Pompeii, Capri and the Bay of Naples

Eight days from only £599pp half-board

- Return flights
- Guided tour of stunning Pompeii – a city preserved in time
- Visit to the magnificent volcano of Vesuvius
- Tour of the Amalfi coast – one of the most beautiful coastlines in the world
- Cruise to the stunning island of Capri
- Visit to Naples and Archaeological Museum
- Seven nights half board in a choice of three and four star hotels in Sorrento
- Escorted by an experienced Riviera tour manager

Managing to retain its roots and traditions better than probably any other modern nation, Italy is a superb destination for a holiday with its stunning blend of excellent food and wine, gorgeous scenery, together with an enviable climate and a phenomenal cultural legacy. Add the Italians themselves with their legendary love of life and you have all the ingredients for a wonderful stay.

For gourmets Italy is a delight, its food and wine being amongst the best in the world and as you would expect in the area we are visiting, seafood is everywhere. Clams, mussels, sea bass, swordfish – the list is endless – as are the methods of cooking them. The pasta is mouth-watering and the wine is of good quality and reasonably priced.

The Sorrento peninsula and the Bay of Naples is simply one of the most beautiful corners of Europe attracting visitors for centuries in search of its outstanding scenery, tranquility and some of the most wondrous ‘sights’ from throughout history. Indeed in the immediate area we have a selection of places to see and visit which stand comparison with almost anywhere in the world. It has a long and violent history, and invasions by the Greeks, Phoenicians and Saracens have all left their mark – but none more so than the Romans. Even 2000 years ago the attributes of the region were well known with the Emperors Tiberius and Augustus, together with countless members of the ruling elite, having villas here.
Capri really does deserve its reputation as a Garden of Eden. We then take the boat to the island, which is reached by boat and by a freak of nature is bathed in incandescent blue light – hence its name. You may wish to visit the famous Blue Grotto – the large cavern which can only be reached from the numerous restaurants and bistros, some humble and homely, some grand and ostentatious with pavement cafes serving fine cappuccino on seemingly every street corner.

We see the legendary Amalfi coast, with every guidebook proclaiming it the most beautiful in Europe, and when you see it, it really is impossible to disagree! Deep red mountains covered with pine forests plunge dramatically into the calm blue Mediterranean. Next it’s Capri, which possesses a deserved reputation as a veritable Garden of Eden – it will come as no surprise why so many of the rich and famous have made it their home.

Wherever you travel in the Bay of Naples, the skyline is dominated by the majestic and still active volcano Vesuvius, rising loftily to over 4000 ft. No doubt you will be aware, it has erupted in spectacular fashion several times in its history – the most famous, of course, being in 79AD when the Roman city of Pompeii, together with many of its inhabitants, were entombed and whose state of preservation today is little short of remarkable. All in all there can be few places you will find which combine so much of interest in an area of outstanding natural beauty as the Bay of Naples.

Day 3
Capri is renowned the world over for its outstanding natural beauty and so today we will take the short boat ride to the island. It has long been the most sought-after part of the Bay of Naples; attracting three Roman emperors; both D.H. Lawrence and George Bernard Shaw sought inspiration, with Grace Fields and Graham Greene amongst many others making it their home. It is easy to see why it is so adored, as we approach the island you can see small fishing boats rising and falling with the gentle waves, with pretty shops and restaurants lining the busy quayside. The picturesque main town is perched on the cliffs and looking down on the quaint harbour below. You may wish to visit the famous Blue Grotto – the large cavern which can only be reached by boat and by a freak of nature is bathed in incandescent blue light – hence its name. Yes, Capri really does deserve its reputation as a Garden of Eden. We then take the boat to the mainland and return to our hotel.
Amalfi, a picturesque village in a gorgeous setting, possessing charm in abundance and perhaps the highlight of the coast. Just inland is the stunning village of Ravello, with its univalued location perched like an eagle’s nest on a shelf above Amalfi, affording some amazing views. It has an ambience of its own and a wonderful main square surrounded by delightful small cafes and the Villa Rufolo – once the headquarters of a city-state, now a charming collection of medieval buildings, statues, tasteful walled gardens and the setting for Wagner’s opera Parsifal.

Day 8

Today we return to Naples airport, at the appropriate time, to take our return flight, after a really memorable and unique tour.

