



Independent cycling tour (BCILC7)

Paestum & the coast of the Cilento National Park

*Cycling from the Greek temples of Paestum along the beautiful
coast and into the heartland of the Cilento National Park*



TRIP NOTES

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****GENIUS LOCI TRAVEL - The Real Spirit of Italy****



INTRODUCTION

The region of Campania has been known as a paradise on earth since ancient times. The Greeks built some of their most impressive temples here and under the Romans it became known as 'Campania Felix', or the Happy Land. When travelling through this region one becomes overwhelmed by its wealth of cultural and natural attractions, from the great city of Naples to the well-known Costiera Amalfitana, with its towering cliffs and picturesque coves.

But Campania's real secret is located south of Salerno. Here the coastline bulges out into an expanse of mountainous landmass known as the Cilento, now one of Italy's biggest National Parks, with World Heritage listing.

*The longer version of this tour also brings you into the real **'Heart of the Cilento'**, from ancient Paestum up to Monte Stella, from Pisciotta inland towards the medieval villages of Ceraso and Rodio, and from the pristine southern Cilento coast around the impressive Bulgheria Mountain. Inland the Cilento is largely undisturbed by the 21st century and you will encounter few other tourists along your way. You will cycle past world-famous cultural sites, through pristine natural areas and dreamy coastal scenery. Your trip will take you on small country roads passing through rough mountain scenery, as well as attractive countryside, with vineyards and olive groves.*

During the whole tour you will stay close to the coast, so you'll have many occasions to alternate the cycling with a swim or relax on an empty beach. You will cycle past the archaeological site of Paestum on your way to a genuine mozzarella farm, and climb up to some nice viewpoints on the coastal plain. Further on you will cycle around Monte Stella, dotted with several typical medieval hamlets, and continue along the coast towards the tiny fishing villages of Acciaroli and Pioppi to the Greek site of Velia. From here the coastal route goes a bit higher up, passing through the charming medieval towns of Ascea and Pisciotta, before descending to the sea close to Cape Palinuro again.

The last part of your route takes you along the stunning coast to one of the pearls of the southern coast, Marina di Camerota. A great panoramic ride along the lower slopes of the Bulgheria Mountain – and perhaps a last swim on one of the wonderful beaches is the superb ending to this great cycling tour.



Please note: this is a moderate tour, suitable for all those who have some experience of bicycle touring and are in a good general physical condition. Some of the inland stretches have some steeper climbs. Average cycling times: approx 5-6 hours each day.



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DAY-TO-DAY PROGRAMME

Day 1 – Arrival in Paestum (Capaccio)

After arriving at the Paestum train station you will be brought to your hotel near the world famous Temples of Paestum. Your bicycles will be waiting for you at the hotel. If you want you can already make a first ride, of course past the temples and around the Greek city walls, or down to the beach for a quick swim. In case you have arrived early you can visit the temples already, leaving more time for a longer trip tomorrow. In the evening you enjoy a nice dinner based on local specialties in your hotel.

Hotel*** - Paestum

Distance: 6,5 km. – Cycling time: 1 h. – Ascent & descent: +/- 30 m.

Day 2 – Over the plain and through the foothills of Paestum

Your first trip takes you on a ride through the ancient territory of the Greek town of Paestum. You can opt for a relaxed ride through the plain, or a longer and harder one taking you to some nice medieval hamlets in the foothills and offering some amazing views. Before setting off you can visit the temples and the museum of the UNESCO World Heritage site of Paestum and its world-famous Doric temples. Here you will admire not only the three temples, but also other monuments including the amphitheatre, the 'Heroon' tomb, several Greek and Roman houses and one of the towns' impressive gates. In the local museum you can see the exemplary collection of prehistoric utensils, Greek vases and Roman sculptures. Absolutely not to miss is the so-called 'Tomba del Tuffatore' (Diver's Tomb), a rare example of Greek funeral painting. Lunch can be taken at a local buffalo farm where you can taste delicious and genuine fresh mozzarella. Your cycling trip will take you through the plain to the Sele River and past the 'Capo di Fiume' karst springs to the villages of Giugnano and Cicerale (optional) and back down again to your hotel. Dinner is on the premises of your hotel tonight. After dinner you can opt to make another short stroll past the temples and perhaps grab a gelato.

Hotel*** - Paestum

Distance: 37/71 km. – Cycling time: 2,5/5 h. – Ascent & descent: +/- 130 m. / +/- 750 m.

