovanni Battista (St John the Baptist), dating to the 17th century, with its majestic dome and high bell tower, is located at the highest point of the old centre of town. The ceramics industry, for which Vietri is world famous, was already a booming business in the Middle Ages. Over the centuries artisans and artists have created prized works, a part of which can be admired in the Ceramics Museum which is located in the belvedere-tower of the Villa Guariglia in Raìto.