



Independent walking tour (CIL4)

The 'Cilento Antico'

Paestum, Monte Stella & Cilento Coast

*Walking in the footsteps of the 'Mediterranean Diet'
along the beautiful 'Coast of the Sirens'*



TRIP NOTES

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INTRODUCTION

The region of Campania marks the real starting point of southern Italy. It has been sought after since Roman times when it was labelled the Campania Felix, or 'happy land', hardly a surprise considering the fact that it includes the great city of Naples, beautiful countryside, Roman ruins, small islands and stretches of spectacular coast. On the southern side of the Sorrento Peninsula, the Costiera Amalfitana is probably one of Europe's most well-known stretches of coastline, with its towering cliffs and picturesque coves.

But Campania's real secret is located south of Salerno, and immediately south of the wonderful Greek temples of Paestum. Here the coastline bulges out into an expanse of mountainous landmass known as the Cilento, now a National Park with World Heritage listing. It stretches from the Tyrrhenian coast to the foot of the Apennines, and it includes the peaks of the Alburni Mountains, Mt. Cervati (1899 m.) and the coastal buttresses of Mt. Bulgheria and Mt. Stella. The extraordinary naturalistic richness of the heterogeneous territory goes hand in hand with the mythical and mysterious character of a land rich in history and culture: from the nymphs Leucosia and Kamaraton, to the beaches where Palinuro left Aeneas, from the ruins of the Greek colonies of Elea and Paestum to the wonderful Certosa of Padula.

Inland the Cilento is largely undisturbed by the 21st century and you will enjoy visiting quaint villages where the traditional way of life is still evident. 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 the multicoloured undergrowth of myrtle and cactuses; whilst huge, centuries-old olive trees grow right down to the shore.

This short tour covers the western part of the Cilento, also known as the 'Cilento Antico, dominated by the 'volcano-shaped' Mt. Stella, with a ring of villages around it. It's the homeland of the 'Mediterranean Diet', an area known for the longevity of the local people. A large part of the tour is along the coast, but you also walk through pristine natural areas and attractive countryside, with all their cultural treasures like rural chapels, ancient farmhouses, old watermills and charming medieval villages. During the tour you also visit some of the nicest old fishing villages, like Santa Maria and San Marco di Castellabate, Agropoli and Acciaroli, as well as the beautiful hillside villages of Rocca Cilento, Pollica and Galdo.



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 the them are waymarked. Elsewhere you have to follow the route notes provided together with the maps. Average walking times: from approx.. 4 to 6 hours each day.



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DAY-TO-DAY PROGRAMME

Day 1 – Arrival in Paestum

Arrival at Paestum by train. Settle in your hotel, located only a few hundred meters from the amazing Greek temples, which are among the best-preserved in Europe. Leave your luggage at the hotel and take your time to pay a visit to the archaeological site. Then walk back to the hotel to enjoy a typical dinner of local cuisine.

Accommodation: Paestum - Hotel ***

Day 2 – From Agropoli along Punta Tresino to Santa Maria di Castellabate

First you make a short train ride to Agropoli today. From here you start a wonderful walk along the headland of Punta Tresino, one of the last remaining stretches of pristine coast. You walk through a genuine Mediterranean landscape, through forests and scrubland, along wonderful beaches and an ancient Roman harbour, with beautiful views over the sea. You reach the abandoned village of San Giovanni, where some very good white wine is still produced today (optional tasting possible). Then you descend to the large sandy beach of Castellabate, where it's worth continuing all the way down the beach until you get to the charming little fishing harbour of Santa Maria. From here you are picked up – perhaps after a swim and a nice *gelato* on the beach – and you are brought to your charming hotel in the fortified village of Rocca Cilento.

Accommodation: Rocca Cilento - Boutique Hotel

Total walking distance: 11 km. Approx. walking time: 4 h. Ascent & descent: + 150 m./- 200 m.