Day 3 – From Paestum along Acciaroli to Marina di Casalvelino

Today you will leave the Paestum plain for a first taste of the real Cilento. Your trip takes you on quiet roads through fragrant Mediterranean maquis and shady olive groves, up into the coastal hills above the town of Agropoli, through some dreamy medieval hamlets, and down again to the coastal villages of Santa Maria and San Marco di Castellabate. From here you continue along the coast in a southern direction. This is definitely one of the finest coastal rides in Italy, alternating wonderful views with charming seaside villages. You cycle past the headland of Punta Licosa, named after the nymph Leucosia, and then climb the 'red hills'. After a flattish section you may then stop for a drink in Acciaroli, where according to the legend Ernest Hemingway was inspired to write 'The Old Man and the Sea'. After a last easy climb that takes you a bit further inland again, you descend to the delightful little fishing village of Pioppi. Here you can visit the small Sea Life Museum dedicated to the local marine fauna and flora. Pioppi is also famous as the second home of the American professor Ancel Keys, father of the so-called Mediterranean Diet. A last short stretch brings you to Casalvelino Marina, where you will stay in a beautiful agriturismo for the next two nights. Tonight you'll indulge in local specialties: the dinner you'll have is completely based on the agriturismo's own produce, prepared according to the best recipes.

Agriturismo - Marina di Casalvelino

Distance: 60 km. – Cycling time: 3,5 h. – Ascent & descent: +/- 740 m.



Day 4 - Around the Monte Stella: the ring of medieval hamlets

Today's trip starts with a long and winding climb up the southern slopes of Monte Stella, to the beautifully located old village of Acquavella, through olive groves and vineyards. The road continues uphill and, past the village of Stella Cilento, you reach Omignano. Once you have reached this village, the route becomes easier, from here you'll start the 'Ring of Monte Stella', a very panoramic tour with fantastic views in all directions, all around the 'Mountain of the Sea'. This circuit touches several charming villages at more or less the same altitude (a transfer to either Stella Cilento or Omignano can be arranged). The easy road now passes through chestnut forests, opening up now and then to wonderful views over the inland Cilento, reaching as far as the Alburni and Cervati mountain ranges. Once you reach the northern edge, your views open up towards the Amalfi Coast and Capri. On clear days the view stretches even as far as the island of Stromboli in Sicily! You pass a number of nice medieval villages: Celso, Galdo, San Mauro, Stella Cilento, all worth a short stop. Their honest simplicity and quiet peace is best savoured from the local bar, with an Italian coffee at hand. At the end of the day you descend towards Pollica, and then along the coast back to Casalvelino. Or you can opt for a slightly longer route that takes you down to the fishing village of Acciaroli again, for a nice 'aperitivo' at the harbour, before doing the beautiful final stretch back to Casalvelino. After arriving here you can make a stop at the beach for a well-deserved relaxing swim. Another great dinner awaits you on the premises of your beautiful agriturismo.

Agriturismo - Marina di Casalvelino

Distance: 58 km. – Cycling time: 5 h. – Ascent & descent: +/- 1020 m. (shorter options possible)

Day 5 – From Casalvelino along Pisciotta to Cape Palinuro

After leaving Casalvelino Marina, the road takes you through the plain of the Alento River to the Greek and Roman site of Velia, home to the philosophers Zenon and Parmenides, and cradle of one of Europe's most ancient schools of medicine. You can leave your bikes at the entrance and explore the amazing site. Amongst its remains one finds the celebrated 'Porta Rosa', one of the first examples of the use of the vault in Greek architecture. Other monuments worth exploring are the port, the Greek and Roman baths and the agora. The town's acropolis in medieval times has been reused as a local stronghold and preserves a magnificent medieval bastion. After a short visit you continue your ride, which now starts to go uphill, to reach the village of Ascea. The road now passes through fragrant Mediterranean maquis and centuries-old olive groves, all the while offering fantastic views over the sea. At about lunchtime you reach the medieval hilltop village of Pisciotta. Here you can enjoy a great lunch, overlooking the Mediterranean below. Luckily the ride after lunch is mostly downhill. Halfway through the afternoon you reach the headland of Capo Palinuro. This promontory, named after one of the helmsmen of the mythical hero Aeneas, is one of the most famous spots in the Cilento National Park. Its unique topography, made up of dazzlingly high rock cliffs full of sea grottos, amongst which is the stunning 'Grotta Azzurra', makes for a wonderful sight. You cycle to the little village of Palinuro and stop at the tiny port. Those who feel like it can make a short boat tour of the cape, visiting the caves! Then you settle in your nice hotel, and at night you have dinner in one of the nice local restaurants.

Hotel*** - Palinuro

Distance: 42 km. – Cycling time: 2,5 h. – Ascent & descent: +/- 600 m.



