

The Sorrentine Peninsula

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Sorrento

famous travellers

We descend towards Sorrento on steep roads, lined by walls that protect thick groves of lemons and oranges with fruit-laden limbs, rose bushes and camellias in flower, palm and pine trees which free their green cusps in the air.

Louise Colet, 1863

The marvellous natural scenery makes the Sorrentine Peninsula one of the most famous tourist destinations in Italy. Protruding into the Tyrrhenian Sea, almost touching the island of Capri, it extends from Castellammare di Stabia to Punta Campanella, watershed between the gulfs of Naples and Salerno. Art and tradition characterise the numerous towns, the most famous of which is Sorrento: perched on an imposing cliff over the sea, this charming town holds on to its medieval and classical memories, while also preserving Renaissance and Baroque architecture.

In this very famous area there is no lack of 'wellness tourism', like the thermal baths at Vico Equense, one of the most picturesque towns of the coast. But the great attraction of this land is in its natural beauty: the coastal road is one of the marvels of Italian scenery. Citrus groves, vineyards and olive groves that softly pour down the slopes towards the sea, the road follows the tortuous coastline, where curve after curve opens up incredible views of the Gulf of Naples, Vesuvius and Capri. The coast is high, craggy and rocky, with sheer limestone cliffs that crumble into the sea, coves and rocky shores.



delicacies on the Peninsula

A journey amidst the flavours of the Sorrentine Peninsula cannot but begin with the famous **biscuits**

of **Castellammare di Stabia**. In nearby **Gragnano** the exquisite **pasta** must be tried, made by the famous artisan pasta-shops that still use the old machines. Vico Equense is famous for its "**pizza by the meter**", a long rectangular pizza intended to be sold by

length, invented in the 1950's. The walnuts and oil of the Sorrentine Peninsula are also to be tasted and have been awarded the Dop marking. Do not miss the **Wine trails and the typical products of the Sorrentine Peninsula**: a journey through open-to-the-public wine cellars,

vineyards, typical restaurants and artisan shops. (www.sito.regione.campania.it/agricoltura/home.htm). The area is famous for the production of great traditional wines like **Gragnano** and **Lettere**.

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Azienda Autonoma di Cura Soggiorno e Turismo di Sorrento e Sant'Agello
via L. De Maio 35
tel. 081 8074033
www.sorrentotourism.com

Azienda Autonoma di Cura Soggiorno e Turismo di Vico Equense
via San Ciro 16
tel. 081 8015752
www.vicoturismo.it

Castellammare di Stabia
Scavi Archeologici di Stabia
via Passeggiata Archeologica
tel. 081 8714541

Sorrento
Museo Correale di Terranova
via Correale 48
tel. 081 8781846

Vico Equense
Museo Mineralogico Campano
via San Ciro, 2
tel. 081 8015668

For excursions along the trails of the Peninsula please contact the Legambiente (Environmental Union) "Il Gheppo" in Vico Equense, tel. 081 8024771.

For underwater excursions in the Punta Campanella Marine Reserve you need a permit issued by the Management Authority, viale Filangieri 40 Massa Lubrense tel. 081 8089877
www.puntacampanella.org

not to be missed

Sorrento
 Massa Lubrense
 Bay of Ieranto

the sorrentine peninsula in 1 day

Sorrento
 Vico Equense
 Massa Lubrense
 Bay of Ieranto

the sorrentine peninsula in 3 days

Sorrento
 Castellammare di Stabia
 Vico Equense
 Massa Lubrense
 Nerano
 Bay of Ieranto
 Agerola

shopping

Dairy products and cheese
 Sorrento limoncello
 Wood inlaid furniture and objects
 Rosoli

outings with children

Mount Faito cableway
 Mineralogical Museum
 Campano (Vico Equense)
 Beaches of Vico Equense



View of the Sorrentine Coast

events**January**

_Pacchianelle Festival
 Vico Equense

May

_Caruso Prize
 Sorrento

June

_Lemon Festival
 Massa Lubrense

July

_Vico Jazz Festival
 Vico Equense
_Lemon Festival
 Sorrento
_Sea Festival
 Sant'Agnello

July-September

_Sorrento Jazz... and surroundings
 Sorrento

August

_Surrentum Great Events
 Performance Festival
 Sorrento
_Fiordilatte Festival
 Agerola
_Fried Fish Festival
 Castellammare di Stabia
_Corn Cob Festival
_Ravioli Festival
 Vico Equense

