

VALERIO CEVA GRIMALDI AND MARIA FRANCHINI

SECRET NAPLES



JONGLEZ PUBLISHING

KAYAK TOURS

①

Discovering the city from the sea

Starting point: Pausilypon coast

Bus: 140

Booking essential: 331 9874271, 338 2109978

info@kayaknapoli.com - kayaknapoli.com (Non-swimmers welcome)

A kayak tour along the bay of Capo Posillipo (the city's most scenic district) can't be too highly recommended. Since Roman times these wooded hills overlooking the sea have been dotted with patrician villas concealed among the lush greenery. The tour takes in a stretch of rugged coastline where, nestling in the many creeks, are secluded beaches and grand villas, such as the one commissioned for the Spanish viceroy's wife Donn'Anna di Carafa in the 17th century but never completed. After a few kilometres you reach the beautiful Villa Rosebery, built in 1801, which has become one of three official summer residences of Italian presidents. A little further along is the fishing village of Marechiaro and the famous *finestrella* (little window), which inspired the song of that name by the great poet Salvatore Di Giacomo. Next you glide past Palazzo degli Spiriti (Palace of the Spirits), the remains of the nymphaeum of a fabulous Roman villa dating from the 1st century BC. The villa's owner, Publius Vedius Pollio, called it Pausilypon (from the Greek for 'the place that brings an end to pain'): the 9-hectare grounds (which Emperor Augustus inherited on Pollio's death) included the two islets of

Gaiola, on which stands a 19th-century villa (see p. 19), and extended to the small bay of Cala di Trentaremi where the tour ends. Sometimes these tours are available in the evening. By kayak you can also reach a traditional fishing boat, which serves lunch and dinner.



At certain times of the year you can visit the underwater park of Gaiola in a glass-bottomed boat. As well as offering a great view of the seabed, some of the submerged remains of Villa Pausilypon can also be seen.

Info: 081 2403235; info@areamarinaprotettagaiola.it.

Villa Pausilypon (36 Discesa Coroglio) can also be reached on foot.
Info: 081 2301030.

Guided tours: 081 2403235; info@areamarinaprotettagaiola.it

The cursed villa of Gaiola

The villa built in 1874 on the twin islets of Gaiola has never enjoyed a good reputation due to the series of misfortunes that have befallen all who lived there. A business established in the villa by its first owner, Luigi Negri, flourished. In 1911, Marquis Gaspare Albenga grounded his armoured cruiser, the *San Giorgio*, on a nearby sandbank while attempting to give one of his guests a closer view of the coast.

During a storm in 1926 the cable on the funicular linking the mainland with the villa gave way, causing the death of the passenger. She had been the guest of the villa's occupants Otto Grumbach and Hans Praun, who both committed suicide. In the 1950s Maurice Sandoz, owner of the well-known pharmaceutical company, lived there for a few years before being admitted to a psychiatric clinic where he too committed suicide, convinced that he'd gone bankrupt. The next owner, Paul Karl Langheim, ended up ruined. The villa was then bought by Giovanni Agnelli, who, during the few years he owned it, had a number of bereavements in his family. In 1968, Agnelli sold the property to the oil magnate Paul Getty, whose son was kidnapped and had an ear cut off by the kidnappers in 1973. The last 'lucky winner' was Gian Pasquale Grappone, who bought the estate in 1978 but was jailed after complaints from his many creditors. So the villa was auctioned and, on the same day, Signor Grappone's wife died in a car accident. The villa of Gaiola is now owned by the Campania Region.

Is Virgil behind the curse?

Until the 19th century, before it was submerged, you could still see part of a building belonging to Villa Pausilypon that from the Middle Ages was known as 'Virgil's school'. Virgil, considered a benevolent god in antiquity (see p. 30), was 'downgraded' and classed as a necromancer as Christianity asserted itself. To scare the people, who persisted in their belief in the great poet's beneficial powers, a rumour was put about that these ruins were part of the school where Virgil taught black magic, so the place was bewitched.

A SECRET GARDEN

⑥

Three acres of unspoiled nature inside the city

Near Via Petrarca

The garden can only be visited during cultural events

napolisegreta@gmail.com

A secret 3-hectare garden is unexpectedly revealed once you cross the threshold of a private building in the heart of the city. It's a wonderful surprise – as if by magic, the urban sprawl vanishes and it feels as if you have been transported into a bucolic fairy tale.

