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**WALKS AND TASTES OF THE AMALFI COAST**

**With ‘slow food’ along the way**

*Join Barbara Mariotti for walks of spectacular beauty along the Amalfi Coast, dine on regional food and wine and join the locals to learn about traditional village life in one of the regions of Italy which most personifies the concept of ‘slow food’. Visiting elegant Positano and exploring the ancient laneways of old Naples make this truly a feast for the senses.*

***Highlight: Walking the famous Pathway of the Gods.***

In 1997 UNESCO listed the ‘Costiera Amalfitana’ as a World Heritage Site. But in times before written history the site was already recognized: peoples who were sailors but also farmers divided their time between the trade of spices and precious cloths along the Mediterranean coasts and the tough work of ‘thieving’ pieces of precious soil from the torrential valleys that plummeted down from the mountains to the miniscule beaches below. They terraced with drystone walls their precious cultivation of olives, vines, fruits and vegetables; they built villages of houses that clung to the rock face, gathered together in a tangle of lanes and stairs; and created a network of pathways that linked it all together. Today the Amalfi Coast is one of Italy’s most beautiful places and is there for us to enjoy…

**DAY 1 (D)**

We gather at the meeting point of Naples’ newly renovated Central Railway station at 13.30 for a private transfer to Montepertuso, our home for the next week.

En route we can’t resist a stop below Mount Vesuvius, whose steaming hulk dominates Naples and its territory, to visit a winery run for generations by the same family. During the visit we’ll taste their Lacryma Christi (Tears of Christ) and other great Vesuvian wines, learn of their traditional production in these volcanic soils and begin to know about life living and working with a neighbor like Vesuvius.

As we travel past Sorrento towards the Costiera Amalfitana (the Amalfi Coast) the views of the mountains above and the sea below become increasingly breath-taking. Our destination is a large and comfortable farmhouse near the village of Montepertuso, set above Positano in the Mount Lattari Regional Park. This evening we enjoy a welcome dinner of local products, wines and liqueurs on a terrace overlooking Positano, the little islands of I Galli and the hazy blue expanse of the Tyrrhenian Sea.

This is our chance to know something of the philosophy ‘Slow Food’ which works towards a world where people can find and enjoy food that not only tastes good but is good for them, for those who produce it and for our planet Earth. The philosophy was given shape some 30 years ago by Carlo Petrini and like-minded associates. Carlo has since been given the title of ‘European Hero’ by Time Magazine then included in The Guardian’s list of ‘the 50 people who could save the world’ and received the United Nations award as ‘Campione della Terra’. The movement has now gone world-wide. Interestingly, the people of the Amalfi Coast have always lived it. Enjoy!

**DAY 2 (B, L)**

This morning we wander with our guide along the trail through vegetable gardens, patches of wild foods, forests and olive groves leading to the giant natural arch or hole in the mountain which has given Montepertuso its name and its fame. Legend has it that one fine day the Devil challenged the Madonna to a contest. The winner would own the ‘contada’, the whole area. They both stood on one side of the mountain: whoever reached the other side of the mountain first would win. While the Devil scrambled around towards the other side the Madonna laid a finger on the rocky surface and opened a hole which allowed her to pass through and win the contest. The event is still celebrated by the whole community on the second of July each year with a solemn mass, the statue of the Madonna carried in procession, followed by feasting and fireworks.

Along the way we’ll stop at a small farm for coffee and a chat with the locals: their day-to-day view is of terraced fields and the endless sea below. Anna Maria makes her own traditional cakes and biscuits: also liqueurs from local fruits, flowers and wild herbs. A taste sensation! At the end of our walk we’ll take time to get to know the village of Montepertuso: drink an aperitif at the caffè; check out the grocery shop and the bank; perhaps visit the pretty Church of Santa Maria delle Grazie (she of the powerful finger). Then, on through the village for a light lunch with a local family.

Your evening is at leisure. The area has a number of excellent and accessible restaurants. Or you are welcome to eat ‘at home’ where you can enjoy either a full meal or something light and easy on the terrace as the sun sets over the sea. For the remainder of your stay you are always able to book a meal at the farmhouse when you feel like ‘staying in’.

**DAY 3 (B, D)**

Today we take a guided walk from the farmhouse down to Positano, using the old stairway from Montepertuso, which was the only way to go until the road was built quite recently. Why not join the locals for a coffee in the piazza of Montepertuso before starting the descent? Positano itself is a jewel of a town with white Mediterranean houses nestling between the narrow green valleys and the tough grey rocks of the surrounding mountains. This is an elegant, carefree town of alleys and stairways with a cornucopia of enticing shops: ceramics, linens, fashion, jewellery.and the work of local artisans. It’s also delightfully rich in bars and restaurants. We’ll explore the town, its port and the beaches. The Church of Santa Maria Assunta, begun in the 1200’s, has one of the Costiera’s most beautiful majolica domes.

