



Drive & Hike Tour (DHAM1)

Coasts of the Sirens

Amalfi Coast & Cilento National Park

From the unknown Cilento to the dramatic Amalfi Coast



TRIP NOTES

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INTRODUCTION

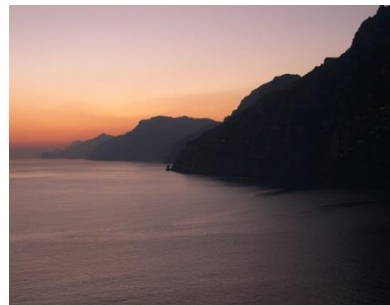
The regions of Amalfi and Cilento have been known as a paradise on earth since ancient times. The Greeks built some of their most impressive temples here and under the Romans they formed part of 'Campania Felix' or the Happy Land. When travelling here, one easily becomes overwhelmed by the well-known cultural and natural attractions of the famous 'Costiera Amalfitana' with its towering cliffs and picturesque coves. However, the Cilento region south of Salerno, now one of Italy's biggest National Parks where the coastline bulges out into an expanse of mountainous landmass, is well worth a visit too.

The Amalfi Coast hardly needs an introduction and has been described by many authors and artists as the most beautiful coast in the world. The landscape is immensely varied and surrounded by infinite ever-changing views. It can be typically Mediterranean, intoxicating with wild perfumed herbs, myrtle shrubs, thyme, rosemary and mastic trees, or almost alpine with meadows and bare rocks. And cultural heritage abounds! Man has created a stunning mosaic terraced landscape, which nothing can compare with. And beautiful little churches, ruins of castles and old farmhouses are found all over the place... The 'Costiera Amalfitana' is definitely Europe's most dramatic stretch of coastline!

During your stay you'll have the time to visit the must-see villages: Amalfi itself, but also Atrani, wonderfully preserved through the centuries, Ravello with its magnificent villas, the quiet Praiano, and of course the scenic and fashionable Positano. You will have the opportunity to walk along well-maintained footpaths, paved alleyways, through attractive countryside with wonderful terraced lemon groves, vineyards and cultural treasures such as rural chapels, ancient farmhouses, old watermills and wonderful villas and villages, where you can sit down and relax with a drink.

The Cilento coast is fairly rocky territory, with the crystalline sea lapping at the shore. There is a wild kind of beauty here; rocky ridges set between small picturesque inlets and richly scented pinewoods backing onto wide sandy beaches. Aleppo pines loom over multi-coloured undergrowth of myrtle and prickly pear; whilst huge, centuries-old olive trees grow right down to the shore. Inland the Cilento is largely undisturbed by the 21st century and you will enjoy visiting medieval and quaint fishing villages where the traditional way of life is still evident. You will have the opportunity to walk or cycle through pristine natural areas, with beech and oak forests and mountain meadows, beautiful river valleys, impressive canyons and great mountain scenery.

During your stay you'll not only visit the Cilento's main cultural highlights such as the world-famous Greek temples of Paestum, the Greek town of Velia and the Certosa Abbey at Padula, but you will also have the opportunity to see some of the nicest mediaeval villages in the area, where the traditional way of life is still evident. And you'll enjoy visiting some of the Cilento's most unknown cultural treasures, like the rock churches of Magliano, St. Michael's cave church in Sant'Angelo a Fasanella, the ruins of Roscigno Vecchia and the castles of Laurino and Sicignano.



For this tour we offer several different options in which you can choose the difficulty level of the excursions yourself. Walks and bicycle rides follow easy routes without any real technical difficulties and are feasible for those who have some walking or cycling experience and are in a good physical condition. Walking and cycling times: approx. 2 to 5 hours a day.



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DAY-TO-DAY PROGRAMME

During this tour you have the choice of several different options, as well as being able to opt for a possible extension either in the Cilento region or along the Amalfi Coast. For culture and nature lovers who have never visited the Amalfi Coast, we recommend some more days in one of the many beautiful hotels or agriturismos along the coast to better discover the countless natural and cultural treasures in this beautiful part of Italy.