This unexpected garden can be regarded as 'urban countryside', and is only open to the general public during cultural events.

Cultivated with great care, the garden combines the natural luxuriance of Mediterranean vegetation and the rigour of botanical sciences – this fertile area has been turned into a pristine oasis, salvaged from dereliction and neglect.

Indeed, until 2001 only brambles, uncultivated scrubland, and abandonment were to be found here.

Then, thanks to the persistence of the owner, the area was recultivated and now many varieties of plants flourish everywhere, including a magnificent fig tree, poplars, laurel trees, Mediterranean plants, herbs, olive trees, fruit and citrus trees, a vegetable garden, as well as a henhouse where hens can roam freely every day for many hours.

Management guidelines are strictly followed, making this urban countryside a unique place: for example, everything here is recycled, including tree pruning waste being used to build fences.

Flowering cycles follow in succession throughout the seasons, even as the steady pace of agricultural activities creates the image of a place far from the hustle and bustle of everyday life.

The curved lines of the garden make its terraces and paths gentle and welcoming among the greenery.

The presence of sundry shrubs, which convey a sense of harmony to the visitors and create a congenial habitat for small wildlife and birds, add charm to the agricultural and natural dimensions, along with a breathtaking sea view, making this a dream location.



STUDIO 137A

⑩

Arts workshop in a historic meeting place

(former City Hall Café)
 137/A Corso Vittorio Emanuele
 Metro Line 2 : Piazza Amedeo
 Funicular : Parco Margherita
 Bus: C16, C27, C28
 Visits on reservation
info@137a.it

Following the 'coworking' principle, several artists, designers, architects, photographers and stylists share the large open-plan space at 137A, where a wide range of events is organised: arts workshops, cinema sets, exhibitions ...

137A occupies the premises that belonged a few years ago to the famous City Hall Café, a historic location where Andy Warhol met Joseph Beuys and where Chet Baker, Paolo Conte, Dizzy Gillespie, Stan Getz, Dave Holland, Sam Rivers and many other big names performed.

The current occupants have kept the original architecture, but added vintage artefacts, photographs and contemporary artworks. You can also have a coffee or an aperitif in the lovely small garden/terrace.



Wunderkammer: culture unveiled in unseen places

Wunderkammer is a festival devoted to theatre, music, and art, as well as food and wine culture set in outstanding venues and unconventional spaces. These include old aristocratic apartments and refined designer houses, as well as showrooms, churches, archaeological sites, art galleries, and art studios, thus combining a passion for the stage with one for architecture, art and design.

Each show, performance and event includes a convivial moment, with tastings of the most delicious local food and wine, specifically prepared and matched to the occasion, featuring some of Campania's best companies. The project's name derives from the German word *Wunderkammer* (room of wonders, curiosities) – from the Renaissance onwards, this referred to the room where nobles displayed their collection of beautiful, strange and exotic items, with the aim of offering their guests a moment of awe and contemplation of the sublime.

The Wunderkammer project is promoted by an association with the same name, which in 9 seasons has staged more than 175 shows, involving 34 directors, and more than 100 actors, 90 musicians and 30 playwrights. This large family brings together renowned and emerging artists, all united by the desire to showcase their voices, bodies, and talents in unusual places. Wunderkammer's programme revolves around the following six themes: Theatre, Music, Books, Food, Home Gallery/Contemporary Art, and Caring (in collaboration with the not-for-profit organization Tesfa).

For further information:

366 98 38 285

info@wunderkammernapoli.com

wunderkammernapoli.com

OPEN HOUSE The Architecture Festival

Established in 2019, Open House Naples is an original format that allows visitors to explore architecture and its past, present, and future issues. It is part of the Open House Worldwide international network, the first global architecture festival founded in London in 1992. Currently, there are 46 cities participating, and in Italy the event is held in Rome, Milan, Turin, and Naples.

The programme of this architecture and design festival, which 'opens the city's doors' with its free events, can be viewed at: openhousenapoli.org.

