



Independent walking tour (AMA9)

Charming Amalfi Coast

*Highlights & Hidden Corners of the World's Most Beautiful
Coastline - from Cava dei Tirreni to Amalfi & Positano*



TRIP NOTES

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INTRODUCTION

The Amalfi Coast, or Costiera Amalfitana is definitely Europe's most scenic and dramatic stretch of coastline! A stunning combination of sea, picturesque coastal towns and mountains, an abundance of both culture and nature. The landscape is immensely varied and surrounded by infinite ever-changing views. It can be typically Mediterranean, intoxicating with its wild perfumed herbs, with myrtle shrubs, thyme, rosemary and mastic trees, or almost alpine with meadows and bare rocks. And cultural heritage abounds! Man has created an incomparable mosaic-terraced landscape. Beautiful little churches, ruins of castles and old farmhouses are found all over the place. And the best thing is, everything can be discovered on foot!

There are thousands of footpaths here, some of which are famous, such as the "Sentiero degli Dei" (the "Footpath of the Gods"), or are at least a thousand years old, like the "Maestra dei Villaggi" – the 'main road' of the Republic of Amalfi. But there are unknown trails which are just as beautiful as well! Going from the sea to the mountains, or vice versa, there are always stupendous views, and you'll walk through little villages, vineyards and olive groves, Mediterranean scrub and woods, living rocks and chestnut woods. The

A large part of this tour is along the coast, and of course it touches all the famous coastal villages which are must-see attractions: Amalfi itself, but also Atrani, Ravello, Praiano and of course the scenic Positano. But you will also walk through real mountainous scenery, past amazing sheer drops, through chestnut forests and attractive countryside, with wonderful terraced lemon groves and vineyards. And you see cultural treasures like rural chapels, ancient farmhouses, old watermills and, every now and then, a herd of goats on your path! You'll explore the virtually unknown charming hamlets above Vietri sul Mare, you'll visit the amazing Sanctuary on the Avvocata Mountain, you'll stroll through the streets of the fishing village of Cetara. Often without the crowds of the better known areas, a real treat!

Walking in this area lets you enjoy some of the most splendid views on the Amalfi Coast and the Bay of Naples, while immersed in an almost alpine landscape, without the crowds. You will surely enjoy the rural scenery as well, which makes you feel like you're far away from the glamour of some of the fashionable places along the coast. This tour shows you the paths most guides don't know about and most books don't tell you about!

You will discover that the Amalfi Coast has become Italy's most famous coastline with good reason, but also that there are still places where you can be all by yourself, surrounded by nature.



Please note: this is a moderately easy tour which is suitable for those who have some experience of walking and a good general physical condition. Most of the walks are on good paths, parts of them waymarked. Elsewhere you have to follow the route notes provided together with the maps. Average walking times: from approx. 5 to 6 hours each day.



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DAY-TO-DAY PROGRAMME

Day 1 – Arrival in Salerno

Arrival in Salerno (train station). Your hotel is only a short walk away (optional taxi). After settling in at your hotel you can take your time to discover the beautiful town centre of Salerno and stroll along the 'lungomare', the seaside boulevard, with views of both the Amalfi Coast and the Cilento National Park.

Accommodation: Salerno - Hotel/B&B ***

Optional extra day – Salerno & its castle

Directly from your accommodation right in the heart of the city, you start a great and rewarding round walk through the city centre, touching of course – but not only!- the most interesting 'highlights', such as the Duomo, the theatre, the narrow alleys of the medieval town centre, with its many noble palaces and churches with IX and X century fresco's. The literal highlight of today is the amazing Arechi castle, named after the Lombard prince who established his capital at Salerno in the 8th century. Views over the Amalfi Coast and the whole bay are stunning from here. Back down in town you'll discover the beautiful gardens of Minerva and the roots of the 'Scuola Medica Salernitana', Europe's most important medical 'university' in medieval times. The walk also brings you through quiet parks and the ideal end of the day is a stroll along the sea shore boulevard with a drink at the harbour.

