

PASSPORT TO ITALY: TOURING TIMELESS CAMPANIA

A view from the Amalfi Coast

BY DONA De SANCTIS

Few places in the world rival Campania. For more than 3,000 years, the people in this southern Italian region have created music, art, architecture and philosophy that have enriched civilization while its cuisine has delighted millions around the world.

Sophia Loren, Enrico Caruso and Victor Emmanuel III, the last king of Italy, were born there along with the 18th century philosopher, **Giambattista Vico**; the 19th century composer, **Ruggero Leoncavallo**; the 17th century painter, **Salvatore Rosa** and countless other illustrious men and women too numerous to mention.

Campania is also known for the stunning natural beauty of Capri, Amalfi and Sorrento; its busy, bustling capital, Naples; and the ancient cities of Pompeii, Herculaneum and Paestum.

Its cuisine boasts such popular staples as pizza, which was created in 1889 by Raffaele Esposito, a Neapolitan baker; and such classics as spaghetti with clam sauce and egg plant parmigiana. It also has given the world such unforgettable melodies as *Torna a Sorrento*, *Cuore Ingrato*, *Mattinata* among thousands of others that capture love's passion and its pain.

Despite these many attractions, Campania remains "off the beaten track" for millions of tourists, but that is about to change, thanks to the Sons of Italy Travel Bureau. Beginning this September, it will launch all-inclusive tours of this storied region that begin as low as \$1,799.00.

CAMPANIA'S HISTORY

Campania had been home to native Italic peoples for centuries when it was "discovered" in the 8th century B.C. by the Greeks, who established colonies in the region and named one of their settlements *Nea Polis* or "new city." Today we know it as the vibrant metropolis, Naples, Italy's third largest city after Rome and Milan.



Paestum's Poseidon Temple built by the Greeks



Fresh fruits and vegetables are staples of Campania's cuisine



One of Sorrento's quaint side streets



How sweet it is! A sampling of Neapolitan desserts.

By the end of the 4th century B.C., the Romans had taken Campania from the Greeks. Struck by the region's stunning vistas, warm climate and fertile plains, they called it *Campania felix* or "fortunate land."

It was there that emperors and wealthy Romans vacationed in luxurious summer villas until Vesuvius erupted in 79 A.D., destroying Pompeii, Herculaneum and other small resort cities in the area. Nearly 4 centuries later, in 467 A.D., the last Roman emperor died in Naples and the region was conquered by Germanic tribes.

For the next five centuries, Campania was passed back and forth between France, Austria, Spain and lastly, the Bourbons, a royal branch of the Spanish monarchy, that ruled the region for 125 years from their palace in Caserta, a magnificent 18th century royal palace with 1,200 rooms that rivals Versailles. Even Napoleon briefly conquered the region, which finally became part of the newly united Kingdom of Italy in 1860.

Despite its long history of foreign domination and oppression, Campania continued to make remarkable contributions to culture. During the Renaissance and Baroque eras, Naples rivaled Florence and Rome as a cultural capital of Europe and was second only to Paris in size.

Poets and philosophers, composers and artists from all over the continent flocked to the city which was also an important trade center, thanks to its fine craftsmen. Today, evidence of Campania's rich heritage is found in its Greek temples, Roman villas, Baroque cathedrals, majestic palaces and stunning views of natural beauty as well as its fine cuisine and world-famous cameos.

CAMPANIA'S CUISINE

Neapolitans do not exaggerate when they claim that their food put Italy on the culinary map. Besides pizza, they invented calzoni and *mozzarella di bufala*, from the milk of domestic water buffalos. When Columbus brought the tomato to Europe, they were among the first to create recipes for this new and exotic fruit. Campania's cuisine features fresh seafood, vegetables and fruit along with notable red and white wines.

Traditional desserts include Babà, a sponge cake soaked in rum or *limoncello*, a lemon liqueur; and *sfogliatella*, a puff pastry filled with sweet ricotta. Holidays bring special treats, including *la pastiera*, a sweet pie made

Naples began as a Greek colony in the 5th century B.C.



of ricotta, orange blossom water and wheat for Easter; *struffoli* or little balls of fried dough dipped in honey for Christmas and *zeppole*, the cream puffs traditionally eaten on March 19th, St. Joseph's Day.

TOURING TIMELESS CAMPANIA

The Sons of Italy's Campania tours begin at less than \$1,800.00 per person and include round-trip airfare via Alitalia, seven nights in a four-star hotel, all breakfasts and dinners and escorted tours with an English-speaking guide.

"Home" for the week is the **Grand Hotel Salerno** in Salerno, where all the rooms will have seaside views. The hotel is near the tour's important sites, including **Naples, Pompeii, Sorrento, Capri, the Amalfi Coast** and **Caserta**.

SPECIAL FEATURES

In addition to the guided tours, participants will have time to shop and sightsee on their own. They can extend their visit either before or after the tour for a maximum of 10 days and will be assisted in finding hotels, auto rentals and airline reservations, subject to availability.

Lodges, clubs and even groups of friends or families can reserve a "members-only" tour for a specific date, but must have 25 people. All tours depart from New York's JFK airport, but other cities of embarkation are available at an additional charge.

The price of the tour varies according to the season. The least expensive tours are **November** through **March** at **\$1,799.00** per person. A single-occupancy hotel room is available for \$250.00 extra.

WHEN TO GO?

Campania has a Mediterranean climate with relatively mild weather year-round. The temperature in March reaches 60 degrees Fahrenheit. Spring comes early – by April the temperature averages in the high 60s Fahrenheit. (See chart below.)

The Sons of Italy Travel Bureau has prepared a **brochure and application form** for the trip, which can be downloaded at www.osia.org or mailed. Interested parties also can fill out the application form on the inside front cover of this issue.

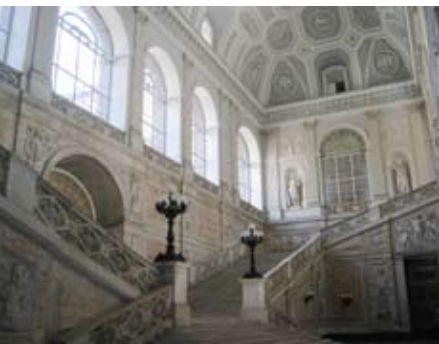
Dona De Sanctis is editor-in-chief of Italian America magazine in Washington, D.C.



TRIP ITINERARY

- Day 1: DEPARTURE - Overnight flight New York/Naples [via Rome]
- Day 2: ARRIVE Naples; motor coach to Salerno – Free afternoon.
- Day 3: Tour of Sorrento/Amalfi
- Day 4: Tour of Caserta's Royal Palace and city of Naples
- Day 5: FREE DAY; Dinner and Neapolitan music in local restaurant
- Day 6: Tour of Pompeii/Ravello; includes visit to cameo factory
- Day 7: Tour of Capri/Anacapri
- Day 8: Tour of ancient Greek colony of Paestum; lunch in Agropoli; Afternoon free
- Day 9: DEPARTURE – Naples/New York [via Rome]

Above: The tour's Grand Hotel Salerno. All rooms have sea views



AVERAGE TEMPERATURES IN SALERNO

	March	April	May	June	September	October	November
H:	60	68	78	85	80	75	65
L:	45	60	65	70	65	60	50



The throne room in the Royal Palace of Caserta