

Touring holidays of Italy

Expressions



From Naples to the toe of Italy and Sicily



From Naples to the toe of Italy and Sicily

12 NIGHTS / 13 DAYS

Naples

Sorrento

Amalfi Coast

Maratea

Tropea

Taormina

Catania



Travel the length of Southern Italy by car, from bustling Naples with its lively lifestyle, along the coast to rocky seaside Maratea in the Basilicata region, and further on to the reef of Tropea in Calabria on Italy's toe. Your final stop brings you to historic Taormina on the floral island of Sicily.

Under the brooding gaze of Vesuvio, begin this luxury fly-drive touring holiday in Naples. Your first hotel sits on the Amalfi Coast's Sorrentine Peninsula, separated from Naples by the mountain and Pompei. Explore the preserved ruins of that infamous eruption, contrasted with the anarchic atmosphere of the Naples that was rebuilt after the Second World War. Its roots, however, date back to before the Bronze Age, and it proudly bears the scars and treasures of many now-fallen empires, particularly the Roman. Your hotel in Sant'Agnello is the Hotel Cocumella, a light and airy property with archways that hark back to ancient times. The cliff face that the hotel overlooks appears to cradle the fossils of caves and walls and buildings. Drive south along the coast after three nights in Sant'Agnello, until you reach Maratea, where you still stay for two nights in La Locanda delle Donne Monache. High on the formidable hillsides of Basilicata, Maratea is a small village of immense natural beauty and religious heritage. The Locanda itself is a beautifully converted convent at the peak of the village, affording it an attractive pool terrace with unrivalled views of the town below, the mountains, and the Statue of the Redeemer. Continue south down the side of Italy's boot to the Villa Paola in Tropea, separated from the sea by a dramatically high cliffside which merges with the buildings above. Spend your days in Calabria exploring this fantastic coastline, hiking across the rocks, and climbing the Isle of Tropea, to see the exclusive stately monastery that sits on top. The final stop on this touring holiday lies across the crystal-clear water on the island of Sicily. You cross by ferry (frequent departures throughout the day) from Villa San Giovanni to Messina, and then it's about hour by car to Taormina. The Hotel Villa Belvedere in Taormina is a hotel that integrates perfectly into the verdant and florally abundant town in which it sits. Step out on to your own private balcony to bask in the warmth and outstanding views of Sicily, or walk into the centre of town to trace the wealth of Roman and Greek heritage that punctuates the quaint streets. Depart Sicily from Catania to return to the UK on your final day.

PRICES

From £2,490 per person

Based on two people sharing a double or twin room.

Alternative hotel options can be offered in most locations as well as room upgrade supplements.

DATES

This holiday can be arranged throughout the year, however some hotels may close during the winter season.

WHAT'S INCLUDED

Accommodation on bed and breakfast as below:

- 3 nights at the Grand Hotel Cocumella in Sant'Agnello, Sorrento
- 2 nights at the Locanda delle Donne Monache in Maratea
- 2 nights at the Villa Paola in Tropea
- 5 nights at the Hotel Villa Belvedere in Taormina

Scheduled flights from London Gatwick to Naples and from Catania to London Gatwick
Group B car hire for the duration of your holiday

WHAT'S NOT INCLUDED

Ferry ticket from Villa San Giovanni to Messina which should be purchased at the port
Early check-in or late check-out at any hotels (though we can arrange this on request at additional cost).

Any other services not mentioned above, such as transfers and meals except breakfast at hotels.

DAYS ONE TO FOUR: Arrive in Naples and drive to Sant’Agnello, where you will stay for three nights