Accommodation: Salerno, Hotel*/B&B**

Optional extra day – Exploring Mt. Vesuvius & Pompeii

Today you'll have the option to see two 'highlights' of the area: you'll make a stunning walk to the top of Mt. Vesuvius, may be the world's most famous volcano and you'll visit Pompeii, Italy's most famous archaeological site, situated under the looming mass of the Vesuvius volcano. The walk to the top of Mt. Vesuvius will also bring you into some lesser known, and therefore less crowded areas of the National Park, which makes you feel in a completely different world! You'll walk through the 'Valley of the Giant' and the 'Valley of Hell', impressive lava flows, which separate the actual main crater from Mount Somma, the remaining part of the ancient crater. The walk will be culminating in a stroll round the edge of the impressive crater at the top! From here you'll enjoy marvellous views over the whole Bay of Naples, a panorama which embraces the area from Sorrento and Capri, to Ischia and Naples. You then travel to the Roman ruins of Pompeii. Here you take your time to visit the extensive excavations and learn about how the Romans lived almost 2000 years ago. After the visit to the archaeological area you can opt for a stroll through 'modern' Pompeii, definitely worth a visit too – the church is one of the main pilgrimage destinations in Italy - before travelling back by train to your hotel.

Accommodation: Salerno, Hotel*/B&B**

Total walking distance: 11 km. Approx. walking time: 4 h. Ascent & descent: +/- 600 m. (several options available)

Day 2 – The Ceramics of the Amalfi Coast

Today's walk takes you from the charming town of Vietri sul Mare, the gateway to the Amalfi Coast, to the little hamlet of Corpo di Cava. Today, as well as during the next few days of your tour, you will be walking along beautiful, but largely unknown footpaths. After strolling through the oldtown centre of Vietri, with its many ceramics shops, you will walk down its little alleys to its Marina, before heading up towards splendid Raito with its wonderful views of the coast. After a coffee break at Raito you then continue uphill to yet another charming little village –Albori. From here the path takes you inland towards the valley of Cava dei Tirreni. After passing Iaconti and the church of San Vincenzo you will walk through shaded chestnut woods to your day's destination near the millennium-old Benedictine Abbey of Corpo di Cava. On your way you could have a look at one of the hidden marvels of this area, the remains of a Roman aqueduct still standing 20m tall! Finally you arrive at your beautiful hotel in the charming hamlet of Corpo di Cava, beautifully located just above a stunning Benedictine Abbey. You have the time to freshen up and get ready for a hearty dinner on the hotel's premises.

Accommodation: Cava dei Tirreni - Hotel ****

Total walking distance: 7 km. Approx. walking time: 3 h. Ascent & descent: + 400 m./ - 100 m.



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Day 3 – From Corpo di Cava to Cetara

Today's walk will take you straight from your hotel, along one of the most famous pilgrim routes in the area, to the Madonna dell'Avvocata, situated on a spectacularly panoramic balcony high above the Amalfi Coast. From the Abbey of Corpo di Cava you first walk up through the golden chestnut woods to the little clearing of Cappella Vecchia or Old Chapel. From here you enjoy a wonderful view over Vietri sul Mare and Salerno to the south, and the ridge of Monte Avvocata to the west. A well-trodden and relatively easy footpath leading through the *maquis* then takes you to the Avvocata Sanctuary. From here you can see as far as Paestum and the mountains of Calabria to the south, while views of the Amalfi Coast reach as far as Ravello and Conca dei Marini. This is definitely one of the most beautiful 'belvederes' of the entire coast, unknown to most, if not all foreign tourists! After visiting the sanctuary, you will then start walking down towards Cetara on the Amalfi Coast proper. Here you will pass through grass and shrub land coloured with numerous wildflowers. Along the winding footpath you will also see some nice examples of local rural architecture. Towards the end of the path you will then enjoy the most wonderful view of the little fishing village of Cetara. A beautiful boat ride along the coast then takes you to Amalfi.

