Contents

INTRODUCTION 4

Where to go 6
When to go 8
Author picks 9
Things not to miss 10
Itineraries 16

BASICS 18

Getting there 19
Arrival 21
Getting around 22
Accommodation 25
Food and drink 27
The media 30
Festivals 31
Travel essentials 32

THE GUIDE 38

1 Naples 38
2 The Campi Flegrei 98
3 Pompeii and south of Naples 112
4 Sorrento and its peninsula 132
5 The islands 150
6 North of Naples 190
7 The Amalfi Coast 208

CONTEXTS 240

History 241
Books 249
Film and TV 251
Italian 253
Glossary 259

SMALL PRINT & INDEX 260

OPPOSITE TEMPLES OF POMPEII **PREVIOUS PAGE** GULF OF SALERNO FROM VILLA RUFOLO GARDENS IN RAVELLO

Introduction to Naples, Pompeii and the Amalfi Coast

A chaotic, dynamic and mesmerizing metropolis, Italy's third largest city after Rome and Milan couldn't be more different from its northern counterparts. Quite unlike anywhere else in Italy, or indeed the world, it will frustrate and thrill in equal measure, and will soon have you under its spell. In addition to its sheer chutzpah, the city's stunning location on the Bay of Naples – within easy reach of some of Europe's greatest archeological sites, the fabled islands of the bay itself, and Italy's most jaw-dropping stretch of coast – make it one of Italy's absolute must-sees.

Naples and its region are undeniably appealing, with a huge variety of things to see and do, but the city certainly comes with baggage. Plenty of Italians have never been here, and swear that they never will. Internationally, too, its reputation is traditionally not strong, and has perhaps only worsened as its longtime struggles against organized crime have been broadcast far and wide through popular books, movies and television series. You may feel the same, and quite honestly it's easy to visit **Pompeii** and **Herculaneum**, the **islands** and the **Amalfi Coast** and barely set foot in the city itself. But to do that would be to miss somewhere special, a destination that just two centuries ago was one of the largest cities in Europe and a must-visit for any self-respecting Grand Tourist. With Italian Unification its power waned, and its fortunes over the twentieth century mirrored those of the wider Italian south, marred by poverty, corruption and stuttering economic growth. These days, however, it's on the upswing, and, truth be told, just as accessible for travellers as – and no more dangerous than – anywhere else in Italy. Naples also provides a vibrant and fascinating base for seeing many of the nearby attractions, with an integrated transport network around the Bay of Naples that makes it a perfect half of a two-centre holiday. Spend time here before heading off for the more bucolic delights nearby – you won't regret getting to know one of Europe's great undiscovered tourist destinations.

ABOVE AMALFI

NAPLES, POMPEII AND THE AMALFI COAST

Where to go

The diversity of attractions in Naples and its region means that – time permitting – you can pack a lot into your holiday. With just a **weekend** to spare, Naples makes a great city-break option, giving you the right amount of time to cover the main sights and wander the atmospheric ancient centre; if you have a **week** at your disposal, you could also take in some of the bay's famous archeological sights, as well as spend a couple of days island-hopping or following the dramatic coast road to the towns around Amalfi. Any longer than this and you can explore the city, coast and islands at your leisure, with great public transport connections cutting travelling (and driving) time to a minimum.

If Naples is your base, head straight for the **Centro Storico**, a UNESCO World Heritage Site whose dead-straight streets follow the grid of the ancient Greek and Roman settlements on which the city was founded. This area is Naples' spiritual heart, home to an array of churches and palaces, and a street-level commerce that couldn't be further from the homogenized centres of many of Europe's major cities. The big museums and attractions are elsewhere, but if you experience only one thing in the city, it should be this. Beyond the old centre, **Via Toledo** is the modern hub of Naples, a busy shopping street that leads up from a cluster of portside attractions – the **Palazzo Reale**, **Teatro di San Carlo** and **Castel Nuovo**, among others – to the **Museo Archeologico Nazionale**, one of the great museums of Europe, home to the best of the region's ancient Roman finds. West of Via Toledo, the jungle of congested streets that make up the notorious **Quartieri Spagnoli** neighbourhood rubs shoulders with the elegant boulevards of **Chiaia**, a haven of designer shopping and high-end dining that is quite at odds with much of the rest of the city. Up above, accessible by funicular, **Vomero** is similarly well heeled, a nineteenth-century residential quarter that boasts heart-stopping views and some of the city's most historic museums, most notably in the **Certosa di San Martino**. Northeast of here, on another of Naples' hills, **Capodimonte** harbours a former residence of the Neapolitan royals, now home to the excellent **Museo Nazionale di Capodimonte**, one of Italy's finest art collections.

But there's plenty to draw you out of the city too. To the **south**, the evocative remains of ancient **Pompeii** – among the best-known archeological sites on earth – need little introduction, frozen in time nearly two millennia ago before emerging from the volcanic rubble. Nearby, the excavated town of **Herculaneum**, smaller but in many ways no less impressive than its more famous neighbour, makes a worthy rival. Numerous other Roman ruins unearthed along the coast – at **Oplontis**, **Stabiae** and **Boscoreale** – are all worth a visit, as is **Vesuvius**, which dominates the coast south of the city. Beyond here, the sprawl of Naples peters out and you're into holiday territory, beginning with the resort town of **Sorrento** – an appealing mixture of earthiness and elegance that makes a good base for sampling the many and varied delights of the whole peninsula.