September

_ "Gragnano in pasta"
 Gragnano
_Festival of Typical Products
 Lettere

September-October

_Sorrento Musical Encounters
 Sorrento

October

_Grape Festival
 Sorrento

October-November

_International Meetings
 Sorrento

December

_Market-Exhibition of Local Products
 Massa Lubrense
_Sausage and Log Festival
 Sorrento

art and archaeology

Antiquarium Stabiano
 (Castellammare di Stabia)
 Baths of the Regina Giovanna
 (Sorrento)
 Correale di Terranova Museum
 (Sorrento)
 Inlaid Wood Museum
 (Sorrento)
 Villa di Arianna
 (Castellammare di Stabia)

nature and parks

Monti Lattari Regional Natural
 Park
 Marina di Punta Campanella
 Natural Reserve

for young people

Nerano
 Sorrento
 Vico Equense

specialities

Castellammare biscuits
 Creel shrimp
 Agerola Dairy Products
 Sorrento Lemons
 Sorrento Walnuts
 Gragnano Pasta
 Pizza by the meter
 Monk's Provolone cheese
 Fiordilatte braided cheese
 Limoncello liqueur
 Lemon delicacies
 Sorrentine Peninsula Doc wines
 Wines of Gragnano and Lettere

spas and fitness

Beauty centres of the major
 hotels
 Stabia thermal baths
 Vico Equense

From Castellammare di Stabia to Sant'Agata sui Due Golfi

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Castellammare di Stabia is famous for its shipyards and its thermal spa establishments.

The name comes from a medieval castle (*castrum ad mare*) to which the place-name *Stabiae* (destroyed in the eruption of Vesuvius in 79 AD together with Pompeii and Herculaneum) was added. The **archaeological excavations** here have uncovered ancient structures: the necropolis of the Madonna delle Grazie and numerous Roman buildings, two of which are open to the public, Villa San Marco and Villa Arianna.

Vico Equense, famous for its thermal baths and for "pizza by the meter", also preserves numerous traces of the past: the **Annunziata Church**, the only gothic church on the Peninsula, **Castello Giusso**, founded by the Angevins and restructured at various different times between the 1600's and 1800's, and the interesting *Antiquarium*, where the relics of an archaeological burial site from 7th-5th century BC are exhibited.

From Vico Equense the road becomes tortuous, following the sinuous slopes of Mount Lattari.

The road follows down all the way to **Meta**, a holiday swimming area with the lovely beaches of Marina di Meta and Alimuri. In the historic centre of town is the noted **Santa Maria del Lauro** Basilica.

From **Piano di Sorrento**, a natural terrace of tuff rock, Sorrento can be admired from afar, and, behind Punta del Capo the profile of Capri is visible. **Sant'Agnetello** gradually slopes down towards the sea and enjoys mild temperatures even in the summer.

Soon after is **Sorrento** itself, the most famous place on the coast.

The city sits high above the sea on an imposing tuff outcrop with deep gorges. The houses are immersed in luxuriant green and surrounded by groves of olive, lemon and orange trees. The whole is framed by the high reliefs of the Sorrentine Peninsula. Sorrento is a tranquil place, to be enjoyed in all seasons for its mild climate, the perfume of its gardens and the panoramic terraces that give onto the sea.

The town became famous in the 1800's, but its history has much deeper roots. The name *Surrentum* is possibly tied to the legend of the siren and theories of a Phoenician foundation are entertained. What is certain is that in Roman times it was the favourite dwelling of the aristocracy.

The town centre is **piazza Tasso**, which takes its name from the author of *"Jerusalem Delivered"*, born in Sorrento in 1544. The **Cathedral** dates to the 15th century, and has seen many restructurings over the ages. The Choir is made of refined inlaid wood, a traditional craft the city excels in. The **Correale di Terranova Museum** houses the relics of the past in the 1600's home of the Correali, "the most beautiful provincial museum of Italy", according to Amedeo Maiuri. The archaeological section is important, with its famous *Base of Augustus*, as is the medieval section with marble works of the 10th and 11th century. The collection of furniture, porcelain and paintings is vast.

The **San Francesco Church** is from the 1700's, and from there you can get to the **Villa Comunale**, a public garden on the edge of a sheer cliff that offers spectacular views.

From the Villa a paved road takes you to the **Marina Piccola**, which has numerous bathing establishments and a port from which the boats for Capri and Naples leave. The biggest beach is **Marina Grande**, traditional destination of Sorrentine strolls.



lemons

The lemons of the Peninsula are famous for having created Limoncello liqueur. The best, hand-made, has a

simple recipe: lemon rinds, alcohol, water and sugar. Sorrento is, however, a centre of exquisite gastronomic delights. A stroll about town is not complete without a lemon sorbet, a 'hot ice cream' (the local semifreddo) or its most famous dessert, the Lemon Delight.