Day 1 & 2 - The South Coast of the Cilento

The first two days of your tour you will stay in a beautiful hotel in Pisciotta or Marina di Camerota. These wonderful medieval villages nicely situated among centuries-old olive groves are the ideal spots from which to discover the many faces of this part of the Cilento Coast. After your day's trip you will enjoy strolling through the quiet back alleys, you can only stay at 1 hamlet though and have a cold drink or *'aperitivo'* on the terrace of a lively local bar.

When staying in this part of the Cilento, you have the opportunity to walk along the unspoilt rocky coast to the very scenic *'Porto degli Infreschi'* Bay. You can follow the ancient mule track of Sant'Iconio on the rocky cliffs high above the sandy beaches to the charming village of Camerota, situated on top of a dramatic rock face. You can climb up to the top of Mount Bulgheria enjoying the fragrant wild alpine flowers and orchids. Or you can take an easy stroll along the shadowy footpaths crisscrossing the pine woods which cover the Palinuro Cape.

Cyclists will enjoy a short trip on the spectacular coastal road hemmed in between the sandy beaches and the high rocky cliffs between Pisciotta and Marina di Camerota, passing through the Mingardo Valley on the way back. Or they may choose to make a longer and more demanding trip around Mount Bulgheria or in the hills behind Pisciotta, visiting the abandoned village of San Severino, situated on a rocky cliff high above the Mingardo Canyon, or stopping at the pre-Greek archaeological site of Roccagloriosa on the way.

Your stay here simply has to include a short boat trip along the spectacular coast full of tiny inlets, sea grottos and high towering cliffs. You can set sail from the tiny harbour of Palinuro for a visit to the cape, or you can marvel at the various spectacular rock formations along the *Infreschi* Coast. The fitter traveller can explore the coast by sea kayak as well.

From Pisciotta and Marina di Camerota many of the main highlights of the southern Cilento are easily reached by car. You can opt for a visit to the enormous Certosa Abbey at Padula in the inland of the Cilento. Alternatively, you could head to Morigerati and visit the WWF oasis where the waters of the River Bussento re-emerge noisily from a deep burrow. Or you can wander from village to village admiring the charming little medieval hamlets and their many ancient churches, old *'palazzini'*, ruined castles and twisting back alleys.

Accommodation: Palinuro/Marina di Camerata - Hotel/agriturismo

Day 3 - Velia, Monte Gelbison and Monte Stella

Today you have a wide choice of walking or cycling excursions, and cultural options. Don't forget to stop for lunch in one of the many *'trattorie'* along your way and taste the many local food and drink specialties. Before going out for dinner again in the evening, you should take a refreshing dip in the crystal-clear waters of the Mediterranean and enjoy an hour's sunbathing on the sandy white beach.

Lovers of long walks can head for Mount Gelbison in the wild mountainous inland of the Cilento. Here you can start out from Novi Velia where a centuries-old pilgrim's path takes you up to the sanctuary situated on the top of the mountain. An easier walk near Moio della Civitella takes you to the remains of a pre-Greek fortified hamlet, situated on top of a low hill.

Cyclists will enjoy the panoramic ride around Mount Stella, passing through the many tiny villages dotting its slopes. Here you will discover the real Cilento, untouched by the coast's mass tourism. In these villages time seems to stand still and the locals are sure to greet you as a welcome guest.



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Culture lovers should make sure to pay a visit to Velia. This archaeological site preserves the remains of the 6th-century BC Greek town of Elea, birthplace of the philosophers Zeno and Parmenide, and origin of one of the oldest medical schools in Europe. Here you can admire the ruins of the ancient harbour, the Greek and Roman bath houses, several temples and public buildings, and the so-called 'Porta Rosa' or Pink Gate, one of the oldest examples of the use of the arch in Greek architecture.

Accommodation: Ceraso/Casalvelino - Hotel/agriturismo

Day 4 & 5 - Paestum and the Calore Valley

During your stay at Paestum you will have ample opportunity to visit the Cilento's main cultural attraction, the world-famous Greek temples and the archaeological museum (UNESCO World Heritage). You will however also have the time to explore the coast and the mountainous inland of this part of the Cilento. In the evening you can enjoy a cool 'aperitivo' on a terrace with views of the temples, or you can taste the locally-produced buffalo milk ice cream, during a visit to a mozzarella farm.