Accommodation: Amalfi - Hotel ***

Total walking distance: 14,5 km. Approx. walking time: 5,5 h. Ascent & descent: + 600 m./ - 950 m. (shorter option available)



Day 4 – Medieval Hamlets of the Amalfi Coast

Today you can either walk or take the local bus to the charming historic village of Ravello, another highlight of the Amalfi Coast. We recommend walking the very scenic first stretch to the beautiful little village of Atrani, with great views of the village centre. Atrani is probably the best-preserved village on the Amalfi Coast, with narrow little streets and a serene village square. Then you can follow the Valle del Dragone, or Valley of the Dragon, up to Ravello. The French novelist André Gide once described this village as being 'closer to the sky than the seashore', and indeed you'll have to climb a number of steps. Ravello is still one of the most exclusive villages on the Amalfi Coast, and boasts two magnificent villas – the superb 11th-century Villa Rufolo, once a papal residence and later the home of Wagner, and Villa Cimbrone, a sumptuous 19th-century mansion with fabulous gardens and unequalled views over the Gulf of Salerno. It has been sought after by writers, artists, musicians and travellers from Northern Europe over the centuries due to its lofty position and sunny, dry climate. Boccaccio, DH Lawrence and Richard Wagner are among the more notable guests who have succumbed to its spells. You can trace your way back to Amalfi by walking back to the beautiful little village of Atrani through the vineyards and lemon groves, or opt for a longer walk through Scala, Minuta and Pontone, possibly visiting the Torre dello Ziro, a medieval watchtower dominating Amalfi and Atrani from above. Either way, the last short stretch to Amalfi is very scenic and has many beautiful viewpoints.

Accommodation: Amalfi - Hotel ***

Total walking distance: 17 km. Approx. walking time: 6 h. Ascent & descent: +/- 700 m. (shorter options available)



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Day 5 – Into the Valle delle Ferriere

Today you make a spectacular round walk in one of southern Italy's most stunning Nature Reserves, the 'Valle delle Ferriere'. From Amalfi you first take the bus to Scala. From here you first walk to the stunning hamlet of Minuta, from where you have great views over Amalfi, Ravello & Atrani. Then you climb up a flight of stairs and enter the Valle delle Ferriere Nature Reserve. You will see some spectacular scenery, walking over comfortable footpaths underneath the towering cliffs, and passing close to some little waterfalls. Though close to Amalfi, the scenery looks like it belongs to a different world: one of isolated mountains. After crossing the main stream, the path gradually descends through the forest towards the little village of Pogerola, dominating the valley of Amalfi from the west. From here a beautiful medieval mule track curves down to Amalfi, amidst lemon groves and *maquis*, with nice views over the valley.

Accommodation: Amalfi - Hotel ***

Total walking distance: 11 km. Approx. walking time 5 h. Ascent & descent: + 300 m./- 700 m.

Day 6 – Along the 'Via Maestra' towards Praiano

Today you walk all the way along the coast towards beautiful Praiano, the 'Heart of the Amalfi Coast', halfway between Amalfi and Positano. From Amalfi you start walking along one of the oldest streets in the area: the so-called 'Via Maestra dei Villaggi', or Highway of the Villages, an old paved mule track dating back to the 9th century. You pass the little villages of Lone and Vettica, before arriving at the imposing monastery of Santa Rosa (there is also the possibility of taking a bus here to avoid walking about 250 m. uphill). The route then descends towards the coast again past some charming churches, beautifully located above the rocky shore. You then descend into the spectacular Fjord of Furore, where a charming little hamlet is nestled in the rocky cliffs. From here you walk up again, past the church of Sant'Elia into the Valley of Praia, and then head to the coastal town of Praiano, with an optional descent to the very picturesque inlet of Marina di Praia, Praiano's little old harbour.

Accommodation: Praiano - Hotel ***

Total walking distance: 11 km. Approx. walking time: 6 h. Ascent & descent: + 700 m./- 500 m. (shorter option available)