You have the rest of the day at leisure until we meet for a seafood dinner at a restaurant overlooking the sea before returning to Montepertuso.

**DAY 4 (B, L, D)**

The guided walk we take today has been voted by the New York Times as ‘one of the world’s ten most spectacular walks’: **il Sentiero degli Dei** (the Pathway of the Gods) which will take us through forested gorges and along cliff edges offering spectacular views over terraces, coastal villages and the sea as far as the Isle of Capri. As with all our walks on this Tour those who want to take it easy will be able to do so, without missing out on the beauty of it all. Just let us know.

At the end of the walk we meet in the pretty square of Bomerano before enjoying a light lunch of local products featuring the famous Fior di Latte of Acerolas, a cheese produced from the fresh cows’ milk.  The breed of cow is particular to this area.

In the afternoon, we spend time in the ancient coastal town and port of Amalfi, which has lent its name to the ‘Costiera’. As far back as the year 977 an Arabian traveler recorded his impression of Amalfi: the most prosperous of cities … the most noble… the richest and most opulent…” In fact, it was one of the four great Sea Republics (Amalfi, Venezia, Pisa and Genova). Amalfi remains one of Italy’s most symbolic destinations. Of particular interest is the Duomo with its Arabic and Byzantine features and a crypt housing the remains of Saint Andrew. You will have time to explore the town until we meet for a dinner of local specialities before our return to Montepertuso.

**DAY 5 (B, L)**

While we are living the life of the Costiera Amalfitana it’s easy to forget the nearby big, bustling, beautiful capital of the region: Napoli…. It’s time to get to know it.

This morning we have a private transfer to the centre of Naples to meet an expert and very local guide for our day in Naples. We begin with a visit of the stunning National Archeological Museum which contains the best of the Naples area including sculptures and frescoes from Pompeii, Ercolano (Herculaneum) and other famous sites. We then stroll through “spaccanapoli”, the ancient network of laneways and alleys at the very heart of old Naples – rich in traditional shops, stalls, food-stands. One of the lanes is devoted entirely to Neapolitan Christmas decorations and traditional figurines. Where better to enjoy a real Neapolitan Pizza for lunch? We’ll do just that. At the end of our day we find ourselves in the grand public square of the Piazza del Plebiscito with its Royal Palace, the extraordinary Church of San Francesco and a grand view of the town itself. There’s also a well-known caffè-pasticceria where you won’t know how to choose between all those Neapolitan delights. And in Naples, the coffee is mythical.

Perhaps there’ll be time for afternoon tea or an aperitivo before our return to Montepertuso? The choice is yours.

**DAY 6 (B, L)**

This morning take your baskets and your aprons. We begin the day with a walk to identify and gather the wild foods and herbs that grow along the paths and terraces around the farm. We’ll also gather produce from the farm’s vegetable gardens. These will be the ingredients for the dishes we’ll learn to make during today’s Cooking Lesson. And enjoy at a lunch on the farmhouse terrace together with a tasting of local wines and the farm’s home-made liqueurs. For those who are interested in the concept of ‘slow food’ this is your opportunity to know more.

The remainder of the day is at leisure.

**DAY 7 (B, D)**

Your day is at leisure.

We’ll have suggestions to make to help you decide how to use your day and information to give you.

This evening we all meet for a Farewell Dinner at the Farm.

**DAY 8 (B)**

Today a 10.00 a.m. departure with a private transfer to Naples’ Central Station.

**INCLUSIONS:**

* *Fully guided each day by Barbara Mariotti*
* *Transportation in private air-conditioned vehicle*
* *Arrival and Departure transfers*
* *Agritourismo (farmhouse) accommodation - each bedroom has private facilities*.
* *Italian continental breakfast (B) daily*
* *Meals as indicated. Lunch (L) dinner (D). All meals include wine*
* *Cooking lesson at the agritourismo*
* *Wine tasting*
* *Morning tea at a local farm*
* *Walks include the famous Pathway of the Gods*
* *Full day in Naples with guided tour*
* *Entries as indicated* *in itinerary*

**BOOKING CONDITIONS:**

All due care will be taken to ensure inclusions will be delivered as agreed. In case of changes beyond

**Walking:** Expect to walk up to 3-5 hours per day on forest tracks and dirt roads. Hiking boots recommended