



SALERNO & THE CILENTO

3 PERFECT DAYS

° DAY 1 // FROM ANCIENT HISTORY TO BEACHSIDE DINING

Wander the crumbling backstreets of Salerno's small *centro storico* (historic centre; p204) in the morning and enjoy a midmorning cappuccino in a typical hung-with-washing piazza. Hop on a train or drive to Paestum (p207) for an early lunch and an afternoon visiting its magical temples. In the evening continue south to Agropoli (p217) for sunset and dinner by the beach.

° DAY 2 // ENJOY CILENTO'S SCENIC SHORES

Stretch your legs with a morning stroll along Agropoli's sweeping promenade. Visit the castle and pretty *centro storico* (p216) before continuing south along this dramatic coastline of hidden coves and high cliffs. Stop for a swim, a snack or a stroll at small Italian resorts like Acciaroli (p218), a favourite of Ernest Hemingway's, ending the day in the picturesque coastal town of Palinuro (p220).

° DAY 3 // EXPLORE HIDDEN CAVES AND GROTTOS

It's not half as famous as its Capri cousin, but Palinuro's Grotta Azzurra (Blue Grotto; p220) is just as spectacular. Next, head inland into the Parco Nazionale del Cilento and two otherworldly caves, the Grotta di Castelcivita (p212), one of the largest cave complexes in Europe, and the equally tantalising Grotta dell'Angelo (p213) in Pertosa, where your tour includes the added adventure of a boat ride. Stay overnight at one of the park's superb *agriturismi* (farm-stay accommodation; p288).

SALERNO

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pop 56,749

Salerno may seem like a bland big city after the Amalfi Coast's glut of postcard-pretty towns, but the place has a charming, if gritty, individuality with its compact *centro storico* and pleasant seafront promenade. One of Campania's five regional capitals and a major port, it was left in tatters by the heavy fighting that followed the 1943 landings of the American Fifth Army.

Concentrate your time in the *centro storico*, where medieval churches share space with neighbourhood trattorias, neon-lit wine bars and trendy tattoo parlours. Salerno is also a major transport hub and you might well find yourself passing through en route to Paestum (p207) and the Cilento coast.

Originally an Etruscan and later a Roman colony, Salerno flourished with the arrival of the Normans in the 11th cen-

tury. Robert Guiscard made it the capital of his dukedom in 1076 and, under his patronage, the Scuola Medica Salernitana was renowned as one of medieval Europe's greatest medical institutes. The city recently invested €12.5 million in various urban regeneration programs centred on the *centro storico*, under the watchful eye of Oriol Bohigas, who was similarly involved in Barcelona's earlier makeover.

ESSENTIAL INFORMATION

EMERGENCIES // **Police station** (☎ 089 61 31 11; Piazza Amendola 16)

TOURIST INFORMATION // **Tourist Office** (☎ 089 23 14 32; Piazza Vittorio Veneto 1; 🕒 9am-2pm & 3-8pm Mon-Sat Sep-Jun, 9am-2pm & 3-8pm Mon-Sat, 9am-12.30pm & 5-7.30pm Sun Jul & Aug)

ORIENTATION

Salerno's train station is on Piazza Vittorio Veneto, at the eastern end of town. Many intercity buses stop here and there are a number of hotels nearby. Salerno's

SALERNO & THE CILENTO ACCOMMODATION

While Salerno doesn't have a great choice of accommodation, the Cilento coastal region and park have a refreshingly diverse range of places to lay your head. Mountain-top, discreet *palazzi*, breezy beachfront hotels and ecofriendly *agriturismi* should cater to most tastes – and prices are considerably lower than those on the Amalfi Coast. For a fuller listing of options, see the Salerno section of the Accommodation chapter, p286.

- * Decorative painted furniture, canopy beds and quirky artwork and decor...B&B **Antichi Feudi** (p289) guarantees a memorable stay
- * Surrounded by rolling hills, grapevines and grazing pastures, **Agriturismo i Moresani** (p288) is a stunningly positioned Cilento *agriturismo*
- * Paestum's **Calypso** (p286) serves organic food, organises spiritual retreats and has suitably inspiring surroundings
- * Overlooking the sea at Santa Maria di Castellbate, **Villa Sirio** (p288) combines old-world elegance with modern panache
- * There's an appealing historic feel about Castellbate's **Albergo il Castello** (p287), with its original tile work and lofty beamed ceilings