Day 7 – Along the 'Path of the Gods' to Positano

Today you start in the picturesque whitewashed alleys of Praiano. Along a medieval pilgrim route, you then walk up to the monastery of San Domenico, dominating the coast from its hilltop. Here you can have a little rest before continuing uphill, through spectacular scenery with bizarre rock formations and luxurious vegetation. Shortly after, you reach one of Italy's most famous footpaths, the '*Sentiero degli Dei*' ("Footpath of the Gods"). This path really lives up to its name, halfway the sea and the sky, with gorgeous views of the Amalfi Coast, Capri, and the Cilento. Towers of limestone rocks in a vertiginous setting of yellow and green; the azure sea seems close enough to touch! The path leads through variegated countryside with vineyards, chestnut trees, oak woods, shrubs and broom bushes. Through this unique scenery, with its unrivalled views, you reach the tiny hamlet of Nocelle and shortly after the little village of Montepertuso. After Montepertuso it's only a short walk down to mundane Positano, one of the most charming villages on the coast. You can do this either by bus or on foot, but we recommend the latter because of the grottos and charming little streets of Positano. There is ample time to explore or perhaps go for a swim, before you return by local bus to Praiano, a short, but very scenic drive.

Accommodation: Praiano - Hotel ***

Total walking distance: 8,5 km. Approx. walking time: 4,5 h. Ascent & descent: + 500 m./- 600 m.

Day 8 – Departure

After breakfast you return by boat or by bus and train to Naples, and then by shuttle bus to the airport. An extra night in a hotel can be booked upon request.



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TOUR DETAILS

ACCOMMODATION & MEALS

Accommodation is on a bed and breakfast basis in 3/4-star quality hotels. All rooms have en-suite facilities.

Only on the second night in Cava your evening meal is included (on the premises of the hotel). All other evenings you are free to choose from the wide choice of restaurants in the area. Your accommodation holder can give you good tips. On some occasions you can also choose to eat at the premises of the hotel.

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 where you'll be staying. On some occasions you have the option of having your lunch in a restaurant along the way.

Nights 1: The first night you will stay in a comfortable hotel right in the heart of Salerno, at walking distance to the train station, the harbour and to the most interesting highlights in the town centre.

Night 2: This night is spent in a beautifully located, comfortable 4-star hotel in the hamlet of Corpo di Cava, high above the little town of Cava dei Tirreni. From the hotel it is only a short stroll to the millennium-old Benedictine Abbey.

Nights 3, 4 & 5: These three nights are spent at Amalfi, the ancient capital of the Amalfi Coast in a welcoming and comfortable 3-star hotel centrally located, at walking distance from the sea and all main monuments of the medieval town centre.

Nights 6 & 7: The final couple of nights you stay in the little village of Praiano, in a good 3-star hotel with a few nice little beaches at walking distance. For those wanting an extra day's relaxation a longer stay can be arranged.

UPGRADE/CHANGES IN ACCOMMODATION

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

INCLUDED

- 7 nights accommodation - BB & HB
- 1 night in Salerno *** - BB
- 1 night in Cava dei Tirreni **** - HB
- 3 nights in Amalfi *** - BB
- 2 nights in Praiano *** - BB
- Extensive route notes, with description of the route & tourist information
- Maps at 1 : 25.000 scale or more detailed
- GPS tracks of each walk
- Luggage transfer on day 2 & day 3 & day 6
- 24/7 assistance



NOT INCLUDED

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

LEVEL OF DIFFICULTY

Moderately easy (2-3): Mostly easy walks along well maintained paths. There are some sections steeply 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

Footpaths: Most paths are relatively well maintained, but during the season some paths can get overgrown, especially the lesser used paths (*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: Part of the route is waymarked; elsewhere you have to follow the route descriptions provided together with the maps. With these you will always be able to find your route.

ARRIVAL & DEPARTURE

Arrival: The tour starts in SALERNO. Regular (high speed) trains run between Salerno and most major Italian cities (Naples, Rome, Milan).

Departure: The tour ends in PRAIANO. A frequent bus service can bring you to either Sorrento or Amalfi/Salerno, where you travel on to your next destination (Naples or Rome can both be easily reached). Taxi services are available to bring you directly to your next destination.

TOUR VARIATIONS

EXTRA NIGHTS

It is possible to include extra nights in any of the towns en route. Extra walking or sightseeing options can be provided as indicated in the day-to-day programme.

EXTENSIONS

It is possible to extend the tour with one or more night in Amalfi or any other town along the Amalfi Coast. This tour can also be extended with one of our existing tours in the heart of the Amalfi Coast.

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