



# Naples & Campania

POPULATION: 5.8 MILLION

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## Why Go?

Campania could be a multi-Academy Award winner, swooping everything from Best Cinematography to Best Original Screenplay. Strewn with three millennia worth of temples, castles and palaces, it heaves with legend – Icarus plunged to his death in the Campi Flegrei, sirens lured sailors off Sorrento, and Wagner put quill to paper in lofty Ravello. Campania's cast includes some of Europe's most fabled destinations, from haunting Pompeii to Med-chic Capri. At its heart thumps bad-boy Naples, a love-it-or-loathe-it sprawl of operatic *palazzi*, mouth-watering markets, and art-crammed museums. Home to Italy's top coffee and pizza, it's also one of the country's gastronomic superstars. Beyond its pounding streets lies a wonderland of lush bay islands, faded fishing villages and wild mountains. Welcome to Italy at its nail-biting best.

## Best Places to Eat

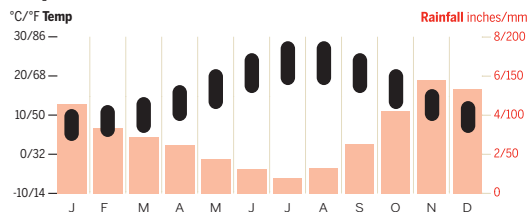
- » Ristorante Il Buco (p665)
- » Lo Scoglio (p666)
- » Ristorante Radici (p637)

## Best Places to Stay

- » Hotel San Francesco al Monte (p636)
- » Hotel Piazza Bellini (p635)
- » Hotel Luna Convento (p671)
- » Casale Giancesare (p681)

## When to Go

### Naples



**Easter** Follow the faithful at Sorrento and Procida's mystical Easter processions.

**May** Naples celebrates culture with its event-packed Maggio dei Monumenti festival.

**September** Hit the coast for warm, languid days without the August crowds.

## The Subterranean City

Mysterious shrines, secret passageways, forgotten burial crypts: it might sound like the set of an *Indiana Jones* film, but it's actually what lurks beneath Naples' loud and greasy streets. Subterranean Naples is one of the world's most thrilling urban wonderlands; a silent, mostly undiscovered sprawl of cathedral-like cisterns, pin-sized conduits, catacombs and ancient ruins.

Speleologists (cave specialists) estimate that about 60% of Neapolitans live and work above this network, known in Italian as the *sottosuolo* (underground). Since the end of WWII, some 700 cavities have been discovered, from original Greek-era grottoes, to palaeo-Christian burial chambers and royal Bourbon escape routes. According to the experts, this is simply a prelude, with another 2 million sq metres of troglodytic treats to unfurl.

Naples' dedicated caving geeks are quick to tell you that their underworld is one of the largest and oldest on earth. Sure, Paris might claim a catacomb or two, but its subterranean offerings don't come close to this giant's 2500-year history.

And what a history it is. Naples' most famous saint, San Gennaro, was interred in the Catacombe di San Gennaro in the 5th century. A century later, in 536, Belisario and his troops caught Naples by surprise by storming the city through the city's ancient tunnels. According to legend, Alfonso of Aragon used the same trick in 1442, undermining the city walls by using an underground passageway leading into a tailor's shop and straight into town. Even the city's dreaded Camorra has got in on the act. In 1992, the notorious Stolder clan was busted for running a subterranean drug lab, with escape routes heading straight to the clan boss' pad.

### CAMPANIA'S NATURAL WONDERS

- » Grotta Azzurra (p645) Nature outdazzles Disney in this magical coastal cave
- » Sentiero degli Dei (p674) Experience the Amalfi Coast from a heavenly elevation
- » Parco Nazionale del Cilento e Vallo di Diano (p682) A wild and rugged playground begging to be hiked
- » Mt Vesuvius (p656) Peer into the crater of this panoramic time bomb
- » Solfatara crater (p643) Feel the earth's wrath at this geological freak show

## Don't Miss

Naples' Cappella Sansevero is home to the astounding Cristo Velato (Veiled Christ), its marble veil so translucent it baffles to this day.

### BEST PLACES TO WHISPER 'TI AMO'

- » Villa Cimbrone (p675)
- » Palazzo Petrucci (p637)
- » Monte Solaro (p647)
- » Teatro San Carlo (p639)
- » La Conchiglia (p654)

## Hold the Prawns

Order a pizza marinara in Naples and you'll get a simple affair of tomato, garlic and olive oil. And the seafood? There is none. The pizza was named after fishermen who took it out to sea for lunch.

## Resources

- » Turismo Regione Campania ([www.incampania.it](http://www.incampania.it)) Up-to-date events, as well as articles and itineraries.
- » Italy Traveller ([www.italytraveller.com](http://www.italytraveller.com)) Luxe and boutique hotel listings, themed itineraries and travel ideas.

## Naples' Top Museums

- » Museo Archeologico Nazionale (p628) A veritable treasure chest of ancient art, propaganda and erotica
- » Museo di Capodimonte (p634) From Caravaggio to Warhol.
- » Museo del Novecento, Castel San't Elmo (p632) A stylish ode to Naples' 20th-century art scene