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Day 6 - Marina di Camerota and Monte Bulgheria roundtrip

After an early breakfast, you will start your cycling day with a wonderful stretch along the southern coast of the Cilento National Park. Upon arrival in the lovely coastal town of Marina di Camerota, you can have a drink at the harbour and then you will have to start climbing! During this very scenic climb you'll enjoy an unparalleled view of one of the most unspoilt stretches of coastline in southern Italy, the 'Costa degli Infreschi', one of the most unspoilt stretch of coastline in southern Italy. You pass through the little hamlet of Lentiscosa, and continue to the amazingly located village of San Giovanni a Piro, beautifully located with spectacular views of the Gulf of Policastro on the one side and the impressive sheer cliffs of the mountain on the other.

Here you can have lunch, either a picnic lunch at one of the most stunning places you've ever been to, or in a cosy little restaurant. Then you continue the tour all around the impressive Mt. Bulgheria. First with a short downhill section, and then 'levelish' through the villages of Bosco and Acquavena, keeping the impressive limestone crags of Monte Bulgheria to your left. After reaching the valley of the Mingardo River you can continue for a short visit to the charming village of Roccagloriosa, nestled on a rocky hill high above the valley floor. After a stroll and perhaps a drink in the village square, you then continue downhill, towards the entrance of the impressive Mingardo canyon, dominated by the abandoned medieval village of San Severino. Through the Mingardo canyon you'll return to the coast and then cycle back the coastal route to your hotel.

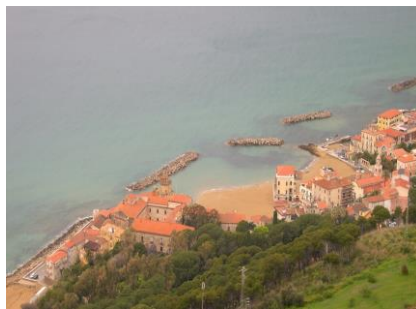
Hotel*** - Palinuro

Distance: 57 km. – Cycling time: 5 h. – Ascent & descent: +/- 960 m.

Day 7 – Departure from Cilento (or on to the Amalfi coast?)

The tour ends in Marina di Camerota after breakfast today. A private transfer (included) takes you to the train station, from where you travel back to Naples or Salerno.

N.B. In case you booked the Amalfi Extension you can take the boat from Salerno to Amalfi, where another two days of great cycling await you. A private taxi transfer to other destinations can be arranged on request.



TOUR DETAILS

ACCOMMODATION & MEALS

All nights are spent in nice hotels or agriturismo's (generally 3-star). All rooms have en-suite facilities.

Dinners are included 4 times, both in Paestum, as well as in Casalvelino. Only in Palinuro, where there is a large choice of nice restaurants, you are free to make your own dinner arrangements.

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.

UPGRADE/CHANGES IN ACCOMMODATION

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

LEVEL OF DIFFICULTY

Moderately easy (2-3): Mostly moderate rides but inevitably with several climbs, only a few of which are really strenuous. All roads are well paved and mostly quiet, with little traffic except for some stretches near Paestum during the first two days and the last. Extensions or shortcuts are possible on some days.

Fitness: Some experience of bicycle touring and a good general physical condition will certainly make your tour more enjoyable. You should be able to cycle for several hours a day even in hot dry weather conditions.

INCLUDED

- 6 nights accommodation – BB/HB
- 2 nights in Hotel*** in Paestum – HB
- 2 nights in Agriturismo in Casalvelino – HB
- 2 nights in Hotel**** in Palinuro – BB
- Luggage transfer on day 3 & day 5
- Private transfers as specified
- Extensive route notes, with description of the route & tourist information
- Maps at 1 : 50.000 scale (or better)
- GPS waypoints & tracks
- 24/7 h 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
- Bicycle rental (available on request* - www.genius-loci.it/tour/rental-bikes)



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ARRIVAL & DEPARTURE

Arrival: The tour starts in PAESTUM, which can easily be reached by train from either Naples or Salerno. Naples has an international airport. From Rome (and many other cities) Naples and Salerno, can easily be reached.

Departure: The tour ends in PALINURO. A short transfer can bring you to the local train station where Salerno and Naples are easily reachable.

TOUR VARIATIONS

EXTRA NIGHTS

It is possible to include extra nights in any of the accommodations 'en route'. Extra cycling and/or sightseeing options can be provided!

It is also possible to extend your tour with a few days in the Cilento or Salerno, along the beautiful Costiera Amalfitana or in Naples. Details & prices on request.

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