VIA DELLE MEMORIE

(27)

An underground flight of 115 steps that leads to an air-raid shelter and a huge cistern

Itinerary of the Associazione Culturale Borbonica Sotterranea

14 Via Monte di Dio - Palazzo Serra di Cassano - Int. A14

Funicular centrale: Augusteo - Funicular de Chiaia: Parco Margherita

Metro Line 1: Municipio, Metro Line 2: piazza Amedeo

Guided tours on Fridays, Saturdays, Sundays and public holidays at 10am and 4pm (duration 1h15 min)

366 2484151, 081 7645808 - mail@galleriaborbonica.com - galleriaborbonica.com



The historic Palazzo Serra di Cassano was built with tuff excavated from its foundations: the resulting caves were formerly used for aqueducts, cisterns and air-raid shelters. These vast galleries can be reached from the Bourbon Tunnel on the Via delle Memorie (Memory Lane) guided tour.

At the start of the descent, the first site you come across (former stables converted first into a carpentry workshop and more recently into an exhibition space) is filled with dozens of objects. These were found by volunteers cleaning up the tonnes of residue from the palazzos above that were blocking the passageways. Many everyday items such as footwear, glass flacons, little vases, etc. were also discovered.

Next stop is the deepest vault, straight down a flight of 115 steps, which leads to the former air-raid shelter installed during the Second World War to accommodate over 2,600 people.

Down there you'll see a huge and spectacular stairway that connects the underground aqueduct tank to the surface quarries. It was built by the army to help the thousands of people seeking shelter from the bombardments to climb up and down easily.

The tour continues through a network of quarries, tunnels and galleries before ending abruptly at the edge of a huge cistern, partly filled with waste material (it was 5–6 m deeper than it appears today) but once again full of water from the original aqueduct, now restored and working again.



POSITANO PALACE

16

A wonderful private salon

Near Via Toledo

The palace can be visited only during cultural events

info@palazzopositanodimarescotti.it



Palazzo Positano is a spectacular private palace that can only be visited during the cultural events which are held here from time to time. Crossing its threshold, the view is breathtaking, and visitors are struck by the charm and beauty of an 18th-century residence with one of the largest vaulted frescoes in the city. The Palace dates to the 17th century and is located near the central Via Toledo, a stone's throw from other noble buildings such as Palazzo Carafa di Maddaloni and Palazzo Doria d'Angri.

Competition among the aristocratic families prompted some members of the Positano family (who held the titles of marquis and dukes) to commission the renowned Neapolitan artist Giacomo del Po to create the exceptional decorative cycle which dates to the first decade of the 18th century. On the high vaulted ceiling of the salon, inside the majestic main hall, there is a fresco depicting the allegory of the Triumph of Justice and Equity, a symbolic allusion to the offices held by some members of the family, in particular Giuseppe Positano, appointed Royal Councillor, who had a brilliant political career – during the final years of the Spanish viceroyalty, he was a member of the Collateral Council, and from 1715, as regent, Positano was the sole representative of the city of Naples at the Spanish Council in Vienna.

This is a huge work of special interest because it represents, along with the ceiling fresco in the hall of the Palazzo Casamassima in Via dei Banchi Nuovi, the only surviving large-scale piece of secular art by Giacomo del Po (Rome, 1652–Naples, 1726), a leading figure in the Neapolitan art scene of the first decade of the 18th century together with Francesco Solimena and Paolo De Matteis. In this fresco, the artist combines monochrome figures with others made in naturalistic colours; these motifs would represent the main part of the artist's legacy to 18th-century Neapolitan painting. After the salon, an ornate room with a polychrome marble arch and a parlour with an oval ceiling – the only surviving example of such a room in Naples, along with the one in Palazzo Doria D'Angri – recreate the ambience of the first half of the 18th century.

ACCADEMIA PONTANIANA LIBRARY

The oldest academy in Italy

35

8 Via Mezzocannone

Metro Line 1: Università - Bus R2 from Napoli Centrale station

Visits on reservation

081 5525015

accademia@pontaniana.unina.it - sbordone@unina.it

pontaniana.unina.it

The aim of the Accademia Pontaniana, housed at the University of Naples Federico II in architecturally austere rooms, is to promote cultural development in the Mezzogiorno (southern Italy).