After arriving in Naples, spend your first day in the city. Embrace the vibrance and uproarious noise, as the rest of this tour will be focused on relaxation. Explore the Gothic Cattedrale di San Gennaro with its charming white façade, the Royal Palace built under Spanish rule still reflected in the intricacy of the interior decoration, the irregular Castel Nuovo, and the extensive Paleo-Christian Catacombs of San Gennaro. The Archaeological Museum is not only a vital insight into the city’s Greco-Roman past and the destruction left by Vesuvio, but is a remarkable pink-hued building in its own right. Your hotel, the Grand Hotel Cocumella, is in the small seaside settlement of Sant’Agnello, which merges with Sorrento to the west. Its coastline rises from the sea in the form of immense grey cliffs, lined with the remains of houses from years ago, with small harbours and marinas stretching out into the sea. For the active visitor, this landscape is ideal for bracing hikes and long walks. Sorrento offers more in the way of historical and tourist attractions. Its historic centre is comprised of a complex network of narrow alleyways, perfect for an afternoon of stimulating exploration, while its famous Piazza Tasso is lined with small cafes ideal for a light lunch. The Chiesa di San Francesco dates back to the 14th century and is adorned with a beautiful, peaceful cloister. Sorrento and Sant’Agnello mark the beginning of the Amalfi Coast, or the ‘Footpath of the Gods,’ with the town of Amalfi itself just an hour’s drive away. Positano, closer to Sant’Agnello than Amalfi, is a similar seaside village of white houses with terracotta roofs built into the tumbling hillside that overlooks the stunning azure sea. The Chiesa di Santa Maria Assunta is a hub of quirky architecture, with its majolica-tiled dome and 13th century Byzantine icon of the Virgin Mary. The Sorrentine Peninsula and the villages of the Amalfi Coast are built on volcanic soil, which enables local producers to create distinctive local wines and olive oil. Stop off at one of the local oil mills or wineries to taste the produce. The Casavecchia wine, for example, dates back to the time of Pliny the Elder and features in his writings, though it was thought to be extinct for a number of years. While in Positano or Amalfi, try the Limoncello, made from the famous Amalfi lemons, or the regional Mozzarella di Bufala, and pick up some of the local speciality ceramics. Retire to your luxury room in the evenings, and relax amidst the elegant decoration. Choose from the hotel’s three restaurants, and dine either in the fragrant



Grand Hotel Cocumella, Sant’Agnello

garden, by the poolside, or on the terrace overlooking the sea.

DAYS FOUR AND FIVE: Drive south to Maratea, where you will stay for two nights

From Sant’Agnello, drive back north to Pompei and take the inland road through Campania to the short coastline of Basilicata. La Locanda delle Donne Monache sits at the very top of the village, with a mountainous backdrop, and was once occupied by nuns. Its religious history can still be observed on the exterior as the building has been faithfully maintained. Explorers of the village will find crumbling buildings and overgrown lanes that hark back to an older Maratea. Follow the flow of these little lanes lined with fractured archways and grottoes, and eat lunch in one of the outdoor cafes on the Piazza Buraglia. Take time to visit most of the 44 churches, each endearingly individual. The most striking is the Chiesetta del Calvario. In the summer the streets come alive with everything from jazz concerts to food tastings, while down at the Maratea Porto, local art is displayed on the walls of the lanes and cafes around the marina. The Grotta delle Meraviglie are a series of atmospheric and mesmerising caves, dripping with stalagmites, and offer another viewpoint from which to see the varied Basilicata landscape. Travel along the shoreline dotted with ruined castles until you reach the small exclusive beaches around Castrocuoco, or relax on the La Secca beach or Spaggia Macarro closer to the hotel.

Nearby Santa Caterina offers scuba-diving opportunities with the Centro Sub Maratea. High on the peak of Mont San Biagio in the Ciento National Park is Maratea’s answer to the statue of the Redeemer in Rio de Janeiro. It is, however, deliberately more joyful and youthful than its Brazilian counterpart. Reaching 22 metres high, the statue is one of Maratea’s most popular attractions, and certainly worth hiking up to, especially due to the picturesque village nestled on the mountaintop beside it. The hotel’s restaurant, Il Sacello, draws on the traditional flavours of Lucania, and cooking lessons can be organised in advance.