Those interested in walking have the choice of several very nice excursions. You could walk through the fragrant Mediterranean 'maquis' along the peninsula of Punta Tresino to the abandoned village of San Giovanni, passing some of the Cilento's most famous vineyards on the way. Or you walk from the tiny fishing harbour of San Marco di Castellabate to the enchanting coast of Punta Licosa with its curiously formed pine trees sculpted by the incessant blowing wind. Closer to Paestum you climb up to the villages of Capaccio and Trentinara, situated on a tall cliff high above the plain, and you walk past the remains of Capaccio Vecchia to the top of Mount Vesolo. You can also head further inland and take a long walk over the high plateau of the Alburni Mountains, through thick beech woods and past bizarre rock formations, deep underground limestone caves and sinkholes. In the valley beneath the mountain's high slopes you can explore the canyon of the Calore River near Felitto, or walk through the abandoned village of Roscigno Vecchia, the 'Pompeii of the 20th century' to the spectacular Sammaro Canyon.

Experienced cyclists have the opportunity to hire a good quality road racing bike at Capaccio, near Paestum, and may opt for a long trip through the Calore Valley and around the Alburni Mountains. Several dirt tracks, both near the coast at Punta Tresino and in the inland of the Alburni Mountains, are ideal for some mountain biking. Those who prefer to enjoy cycling through the area at an easier pace can explore the many quiet country roads around the archaeological site of Paestum.

The coast between Agropoli and Castellabate and the peaceful valleys at the foot of the Alburni Mountains offer many opportunities for an interesting car journey as well. You can visit the splendid medieval centre of Castellabate with its imposing castle, or travel between the villages and hamlets dotting the Calore Valley. Here you can visit the mysterious limestone caves of Castelvività or Pertosa, or stop for a short break near the medieval bridge over the Calore River at Felitto. Further inland you can visit the abandoned villages of Roscigno and Sacco Vecchia and you admire the Sammaro Canyon from the top of the high bridge across it. You can stop for lunch at one of the many agriturismos along the way, tasting delicious 'antipasti della casa' and feast on 'mozzarella di bufala', handmade pasta and tasteful grilled meat dishes. In the afternoon you still have plenty of time to admire the wonderful little church of Sant'Angelo a Fasanella, built in a cave, and maybe ride up to the astronomical observatory high in the Alburni Mountains.

Accommodation: Paestum - Hotel

Day 6 & 7 - The Amalfi Coast

The last two days of your tour you will be staying near the tiny fishing village of Cetara along the Amalfi Coast. From your hotel you have plenty of opportunities to explore this authentic Italian paradise. You might want to extend your stay here with a couple of days to better explore the many cultural and natural treasures of the 'Costiera Amalfitana'.

Those interested in exploring by foot will find a dramatic landscape made up of vertical rock cliffs rising out of the sea, and high mountain peaks overlooking deep lush valleys. You can walk from Cetara to the Avvocata Sanctuary, situated on a highly panoramic terrace 700m above the sea, before clambering back down the seemingly endless steps to the town of Maiori. Or you can hike through charming little hamlets to the 'Valle delle Ferriere' (Iron Valley) and through the 'Valle dei Mulini' (Valley of the Mills). There is the opportunity to walk the 'Sentiero degli Dei' (Path of the Gods), easily the most famous of the many paths along the Amalfi Coast and without doubt one of Italy's finest, with its breathtaking views of the 'Costiera' and the



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isle of Capri. You could also follow the centuries-old mule track of the ‘*Via Maestra dei Villaggi*’, which connected the 10th-century Republic of Amalfi with its many hamlets. Here you will walk through colourful lemon groves and past old churches and lofty palaces.

To admire the dramatic cliffs rising up out of the sea, interspersed with tiny inlets and wonderfully located fishing villages hidden out of sight, there is no better way than by boat. You can choose from a guided excursion leaving from one of the main towns along the coast, or enjoy the view from the ferry as you turn back to your hotel after your day’s trip. For those who feel like it, it is possible to glide along part of the coast by sea kayak, admiring the most bizarre rock formations and pausing for a refreshing dive or a lazy picnic lunch on a small beach in one of the many tiny hidden inlets along the coast.