We stay in Sorrento and have a choice of hotels

The Villa Maria is a fine example of a three star hotel that provides all the comforts of a modern, purpose built property. The bedrooms are tastefully decorated and of course have a private bathroom, TV and air conditioning. It is in an excellent central location next to the maze-like “old town” and only 500m from Piazza Tasso, the lovely main square in the centre of Sorrento. The Corso Italia, the avenue of the town, is just around the corner and is lined with tasteful shops that are so typical of Italy. The hotel has a good quality restaurant and an extensive bar and lounge furnished with pastel coloured fabrics, which create a relaxing atmosphere and the perfect place to unwind after a hard day’s sightseeing. The swimming pool and adjacent sun terrace is the ideal spot to soak up the sun. There is a second sun terrace, which is surrounded by potted shrubs where you can enjoy superb views of the town, sea, Mount Vesuvius and on a clear day, Naples. The family who own the hotel are traditional hoteliers and really care for their clients as welcome guests.

The three star rated La Badia is based on the sympathetic conversion of a 16th century abbey, retaining much of the original stonework and giving a superb ambience to this small family-run hotel. All rooms are tastefully furnished with private bathroom, TV and air conditioning. The hotel has been in the same family for many years and all guests are made to feel extremely welcome with the reception and entrance hall boasting many antiques, adding to the overall relaxing atmosphere. It’s location is wonderful, just behind Sorrento with amazing views of the sea, Sorrento itself, Vesuvius and Naples on a clear day. It is set amongst four acres of its own lovely gardens and fragrant lemon and orange groves. By road it is approximately two miles from Sorrento. There is also a more direct 400 metre pathway, which is steep and narrow but illuminated at night. Should you not wish to use this you can either use the free pre-bookable shuttle bus, or the local bus which stops just outside. The hotel has a swimming pool with gorgeous views so typical of the area and is ideal for a refreshing dip. The hotel restaurant serves good quality local cuisine and, weather permitting, you may dine on the terrace overlooking the bay. There is also a comfortable bar to relax in after sightseeing.

Also three star rated is the Hotel Metropole, situated on the coastal road approximately one kilometre from the Old Town. This charming hotel, purpose built to a high standard in its own attractive gardens, offers some wonderful views of the Bay of Naples and spectacular Vesuvius. It has recently benefited from a complete renovation by its very professional family owners, with the result an outstanding hotel within its category, whilst still retaining its individual character. The public rooms feature typical traditional terracotta floors covered with rugs, Italian high-quality furniture, high arched ceilings and beautiful Venetian glassware and are very tastefully decorated in classic Neapolitan style. The rooms themselves are very well appointed with bathrooms, air-conditioning and have a private balcony. The grounds are lovely too: a series of terraced interlocking patios bedecked with colourful flowers and plants, where you can escape to a private, shady corner to catch up on some reading perhaps – what a refreshing change from some of the larger ‘chain’ hotels! There is a good size outdoor swimming pool and sun terrace, with the extensive views typical of the area - just the spot to relax in after a hard day’s sightseeing! Enjoy good quality local and international cuisine in the hotel restaurant before winding down with a drink in the comfortable lounge and bar.

Also four star rated is the hotel Atlantic Palace, situated on the coastal road approximately one kilometre from the Old Town. Purpose-built to a high standard with all rooms air-conditioned, some offering views of Naples and Vesuvius, the hotel is tastefully furnished with wood and marble. To its rear is an oval swimming pool with whirlpool section, attractive sun terrace and poolside restaurant facing onto a hillside orchard of olive and lemon trees. The spacious lobby and lounge, constructed from marble, lined with comfortable sofas and leafy plants affords a lovely classic ambience and is the ideal place in which to relax. The restaurant is very good too, having one of the best chefs in Sorrento and all in all, the Atlantic Palace represents excellent value for money.

The four star rated Conca Park is a fine example of an international standard property, set in its own landscaped grounds in the heart of Sorrento only 300m from Piazza Tasso, the hub of Sorrentine life. The bedrooms are very well appointed including air conditioning and very tastefully decorated with pastel colours which the Italians seem to use so well. Built on a slight rise above the immediate area you therefore have sea views and as you would expect, the hotel boasts an excellent range of facilities. There is an extensive swimming pool with poolside bar, a further piano bar, a very comfortable lounge, ideal to relax in after sightseeing, a good quality restaurant, a coffee shop and surrounded by extensive terraces of old olive trees giving welcome shade. In short a very well managed hotel in central Sorrento.