Lemons of Sorrento



The Cathedral of Vico Equense

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the art of wood inlay of Sorrento

The art of wood-working in Campania has ancient origins and traditions: but sorrentine wood inlay is a

separate glorious chapter. What makes this unique inlay so special is not just the mastery and inventiveness of the artist, but his profound knowledge of the material. It is, in fact, very difficult to recognise and choose the diverse qualities of wood to create a chromatic spectrum that

permits the delicate designs.

I can only imagine that heaven on earth looks more or less like the Capo di Sorrento. Outside my window an emerald sea spreads out, olive, orange and lemon trees climb up the my front doorstep. Only now do I begin to regain some of my senses in the face of all of this grace of God.

Isaak E. Babel, 1931

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After Punta del Capo, where the ruins of **Villa of Pollio Felice** (1st century BC, known as the **Baths of the Regina Giovanna**) face the sea, is **Massa Lubrense**, a popular and panoramic health resort.

The town is less well known than others on the Peninsula and therefore not as affected by mass tourism. Thanks to this, it retains its secluded nature and preserves flavours and that special feeling lost in other places, like the old farm buildings. Close by is **Marina della Lobra**, a fishing village with its houses built on the beach and at the little port.

Around Massa Lubrense there are many charming little villages: **Termini**, **Nerano**, a town halfway up the shore with houses and terraces that come down towards the sea, and the vast and beautiful **Marina del Cantone**. From Massa you can continue to the far extreme of the Sorrentine Peninsula, in front of Capri: **Punta Campanella**. In antiquity this place was sacred: perhaps it was here that the Greek temple dedicated to the sirens, so written about by the ancient authors, surged. In the Classic Era the temple was dedicated to Athena, the Romans then built a road that led to it from Sorrento. Some of the old stoneslab paved stretches are still visible as one nears the Punta. The tower-lighthouse, built in 1335 and rebuilt in 1566, signalled the arrival of pirates with the sounding of a bell, hence the name of the Point: Campanella means bell.

Here one discovers the wilder and more enchanted face of the coast. One can explore this fascinating natural environment following a trail that reaches the evocative **Bay of Ieranto**, a rocky cove at the feet of Mount San Costanzo, today the property of the FAI (Italian Environmental Foundation) who insures its environmental integrity.

From Massa Lubrense one can go up to **Sant'Agata sui Due Golfi** (Saint Agatha of the Two Gulfs), in a magnificent panoramic position over the gulfs of Naples and of Salerno, and reach the ancient 18th century carmelite hermitage called **Deserto** (desert).



the diver's sanctuary

The rock of the Vervecce, in full view of Massa Lubrense, is where, in 1974, Enzo Maiorca set a

new world record for depth (87 mt) without breathing aids (in apnoea). Every year, on the second Sunday of September, Mass is celebrated on the islet, followed by the laying of flowers by underwater divers in honour of a little bronze Madonna that lies at a depth of 15 meters.



on the trails of the Peninsula

A day walking along the footpaths of the peninsula is the best way to discover the marvellous sights of this

natural balcony overlooking the bays of Naples and of Salerno. The Lattari Mountains form the backbone of the peninsula. The terrain is uneven, with rises and precipices, peninsulas and deep gullies. The nature walks are very varied in length and degree of difficulty.

From Punta Campanella, designated a Marine Nature Reserve, more experienced walkers will be able to reach the enchanting Baia di Ieranto.

I remember well the place and the moment when the car that was taking me on the road that goes to Sorrento towards Sant'Agata crossed the backbone of the sorrentine peninsula when suddenly the other sea appeared, the Gulf of Sorrento, and the little Sirenuse islands, and all the scenery around me was suddenly arid, naked and wild, without a tree, without a house, and in front of me there was only a series of curves on the edge of the cliff over the water, far below me, and the little street that courageously ventured between curtains of rock that skirted one abyss after the other.

Raffaele La Capria, 1992

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Massa Lubrense



the Punta Campanella Marine Reserve

A protected marine reserve (1539 hectares of seabed), it is between the Sorrentine Peninsula and Capri, where

evocative submarine grottoes can be found: the most spectacular being the *Grotto of Cala di Mitigliano*. Diving and boat visits are permitted in the Reserve.