DAYS SIX AND SEVEN: Drive onto the ‘toe’ of Italy and stay two nights in Tropea

Leave La Locanda delle Donne Monache after breakfast, and drive down the coast to Tropea. Situated on the Costa degli Dei, or Coast of the Gods, Tropea, and the Villa Paola where you will be staying for two nights, is characterised by its beautiful crystal-clear turquoise waters. Explore this intriguing Calabrian town, perched high up on the fledgling cliffs that line the shore, dining in the hidden squares that belong to the many restaurants, tasting the local seafood, and Tropea’s speciality sweet red onions. This region is also well-known for its hot and spicy food. The headland of this area forms the heart of the town, encased in the remains of the old fortifications. While here, partake in the local tradition of Passeggiata, walking down



Hotel Villa Belvedere, Taormina

the Corso Vittorio Emanuele until you reach the metal railings that line the cliff edge as it looks over the sea, and then walking back up and stopping in one of the small cafes. This is an excellent way of getting a feel for Tropea, and the way of life of its residents. For a taste of Tropea's history, be sure to look around the Norman cathedral, and the Palazzo Vescoville, or Bishop's Palace, now used as a museum. Various religious festivals happen in Tropea at different times of the year, involving processions through the town carrying the icon of the Madonna of Romania, their patron saint. The crowning glory of Tropea, however, has to be the Santa Maria dell'Isola, a picturesque monastery on a large verdant rock that used to form its own island. Whether you admire this stately building and its position from the high edge of the town, or by climbing up the steps of the rock to capture the magnificent views, the monastery offers an unusual, and beautiful, new perspective on the town. On your second day, you may wish to take a boat trip out into the tranquil waters in the hope of seeing some marine life, or simply to enjoy the sunshine and magnificent surroundings. If you have time on the afternoon of your last day, drive to nearby Capo Vaticano for the watersports opportunities, moonlit cycle rides, and the views from the military lighthouse. Or drive east to the lovely town of Pizzo, rich in local history, with castles, a beautiful town centre, and the Piedigrotta Church, built half into the ground. In the evenings, return to the red façade of the Villa Paola and relax on one of the terraces or in the pool, which, even from

its high position, seems to stretch into the sea.

DAYS EIGHT TO TWELVE: Drive into Sicily and spend five nights in Taormina

Cross over the short stretch of water that separates Sicily from mainland Italy, and drive south to Taormina, overlooking the Bay of Naxos. The Hotel Villa Belvedere is situated in one of the greenest parts of Taormina, with a yellow-ochre façade that seems to help it blend in to its floral environment. The rooms are luxurious and chic, and outside are a number of terraces and gardens for you to enjoy before heading out into Taormina to explore its historical delights. Locate the impressive Teatro Antico di Taormina, the second largest Greco-Roman theatre in Sicily, and the source of much local debate as its origins are currently undetermined. Taormina's history as a Greek Polis does, however, indicate Grecian beginnings. The theatre hosts the Taormina Arte festival, which lasts all summer and features a vibrant abundance of cinema, ballet, theatre, and music. See the influence of Arabian and Norman art on the Gothic Badia Vecchia, formerly Taormina's abbey, and the Palazzo Duca di San Stefano. Observe the extent of the Arabian influence in the architecture of the Palazzo Corvaja, built in the style of the first temple Abraham built in God's name. Wander through the Corso Umberto and pick up some of the hand-made ceramics, fine leather, Sicilian wines, and wrought iron and wooden products so prevalent in the area. Stroll around the

botanic gardens of Villa Comunale, just a short walk from the Villa Paola, or admire the white-stone medieval Palazzo Ciampoli and its quaint adjacent square. To break up your days of exploration, have a light lunch under the citrus trees that grow by the poolside and the restaurant. One afternoon, drive out to the Alcantara River Park and its gorges, riddled with lava coves and waterfalls. And make the most of the Italian waters on this final stop of your touring holiday, by partaking in the local sports of wind-surfing, sailing, fishing, scuba-diving, canoeing, or snorkelling. Consider also taking a boat trip or hydrofoil to one of the nearby Aeolian Islands, such as Lipari and Salina. One and a half hour's drive from Taormina is Syracuse, the sight of the largest Greek-Roman theatre in Sicily. The Ortygia, or 'old town,' is the home of a beautiful Duomo, the Temple of Athena, extensive catacombs, the Ear of Dionysus, and breath-taking seaside bays, making Syracuse a must-see day-trip for history enthusiasts and those looking for a relaxing day alike. Finish your days by sampling the famous Marsala, Zibibbo, and Primitivo Sicilian wines, or the range of locally-produced liquers, in either the Hotel Villa Belvedere's restaurant, or in a restaurant in Taormina.

