

WALKING & HIKING ITINERARY  
PREMIERE INN TRIP

**BACKROADS**  
THE WORLD'S #1 ACTIVE TRAVEL COMPANY

# Amalfi Coast

FROM THE COAST TO CAPRI

TO RESERVE YOUR  
TRIP CALL  
800-462-2848 OR  
SIGN UP ONLINE [HERE](#)



Important Facts  
*at a glance*

**6 DAYS, 5 NIGHTS**

Click [here](#) for departure dates  
and pricing details

**ROUTE RATING**

Levels 1–3

See [below](#) for details.

**IN BUSINESS FOR  
29 YEARS,  
BACKROADS IS  
RECOGNIZED YEAR IN  
AND YEAR OUT AS  
ONE OF THE WORLD'S  
TOP 10 TRAVEL  
COMPANIES BY  
TRAVEL+LEISURE**

Mountains standing proud above rocky cliffs and an azure sea. Lemon trees bursting with vivid scent and color. Patchwork patterns of ancient olive groves and vineyards clinging to the hillsides. Is there a better way to define the elegant Italian paradise of the Amalfi Coast? For centuries, this slice of heaven has lured kings, queens, writers and artists to its sun-drenched islands and villages. Our journey through the land of *le sirene* (the sirens) will tempt you with glorious landscapes, decadent Neapolitan cuisine, rich culture and local flavor. Surrender your senses to this captivating region where the land meets the sea.

## DAY 1

Meet your Backroads Trip Leaders (the folks wearing Backroads T-shirts) at 10:30 a.m. at the Hotel Excelsior in Naples. **Please arrive dressed in your walking clothes with a daypack handy.** See “Arriving & Departing” for additional logistics information.

**SHUTTLE TO SANTA MARIA ANNUNZIATA 1½ HOURS**

**SORRENTO ROUTE 5.9 MILES (345-FOOT ELEVATION GAIN)**

SHORTER OPTION: ANNUNZIATA 4.8 MILES WITH SHUTTLE (345-FOOT ELEVATION GAIN)

After meeting in Naples we shuttle to the town of Santa Maria Annunziata on the Sorrento Peninsula, a pristine region blanketed with olive groves and lemon orchards, where we get acquainted over a Neapolitan-style picnic.

Following lunch, stretch your legs on a walk along timeworn paths that curve through hills high above the water and offer commanding vistas of Capri and the Bay of Naples. Note that these cobblestone paths create tough hikes, which include rugged steps and some hearty climbs. You'll descend gradually into the bustling port town of Sorrento, an excellent place for a café break and leisurely stroll through shops. (If you're looking for lemon-infused anything, you'll probably find it in Sorrento!) Continue on foot to the waterfront, where you can settle in at the elegant cliff-side Hotel Bellevue Syrene, a majestically perched retreat overlooking the Bay of Naples. Tonight we gather on the hotel's sun-drenched terrace to toast the start of our Amalfi trip before sitting down to an exquisite dinner of seafood and regional delights at the hotel. *Lodging: Hotel Bellevue Syrene*

## DAY 2

**PRIVATE BOAT TO CAPRI 45 MINUTES**

**BOAT TOUR AROUND CAPRI 1½ HOURS**

OPTIONAL ROUTE: THE PHOENICIAN STEPS 1.2 MILES (935-FOOT ELEVATION GAIN)

**MONTE SOLARO ROUTE 1.7 MILES WITH CHAIRLIFT RIDE (995-FOOT ELEVATION GAIN)**

LONGER OPTION: MONTE SOLARO ROUND-TRIP 3.4 MILES (995-FOOT ELEVATION GAIN)

This morning we head across the deep blue waters of the Bay of Naples aboard a chartered motorboat. Lounge on the deck and soak up the beauty of our surroundings as we head for Capri, a small island whose high limestone peaks, narrow twisting streets,



### **HOTEL BELLEVUE SYRENE**

(1 night) An elegant hotel perched above the Bay of Naples. Breathtaking views of sea and city at this Italian gem are matched only by its stunning interior—each room in this oasis is delicately hued to complement its spectacular sea view.

Sorrento  
phone: 39-081-878-1024  
[www.bellevue.it](http://www.bellevue.it)

### **HOTEL CAESAR AUGUSTUS**

(2 nights) An unmatched island getaway, this 200-year old hotel features the best views on the entire island and imparts an undeniable sense of calm and tranquility.

Capri  
phone: 39-081-837-3395  
[www.caesar-augustus.com](http://www.caesar-augustus.com)

### **VILLA CIMBRONE**

(2 nights) A romantic retreat perched in the hills above the sea, with formal gardens and an outstanding vista of the coastline.