To the **west** of Naples lie the fabled Phlegrean Fields or **Campi Flegrei**, named for the volcanic activity that has been a feature of the region for centuries. The remarkable **Solfatara**, just outside the main town of **Pozzuoli**, is the most visible instance of this: an otherworldly landscape of bubbling mud and sulphurous fumaroles. Pozzuoli itself is

OPPOSITE CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT AMALFI; MEN'S CLUB IN FORMER CHURCH, SORRENTO; CENTRO STORICO, NAPLES

FRUTTADORO
Le primizie
FRUTTADORO
Mediterraneo
Donnio Gusto
Prodotti di Sicilia

home to a number of sights dating back to a time when it was the principal port of ancient Rome – remains that provide a taster of the ruined cities of **Baia** and **Cumae** beyond. North of Naples lie more ancient sites, principally in **Capua** and in the provincial capital of **Benevento**, but the area's real draw is the vast royal palace at **Caserta**, an eighteenth-century pile that dominates the town.

The **islands** of the Bay of Naples – **Capri**, **Ischia** and **Procida** – are a massive draw, and many people arrive at Naples' train station or port and ship right out again on the first ferry. Of the three islands, **Ischia** has perhaps the broadest appeal, much larger than its neighbours and with an assortment of attractions that make it suitable for everything from a day-trip to a fortnight's holiday: climb to the top of its extinct volcano, relax in its healing spa waters, or just eat and laze the days away in one of its small-scale resorts. **Capri** is smaller and more scenically spectacular, but it can be heaving in high season – and its high prices reflect its popularity. The dazzling landscape and sharp Mediterranean light make it truly special, however, and it would be a pity to come to Naples and not visit at all – though it's best out of season or after the day-tripping masses have gone home. Tiny **Procida** remains the least-known of the islands, at least among foreign visitors, though it's fast becoming a popular alternative for the laidback charms of its handful of fishing villages, colourful marinas and picturesque beaches.

The **Amalfi Coast** draws crowds of admiring visitors, and no wonder: its crags and cliffs, girdled by a spectacular coastal road, are as mind-blowing as you are given to expect. If you avoid the tourist hotspots, and travel outside the peak months of July and August, you'll find it bearably busy, and with a range of rewards in the shape of stunning coastal towns like **Amalfi**, **Ravello** and **Atrani**.

When to go

Like the rest of Southern Italy, Naples and its surroundings enjoy a mild Mediterranean **climate**, with warm summers and mild winters. The hottest months are June through to August, although temperatures are rarely uncomfortably high, and the islands and coast usually enjoy the benefit of a cooling breeze. The wettest period tends to be the autumn and early winter, when the region is prone to thunderstorms and downpours, particularly in October. January and February can also be wet and cold, but conditions usually improve by March and April. The **best months to visit** are May, June and September; the weather is usually warm and sunny, and you're also likely to catch a festival (see p.31). The soaring temperatures of August, and the fact that this is when the Italians take their annual holiday, make it the month to avoid, especially in Naples, when everything is closed, and the coastal resorts, when everything is crowded and expensive.

AVERAGE TEMPERATURES AND RAINFALL

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Max/Min (°C)	13/5	13/5	16/7	18/9	23/12	26/16	30/19	30/19	27/16	22/13	17/8	13/6
Rainfall (mm)	80	100	80	100	60	30	30	30	80	130	140	100

OPPOSITE FROM TOP GELATO; FONTANELLE CEMETERY IN NAPLES; SENTIERO DEGLI DEI

Author picks

Martin Dunford has travelled every inch of the Naples region and loves it in all its different aspects, but there are certain places and activities that for him make a visit truly special.

Gorgeous beaches Procida (p.185) has plenty of attractive beaches to choose from, and Ischia's long, sandy beaches make the island the ideal choice for a break with the kids (p.170).

Budget stays Your holiday budget will go a long way in Naples, which has plenty of inexpensive accommodation, and makes a good base for day-trips. But there also some great budget choices on the islands and on the Amalfi Coast (p.83, p.142, p.182, p.216, p.226 & p.237).

Cultural treasures The impressive collections of the Museo Archeologico Nazionale (p.68), Museo Nazionale di Capodimonte (p.73) and MADRE (p.57) make Naples an obvious base for a cultural break.

Spooky death cults Death is a recurring motif in Naples – in its weird cemeteries full of skulls (p.72), underground catacombs (p.72) and death cult churches (p.51) – and an interesting way to understand the city.

Sublime feasts Naples is arguably Italy's greatest foodie location – unpretentious home-style restaurants serve up great pasta and freshly caught fish and seafood. It's also the home of pizza, and if you love *gelato* you're in for a treat. Up in the hills and along the Amalfi Coast, you'll also find very special restaurants (p.148 & p.217).

Natural beauty Hike into the hinterland of the Sorrentine peninsula to escape the crowds and experience the region's beauty in its most primal form (p.130).

Lazy days The thermal spas of Ischia are perfect for pampering and easing away aches and pains (p.181).

Romantic bolthole The stupendous backdrop of the Amalfi Coast makes the swanky hotels of hilltop Ravello the ultimate romantic hideaway (p.231).

Seaside fun Sorrento is the quintessential coastal resort, with a lovely old town, good restaurants and appealing hotels at all prices (p.134).

Our author recommendations don't end here. We've flagged up our favourite places – a perfectly sited hotel, an atmospheric café, a special restaurant – throughout the Guide, highlighted with the ★ symbol.