Since it was founded in the 15th century, the academy has produced many major works of literature.

Among its early members were the eminent man of letters Giovanni Pontano (after whom the institution is named), Pietro Summonte, Jacopo Sannazaro (see p. 29), Scipione Capece, Vincenzo Cuoco, Benedetto Croce, Renato Caccioppoli and Maria Bakunin.

The academy, originally known as the 'Alfonsine', was set up around 1443 when King Alfonso of Aragon brought the leading researchers of the time to participate in round tables at Castel Nuovo.

The first president was the poet, historian and writer Antonio Beccadelli, known as Il Panormita (a poetic form, meaning 'The Palermitan').



SAINT GEORGE AND THE DRAGON ④3

FRESCO

One stunning image hides another

Church of San Giorgio Maggiore

Metro Cavour or Museo

Open 9am–12 am and 5pm–7pm

081 287932

To see the hidden fresco, contact the caretaker



The choir of the church of San Giorgio Maggiore conceals an extraordinary secret: behind the main altar, the huge *Saint George Slaying the Dragon*, a 40 m² canvas, can be opened like the page of a book, thanks to a hinged mechanism (activated by the sacristan on request), to reveal a fresco by Aniello Falcone (see below) on the same subject. This was painted during the reconstruction of the church to a design by Cosimo Fanzago after the fire of 1640.

The unfinished building work resumed a century later, when Alessio D'Elia executed his *Saint Severus* and *Saint George* under which, during further restoration work in 1993, Falcone's fresco was discovered.

San Giorgio Maggiore, founded by Emperor Constantine and enlarged by Bishop Severus in the 5th century, was one of the city's four main churches of the early Christian period.

In the 1640 restoration the church's orientation was reversed: this explains the position of the entrance, which now leads directly to the apse, the only original section and of great architectural interest.

The paintings of Aniello Falcone, an artist famous for his depictions of battles and scenes of everyday life, are rare in Neapolitan religious buildings and they are clearly distinguishable from those of his contemporaries.

The story goes (as revealed by the highly controversial De Dominicis) that Falcone and his contemporaries belonged to a revolutionary group, the 'Death Company', whose aim was to kill the Spanish occupiers of Naples.



PALAZZO CARACCILOLO DI AVELLINO

23

A breathtaking series of frescoes

Fondation Morra Greco

17 Largo Proprio di Avellino

Metro Line 1 Museo, Line 2 Cavour

Visits by appointment: email or follow links on website

fondazionemorragreco.com

info@fondazionemorragreco.com



A visit to Palazzo Caracciolo di Avellino will blow you away – on the first floor is a spectacular series of rooms with frescoes by Baroque artist Giacomo Del Pó (1654–1726). As if by magic, you'll be transported to a fantasy land populated with human and animal and geometrical shapes. Although the frescoes suggest an open and deceptively deep space, the rooms are decorated from the walls to the vaulted ceiling, achieving an extraordinary and timeless effect. Collections of works by contemporary artists add to the charm.

The building's foundations date back to the 15th century. It was the seat of the Benedictine nuns of San Potito Sannitico before being purchased by Camillo Caracciolo (1563–1617), who enlarged and redeveloped the old convent.

Palazzo Caracciolo di Avellino, as it came to be known much later, was built at the beginning of the 16th century. It is one of the most important residential buildings in the historic centre, with many additions right up to the 18th century. First it belonged to the Gambacorta family, then to Caracciolo de' Rossi, before passing to the Princes of Avellino – a collateral branch of the Caracciolo family.

Italian Renaissance poet Torquato Tasso lived here from 1550 to 1554, as recorded by a marble plaque on the main façade. Having moved to Naples, Torquato's father Bernardo acquired an apartment in this palazzo, which belonged to the parents of his wife, Porzia de' Rossi. The wing where the Tassos lived no longer exists, destroyed in the heavy bombardment of the Second World War. The surviving section of the building now covers an area of some 2,000 m² over five floors.

More recently, Neapolitan doctor and collector Maurizio Morra Greco bought the palazzo for the headquarters of the Morra Greco Foundation. Since 2015, the building has been extensively restored and restructured to convert it into a museum and exhibition centre.