Culture lovers, city trippers and shoppers will find many a suitable spot along the Amalfi Coast. You can choose to visit the ‘provincial’ city of Salerno, with its imposing castle, well-preserved medieval city centre and magical botanical gardens. Or you can stop at Vietri sul Mare, famous for its colourful tableware ceramics, where you can spend hours in its many little shops. You will have the opportunity to visit splendid medieval Amalfi with its ‘*duomo*’ and numerous ‘*palazzi*’ with clear Arabic influences. You can wander through the back alleys of Ravello, dramatically situated on a vertical limestone cliff high above the coast, and visit its wonderful villas and their beautiful gardens. Or you can walk down the many steps to the wide beach of mundane Positano, famous for its many VIP visitors, where you enjoy a ‘*gelato*’ while lounging under the sun. You can also take the ferry from Amalfi for a visit to Capri, the favourite holiday resort of the Roman Emperor Tiberius.

Accommodation: Vietri/Cetara - Hotel

Day 8 - Departure

Your tour finishes this morning after breakfast.



TOUR DETAILS

ACCOMMODATION & MEALS

All nights are spent in beautiful hotels and agriturismos (generally 3-star). All rooms have en-suite facilities.

Dinners are not included in the tour price. You have an ample choice of good typical restaurants in the towns where you are staying. The agriturismos in the Cilento inland often offer the opportunity to have dinner in the restaurant on their premises.

No picnic lunches are included in the tour price, but these can be prepared for you by the accommodation holders, or materials for picnics can be purchased in the villages which you pass through.

Nights 1 & 2: The first two nights are spent in a beautifully located hotel, either at Palinuro or in Marina di Camerota.



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Night 3: This night you stay in a nice hotel or agriturismo in the village of Ceraso or in nearby Casalvelino.

Nights 4 & 5: The next two nights are spent in a charming hotel near the Greek temples of Paestum.

Nights 6 & 7: The last two nights you stay in a beautiful hotel near the fishing village of Vietri or Cetara along the Amalfi Coast.

INCLUDED

- Accommodation: 2 nights Palinuro/Marina di Camerota, 1 night Ceraso/Casalvelino, 2 nights Paestum, 2 nights Vietri/Cetara; all nights in good 3-star hotels or agriturismos
- Extensive route notes, with description of the route & tourist information
- Topographical Maps for walking and cycling excursions
- 24/7 local assistance

NOT INCLUDED

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

LEVEL OF DIFFICULTY

Level: Moderately easy 2/3.

Reasonable fitness required, mostly easy paths, no technical difficulties. Some include walking uphill, sometimes on paths with rough surfaces. On some days extensions or shortcuts are possible.

Fitness: High standard of fitness is not necessary but you should be able to walk for up to 5 hours a day in the hot sun on dusty or stony tracks.

FOOTPATHS & WAYMARKING

Most paths are relatively well maintained, but during the season some paths can get overgrown (*we are in continuous contact with local authorities to keep the paths clean – please help us by providing your feedback on the quality of the paths*).

Waymarking: Only a small part of the route is waymarked (partly by us); elsewhere it is necessary to follow the route descriptions provided together with the maps. With these it is always possible to find your route. In case you don't feel confident a local guide can be provided for some trails.



ARRIVAL & DEPARTURE

Arrival: The tour starts in PALINURO/MARINA DI CAMEROTA. By car you reach the South Coast of the Cilento from Rome (daily flights, also low-cost, from all major European cities) in around 4 hours. From Naples (daily flights, also low-cost, from all major European cities) it will take you around 2,5 hours.

Departure: The tour ends in VIETRI/CETARA. From here you can reach Naples in 1 hour, Rome in 3 hours.

TOUR VARIATIONS

One of the main characteristics of a Genius Loci Travel 'Drive & Hike, Walk & Discover' Tour is the freedom you have in putting together not only your own daily programme, but also the length of the tour and the places to visit.

The above programme is only an example of what is possible. It is a well-balanced programme, which shows you the great variety of this part of southern Italy, both the authentic inland areas, as well as the stupendous coastline. However, according to your interests we can easily adapt the programme to your demands. More mountains, more sea, more culture, more relax.... You decide!

EXTRA NIGHTS

It is possible to extend your tour with a few days in Salerno, along the beautiful Amalfi Coast or in Naples. Details and prices on request.

UPGRADE

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

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