DAY THIRTEEN: Return to the UK from Catania

Leave Sicily on your return flight from Catania, just a short drive from the Hotel Villa Belvedere.

DRIVING TIMES

Naples to Sant'Agnello: 1 hour
 Sant'Agnello to Maratea: 2 hours 45 minutes
 Maratea to Tropea: 3 hours 5 minutes
 Tropea to Taormina: 2 hours 55 minutes
 Taormina to Catania: 45 minutes.

OPTIONAL

It is possible to add extra nights in any of these locations. Please contact one of our Personal Travel Specialists for recommendations of additional stops.

HOTELS

These are the outstanding hotels featured in this touring holiday from Naples through Basilicata, Calabria and Sicily. Alternative hotels are available in some destinations - please contact us for full details.

Expressions



Villa Paola

TROPEA, CALABRIA

Villa Paola 5 star

Poised on the cliffs above Tropea's shores, Villa Paola is a five-star hotel with beautiful surroundings. Whilst areas of the hotel's structure date back to 1543, its traditional dark red and cream exterior and colourful flowers of the gardens give an attractive and almost contemporary appearance. Inside, the hotel is a careful blend of modern decoration and historical, traditional features. Perhaps the best example of this is the ancient cloister which is now a lounge and library, the ideal area for peaceful relaxation. The 11 bedrooms at the hotel are very light and offer views of the sea or beautiful gardens. The hotel's high ceilings make the rooms feel incredibly spacious, whilst an accent colour of deep purple adds an element of subtle luxury. There is an abundance of colour in the hotel's garden with green lawns and flowers of pinks, blues and whites. An outdoor swimming pool with a Jacuzzi is found in the garden whilst the solariums make good use of the hotel's coastal location. The hotel's terrace offers panoramic views of the sea and surrounding cliffs and is the ideal place to relax outdoors. There is also a Thalassotherapy Wellness Centre belonging to the hotel which lies 7 miles away. Ideally placed for days wandering down to Tropea's beach, Villa Paola offers a comfortable stay with helpful staff in a beautiful location.

SORRENTO

Grand Hotel Cocumella 5 star

The gracious Grand Hotel Cocumella is situated in its own tranquil and beautiful park in Sant'Agnello, just a 20 minute walk from Sorrento's lively centre with its ample choice of tempting shops, bars, and restaurants. Set in the leafy and well-tended gardens, where various types of flowers, fruits and vegetables bloom, are a lovely swimming pool surrounded by terraces, and a tennis court. The Grand Hotel Cocumella has spacious public rooms and bedrooms decorated in traditional style. The atmosphere of the hotel is traditional, historic and elegant and almost no two rooms are alike in size, even if they are in the same category. Leading off the hotel, a pretty terrace looks out to the gardens where guests can enjoy the full buffet breakfast. The summery restaurant, Scintilla, specialises in regional and vegetarian cuisine and here there is also the possibility of eating 'al fresco'. The Grand Hotel Cocumella also has its own man-made beach which is reached by a lift in the gardens; this is exclusively for guests' use, and deckchairs, umbrellas and bathing cabins are provided. A unique asset of the Grand Hotel Cocumella is its magnificent fully crewed ship, which provides the opportunity for guests to go on sailing excursions for the day.

MARATEA, BASILICATA

La Locanda delle Donne Monache 4 star

La Locanda delle Donne Monache is set in the heart of the delightful town of Maratea on the coast and was once occupied by Visitandine nuns. The hotel, nestling in its private gardens with a large terrace, is ideally placed for enjoying the coast and the beaches of Maratea whilst also exploring the dramatic wealth of scenic and cultural treasures the Lucania region has to offer. The atmosphere is one of understated elegance, with simplicity and a slight exotic touch. The rooms, each named after an aspect of the ancient monastery life, make the most of the abundant light and their furniture combines the classic with warmth; each room is decorated with Murano lamps, contemporary oils and traditional paintings. All rooms have long windows, balconies or terraces with private gardens. The hotel's restaurant, Il Sacello, offers local and traditional recipes served to the highest contemporary standards and guests can dine both indoors and under the portico overlooking the garden.