THE HISTORIC OMEGA WORKSHOP

Naples, glove capital of the world

12 Via Stella

Metro Line 1: Museo, Line 2: Cavour

Visits on request by phone or email

omegant@tin.it - omegasrl.com

081 299041



⑥

Places retaining that inimitable mixture of hospitality, tradition and class, encapsulating the true essence of Naples, have become increasingly rare. The Omega workshop is undoubtedly one of them. Crossing the threshold of this artisanal glovemaking, founded in 1923, is to experience a tradition that has indisputably contributed to the prestige of the city, now considered the glove capital of the world. The owner, Mauro, will be glad to regale you with anecdotes, secrets and stories about this ancient profession.

Visitors have the opportunity to watch the 'glovers' at work and hear explanations of the different stages of manufacture, the properties of the raw materials and current marketing trends (these gloves are especially sought-after in France).

The ground-floor warehouse is where all the skins from various suppliers are kept. The corridors and halls are filled with hundreds of supple gloves of assorted colours and shapes, laid out on large wooden tables. Everywhere is the pervasive, pleasant smell of hand-worked leather.

Four generations of the founding (Squillace) family and their skilled craftworkers have succeeded each other in this workshop, where the know-how, techniques and traditions of aspiring glovemakers have been passed on. This is where some of the world's major fashion houses have sourced their products for years.

The glovemaking's craft, popular since the 18th century, really took off at the beginning of the following century.

The presence of the Bourbon court gave a further boost to the production of this sought-after accessory. In the past, Naples was responsible for about 90 per cent of all Italy's glove exports: in the Sanità district whole families, sometimes twenty or thirty people, devoted their time to glovemaking.

An 1888 document in Omega's possession records that there were forty-one glovemakers in Naples that year, providing work for a total of 6,800, so at the time this cottage industry was the city's biggest employer. A handcrafted pair of leather gloves is the result of at least 25 different operations, from cutting to finishing. All these stages, completed entirely by hand even today, are generally carried out by homeworkers, either within the neighbourhood or in the surrounding villages.



MICHELE IODICE'S WORKSHOP (31)

Sculptures in a stable

132 Salita Capodimonte
Visits on reservation
mic.iodice@gmail.com



A former quarry, first used as a stable and then a slaughterhouse and accessed through the entrance hall of a building, has been converted into a studio by a Neapolitan artist who displays hundreds of sculptures along the tuff walls.

Michele Iodice, the sculptor, has also brightened up his studio with towering plants that add to its originality.

Local people say that this was where the replacement oxen were stabled while they waited to be harnessed to the king's carriage whenever he and his family took the only road up to the Royal Palace of Capodimonte, which was too steep for the horses (see p. 324).



NEARBY

Wine tax marker

(32)

Further along Salita Capodimonte you come to Via Sant'Antonio a Capodimonte where, between 1 Salita Capodimonte and 111 Via Sant'Antonio, a plaque marks the boundary of the 'wine tax'. Among the earliest collectors of this tax, which was payable on the sale of carafes and casks of wine in the City of Naples, was Gregorio Carafa di Stadera, an aristocrat who lived in the 12th century.

VALERIO CEVA GRIMALDI AND MARIA FRANCHINI



SECRET NAPLES

A wonderful private theater, the smallest 'Museum of typography' of the world, the secret deposits of the National Archaeological Museum, the oven where the first pizza Margherita was cooked in Capodimonte, a skull with 'ears', the sumptuous salon from which Garibaldi greeted the crowd, a community of friars who has lived since 1976 in some old railway carriages, an astonishing staircase hidden in an ancient building, extraordinary old libraries unknown to Neapolitans, vestiges of a former brothel, a Hellenistic hypogeum unique in the world, a customised Vespa from the Second World War, remarkable secret private collections, a Greek watchtower in a theatre, a rare clock that measures the equation of time, the staircase of a building entirely excavated in the tuff, a raft ride 20 meters below Piazza del Plebiscito ...

Far from the crowds and the usual clichés, Naples holds many well-hidden treasures that are revealed only to local residents and travellers who know where to step off the beaten track.

An indispensable guide for those who think they are familiar with Naples or who want to discover another side of the city.

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