



Naples & Campania

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Best Places to Eat

- L'Ebbrezza di Noè (p55)
- Il Focolare (p69)
- Da Gelsomina (p66)
- Viva Lo Re (p73)

Best Places to Stay

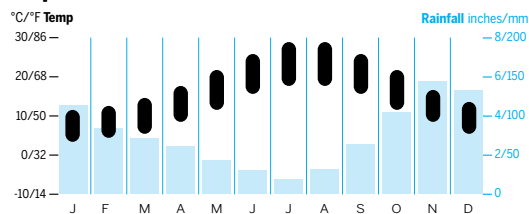
- La Minerva (p66)
- Hotel Piazza Bellini (p53)
- Hotel Luna Convento (p92)
- Casale Giancesare (p99)

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 and Herculaneum to Med-chic Capri and Positano. At its heart thumps bad-boy Naples, a love-it-or-loathe-it sprawl of operatic *palazzi* (mansions) and churches, 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. Seductive, vivacious and often contradictory: welcome to Italy at its nail-biting best.

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.

Sep 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-thin 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 Catacomba 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** (p64) Nature outdazzles Disney in this magical coastal cave.
- ➔ **Sentiero degli Dei** (p87) Experience the Amalfi Coast from a heavenly elevation.
- ➔ **Parco Nazionale del Cilento e Vallo di Diano** (p100) A wild and rugged playground begging to be hiked.
- ➔ **Mt Vesuvius** (p73) Peer into the crater of a panoramic time bomb.
- ➔ **Capri Hiking Trails** (p65) Explore the island's bucolic side.

Don't Miss

Naples' Cappella Sansevero (p40) is home to the astounding *Cristo velato* (Veiled Christ), its marble veil so translucent it baffles to this day.

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 fishers, who took it out to sea for lunch.

Best Places to Say 'Ti Amo'

- ➔ Villa Cimbrone (p94)
- ➔ Palazzo Petrucci (p55)
- ➔ Monte Solaro (p64)
- ➔ Teatro San Carlo (p50)
- ➔ La Conchiglia (p71)

Naples' Top Museums

- ➔ **Museo Archeologico Nazionale** (p41) A trove of ancient art and erotica.
- ➔ **Museo di Capodimonte** (p51) From Caravaggio to Warhol.
- ➔ **Novecento a Napoli** (p49) A stylish ode to Naples' 20th-century art scene.

Resources

- ➔ **Turismo Regione Campania** (www.incampania.it) Up-to-date events, as well as articles and itineraries.
- ➔ **Napoli Unplugged** (www.napoliunplugged.com) Smart, updated website covering sights, events, news and practicalities.
- ➔ **Italy Traveller** (www.italytraveller.com) Boutique hotel listings, themed itineraries and travel ideas.