Day 3 – The Valle dei Mulini from Rocca Cilento

Today you make a circular walk from Rocca Cilento, a walk which brings you through some of the most interesting villages in the area and into the so-called 'Valle dei Mulini' (the Valley of the Mills). Parts of the walks follow the old route that connected this valley to the Greek cities of Paestum and Velia. First you walk down along the ridge, with wonderful views to both sides, to the tiny village of Lustra, with its well preserved medieval centre. Then you start to descend into the Valley of the Mills, along a beautiful, recently restored footpath. Here you'll notice the remains of a whopping 17 watermills! After crossing the river you'll climb up to the charming little hamlet of Valle Cilento, with its beautiful bell towers. The path then descends into the valley again and goes past the abandoned village of Massacanina. A short but steep climb leads you onto the ridge again and, past the monastery of Mercato Cilento, you take a panoramic road, which will lead you back to Rocca Cilento, dominated by its fine castle where views over the area are unrivalled. Take some time to relax on the panoramic terrace before your dinner based on local specialties.

Accommodation: Rocca Cilento - Boutique Hotel

Total walking distance: 13 km. Approx. walking time: 5 h. Ascent & descent: +/- 550 m.

Day 4 – Along the 'Alta Via' of the Monte Stella

Today you will have a very panoramic walk along the ridge of Mt. Stella, which is still the geographic and cultural centre of the area, surrounded by a ring of charming medieval villages. A short transfer brings you to Perdifumo, where you start the walk in the chestnut forest. Once you reach the ridge views range from the island of Capri and the Amalfi Coast to Capo Palinuro, and sometimes even to the island of Stromboli in Sicily! Parts of the walk lead through the *maquis* and bare rocks, other parts through thick chestnut forests. You pass the historical 'Castelluccio', an abandoned fortress, probably dating back to the pre-Roman period. Then, still following the ridge, you reach the chapel of the Virgin of Monte Stella, the spiritual centre of the area, and still a place of worship today. Then you



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make a long descent towards the coast and you'll pass a nice picnic area and a last, very scenic stretch brings you down to the beautiful small village of Galdo (or San Mauro), your base for the next two nights.

N.B. In case you book the short 6-day version of this tour you'll walk all the way down to Acciaroli (see day 6).

Accommodation: Galdo (Pollica) – Agriturismo/B&B – HB

Total walking distance: 10 km. Approx. walking time: 4 h. Ascent & descent: + 400 m/- 750 m.

Day 5 – The ‘Ring of the Villages’

Today's walk is a 'cultural walk, which will bring you through several beautiful historic villages. The first one is the tiny medieval Galdo, where you must visit the lone church of San Nicola. From here you climb up and shortly reach the small hamlet of Celso, which you enter under its medieval arch. From Celso to Pollica you'll follow one of the most scenic paths of the area, with amazing views over the sea. Take your time to stroll through the alleys of the village and perhaps have lunch at the beautiful 'Orto dei Centenari'. Along a scenic road you then walk on to Cannicchio, beautifully located on a ridge, again with nice views over the sea. After a drink here you walk back through the valley to your accommodation.

Accommodation: Galdo (Pollica) – Agriturismo/B&B

Total walking distance: 10 km. Approx. walking time: 4 h. Ascent & descent: +/- 350 m.

Day 6 – Down to Acciaroli & Roundwalk Castellabate

Today you leave the hills and walk back down to the sea. A very scenic walk will bring you down to Acciaroli, a characteristic fishing village with a beautiful sandy beach, one of Ernest Hemingway's favourite places. Here you can enjoy a swim before you are being picked up and brought to the small village of San Marco di Castellabate, where you stay in a comfortable family-run hotel. In case you want to relax, there are a few beautiful beaches nearby and you still have the time to make the nice short walk to Santa Maria di Castellabate. In case you want to make a more challenging roundwalk: you can opt for the walk up to Castellabate itself, a beautiful medieval town, with its imposing castle overlooking the sea. From there you then make a stunningly scenic walk back down to the coast, either towards Santa Maria, or directly back to your hotel in San Marco. In the evening you are free to arrange your own dinner from a wide choice of restaurants in the near surroundings.