Grand Hotel Cocumella



La Locanda delle Donne Monache

TAORMINA

Hotel Villa Belvedere 4 star

The Hotel Villa Belvedere is a four-star hotel located centrally near the botanical gardens of Taormina, perched on a hill-side affording beautiful views of the coast and the countryside towards Mount Etna. Occupying an historic Sicilian villa, the Villa Belvedere offers comfortable accommodation in good sized bedrooms, some of which have a balcony with tables and chairs. The bedrooms are simple but pleasingly equipped, with wi-fi throughout. There is a small, prettily furnished lounge with paintings and comfortable chairs, a cosy bar area nearby and on the floor below, a breakfast room. Outside there is a sun terrace and swimming pool accessible through terraced luxuriant gardens of tropical plants and bougainvillea, above which tower immense palm trees. On the terrace by the pool, tasty light lunches are served. The Hotel Villa Belvedere can also arrange for you to join local excursions to all the major sites and places of interest.



Hotel Villa Belvedere



Villa Paola



Hotel Villa Belvedere



Grand Hotel Cocumella

MAP OF TOUR FROM NAPLES TO THE TOE OF ITALY AND SICILY

The map below illustrates the route outlined in this touring itinerary, with overnight stops and places of interest highlighted.



GENERAL INFORMATION

This tailor-made touring holiday is one of several suggested touring holidays we can offer you exactly as it is but also with any alterations you might want including extra nights in one or more places or adding in extra places. All our tours can be extended so that you can include a longer stay in one mountain or lake resort too, perhaps at the end of the itinerary. Do call to discuss the options with our travel consultants.

OUR TOURS

Our tailor-made touring holidays are suggested itineraries which can be adapted in numerous ways. They can be fly-drive (with flight and hire-car included), self-drive (with ferry or Eurotunnel included with your own car) or rail and hire-car.

FLEXIBLE ARRANGEMENTS

Our arrangements are very flexible in that you choose to travel on any day you want, subject to availability of your chosen transport and hotels. As mentioned above, additional nights can be added at any point.

OUR PRICES

The sample prices mentioned in this leaflet are generally a 'from' price based on the cheapest season of travel. However, train fares and hotel rates can change (up and down depending on offers), so we give you an accurate price for your holiday when we provide you with a quotation. Our sample prices should be used as an indication of how much a particular combination will cost and to show the differences on average between the hotel categories on offer.

PRICE INFORMATION IN MORE DETAIL

Prices from **£2,490 per person** based on two people sharing a double or twin room.

What's included?

Accommodation on bed and breakfast as below:

- 3 nights in a Classic room at the Grand Hotel Cocumella in Sant'Agnello, Sorrento
 - 2 nights in a Classic room at La Locanda delle Donne Monache in Maratea, Basilicata
 - 2 nights in a Superior room at the Villa Paola in Tropea, Calabria
 - 5 nights in a Double room with French balcony and sea view at the Hotel Villa Belvedere in Taormina, Sicily
- Flights with British Airways Gatwick to Naples and Catania to Gatwick. Easy Jet options are also available
- Group B car hire for the duration of your holiday

What's not included?

Ferry ticket from Villa San Giovanni to Messina which should be purchased at the port

Early check-in or late check-out at any hotels (though we can arrange this on request at additional cost).

Any other services not mentioned above, such as transfers and meals except breakfast at hotels.

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BOOKING CONDITIONS

Our booking conditions apply to all holidays. A copy can be found on our website and a copy is also sent to you with a written quotation and when you make a booking.

FINANCIAL PROTECTION

Expressions Holidays offers full financial protection for all holidays you book with us. If your holiday includes a flight, the ATOL (3076) covers the costs of the holiday. If the holiday does not include a flight, it is the ABTOT bond that protects the cost of the holiday. We are also members of AITO (the Association of Independent Tour Operators) and ABTA.



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HOW TO BOOK

To make a booking, just phone us on

01392 441275

and we can take you through the details we need and start the booking process. A deposit is required to confirm the arrangements and this can be paid by debit or credit card over the phone. The level of the deposit will be confirmed at the point of booking and will depend on the ticketing deadlines of the rail tickets involved in your booking.