Accommodation: San Marco di Castellabate - Hotel*/***

Total walking distance: 8 km. Approx. walking time: 2 h. Ascent & descent: + 70 m/- 500 m. (Walk to Acciaroli)

Total walking distance: 11 km. Approx. walking time: 3 h. Ascent & descent: +/- 300 m. (Roundwalk Castellabate)

Day 7 – Punta Licosa, the *Finis Terrae* of the Cilento

You start a circular walk straight from your hotel, passing through typical Mediterranean *maquis* onto the Monte Licosa headland. This is the point where Cilento reaches furthest out to sea, like a miniature reproduction of the Monte Stella peninsula. It is full of marine charm, a place where the sea breeze makes the trees dance, bound to Ulysses' myth: people say that the Siren Leucosia drowned herself here after failing to bewitch Ulysses. You first walk up to the ridge through the pine forest. From here you'll enjoy superb views over the whole area, both the coast and inland, the bay of Salerno and even Calabria! You then descend towards the coast near Ogliastro Marina, and from here you follow a coastal trail to the very tip of the headland. Also along the coast you can see the ruins of several watchtowers and you will be captivated by the magic of the dancing trees. Of course there are several opportunities for a swim. From Punta Licosa you then continue along the coast and a beautiful path brings you back to the nice harbour of San Marco.

Accommodation: San Marco di Castellabate - Hotel*/***

Total walking distance: 15 km. Approx. walking time: 5 h. Ascent & descent: +/- 400 m.



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Day 8 – Departure

The tour ends after breakfast in San Marco. Of course you can opt for an extra day here, otherwise a short journey by bus or taxi brings you to the Agropoli train station. From here you return to Naples, Salerno or Rome.



TOUR DETAILS

ACCOMMODATION & MEALS

Accommodation is mainly on a half-board basis (only the nights in San Marco are on a bed and breakfast basis – see inclusions) in very good 3-star hotels and a comfortable guesthouse (comparable to a 3-star hotel). All rooms have en-suite facilities. You will have most dinners included; on two evenings you will be free to organise your dinner from the wide choice of restaurants in the area. 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.

INCLUDED

- 7 nights accommodation – BB/HB
- 1 night Hotel*** in Paestum – HB
- 2 nights Country House*** in Rocca Cilento – HB
- 2 nights Agriturismo/B&B in Galdo – HB
- 2 nights in Hotel/B&B*** in San Marco di Castellabate – BB
- Extensive route notes, with description of the route & tourist information
- Maps at 1 : 25.000 scale
- GPS tracks for each walk
- Luggage transfer
- Private transfers as specified
- 24/7 h local assistance

NOT INCLUDED

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



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ARRIVAL & DEPARTURE

Arrival: The tour starts in PAESTUM; a pick-up service can be arranged from the train station, which can be reached from Naples, the nearest city with an international airport. The train journey takes about an hour.

Departure: The tour ends in CASTELLABATE. A short ride brings you to the Agropoli train station, from where you can travel on to your next destination (Naples, Salerno or Rome can all be easily reached). Several taxi services are available to bring you directly to your next destination.

LEVEL OF DIFFICULTY

Moderately easy (2-3): Mostly easy walks, though 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

Footpaths: Most paths are 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; elsewhere you have to follow the route descriptions provided together with the maps. With these you will always be able to find your route. In case you don't feel confident a local guide can be provided for some trails.

TOUR VARIATIONS

This tour includes the best walks of the 'Cilento Antico, the area around Mt. Stella on the northern Cilento Coast. It is possible to book a shorter version of this tour (skipping the area of Pollica), but it is also possible to extend this tour with a few walks in the territory of the '**Mediterranean Diet**', between the villages of Pioppi & Pollica, with possible stays in one of the villages on the lower slopes of Mt. Stella, San Mauro, Serramezzana or Pollica, or in the beautiful seaside village of Acciaroli or in the charming seaside resort of Casalvelino Marina, located close to the Greek city of Velia, and with some beautiful sandy beaches.

We also offer tours along the southern Coast, as well as a 'complete' tour, which includes walks both along the northern coast as well as along the South coast:

- [Southern Cilento Explorer](#) – a full immersion in the beautiful southern part of the Cilento.
- [Paestum & the pristine coast of the Cilento National Park](#) – the best walks along the Cilento Coast

EXTRA NIGHTS

It is possible to include extra nights in any of the accommodations en route. As well is it possible to extend your tour with a few days In Salerno, Naples, or along the Amalfi Coast. Details and prices on request.

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