Ravello  
phone: 39-089-857-459  
[www.villacimbrone.it](http://www.villacimbrone.it)

**EACH YEAR,  
3 OUT OF 4 OF OUR  
GUESTS HAVE  
PREVIOUSLY  
TRAVELED WITH US OR  
BEEN REFERRED BY  
SOMEONE WHO HAS**

postcard-perfect houses and delightful gardens have charmed visitors for centuries. In 29 B.C., Emperor Augustus visited the island and was so struck by its loveliness, he nicknamed it “Apragopolis,” land of sweet idleness, and acquired it from Naples in exchange for larger, wealthier Ischia. Later, between 27–37 A.D., Emperor Tiberius ruled the Roman Empire from his private home base at Villa Jovis, the largest of 12 villas he built on the island.

We disembark at the bustling port of Capri and board a smaller vessel that allows us to navigate the shallower areas and boat through natural stone arches carved by the waves. On board our local guide tells us about the island’s rich history. The cool clear water is perfect for a dip, so don’t forget your swimsuit! Back at the Marina Grande, tackle La Scala Fenicia (Phoenician Steps), a series of more than 900 steps cut into the cliffside. During ancient times, these steps provided the only access between the marina and Anacapri, the island’s only other town.

Later we head to our hotel, Hotel Caesar Augustus, for a poolside lunch of Caprese specialties and the best views on the island. Ease back into action with a chairlift ride to the summit of Monte Solaro, Capri’s highest point. Or if you’re feeling energetic, you can hike to the top instead. From the summit, descend along a path that winds through a pine forest and offers an awe-inspiring vista of the sea and the famous Faraglioni, the rock formations that many people consider symbols of this rugged island. This evening we dine at a charming local trattoria tucked away on the cliffs of Anacapri and renowned for its beautifully prepared seafood and lovely terrace. *Lodging: Hotel Caesar Augustus*

### **DAY 3**

**CAPRI COASTAL LOOP 2.8 MILES (335-FOOT ELEVATION GAIN)**

LONGER OPTION: CAPRI LOOP WITH VILLA JOVIS 4.8 MILES (800-FOOT ELEVATION GAIN)

**FREE TIME ON CAPRI**

OPTIONAL HIKE: BELVEDERE MIGLIARA 6 MILES (300-FOOT ELEVATION GAIN)

After breakfast, we stroll to nearby Villa San Michele, a beautifully preserved 19th-century villa owned by philanthropist and historian Axel Munthe. Following a tour of the ornate villa and its grounds (parts of which were once owned by Emperor Tiberius), we head to the center of Capri, where our walk begins. From Capri town, head to the ruins of Tiberius’ Villa Jovis, situated above the cliffs and facing the Sorrento Peninsula. After taking in the amazing views, check out the Grotta di Matermania—believed to have been a shrine for ancient pagan rituals of self-castration, animal sacrifice and hypnotism—and don’t miss l’Arco Naturale, an enormous rock arch rising several hundred feet above the sea. Afterward you’re on your own to enjoy lunch at any of the recommended restaurants along our hike, or you might return to town for a livelier atmosphere. Order an *insalata Caprese* or a cappuccino in the Piazzetta, shop for lemon-infused perfume, soap or the locally made liquors, *digestivo* and *limoncello*. If you’re in the mood for more walking, however, we recommend a scenic loop hike up to Belvedere Migliara for views of the Punta Carena Lighthouse. Tonight, you’re free to choose your own dinner hour at our hotel’s excellent restaurant. *Lodging: Hotel Caesar Augustus*



Top Reasons Why  
you should take this trip

We provide a variety of route options so you can do as much or as little activity as you like each day.

You'll stay in the area's finest hotels, each carefully selected based on our rigorous quality standards.

You'll enjoy the best of the region's cuisine, as well as Backroads' trademark grand picnics.

Our Trip Leaders have undergone hundreds of hours of training and are the best in the industry.

**WHEN YOU SIGN UP  
FOR A TRIP, YOU'LL  
RECEIVE A  
COMPREHENSIVE  
TRAVEL PLANNER  
WITH ALL THE  
INFORMATION YOU  
NEED TO PLAN  
AND PREPARE**

#### DAY 4

**PRIVATE BOAT TO POSITANO 1 HOUR**

**SHORT WALK IN POSITANO 30 MINUTES**

**BOAT SHUTTLE TO AMALFI 45 MINUTES**

**SHUTTLE TO RAVELLO 30 MINUTES**

**RAVELLO LOOP 2.4 MILES (365-FOOT ELEVATION GAIN)**

Departing Capri, we travel by private high-speed motorboat to the famed coastal town of Positano, known for the clusters of pastel-colored villas clinging to the surrounding cliffsides, the majolica-covered dome of Santa Maria Assunta church, charming shops and chic cafés. En route, sit back and take in spectacular views of the patchwork coastline, lush with vineyards and lemon tree orchards. Arriving in Positano, we're greeted by our local guide who leads us on a brief orientation walk through Positano's main square. Afterward, you'll have time to pick up picnic supplies or eat lunch at a pleasant waterfront restaurant before we hop back into the boat and head to Amalfi, where a shuttle will carry us to the beautiful hilltop village of Ravello, affectionately known as the "aristocrat of the Amalfi Coast." Have a look around—this pretty little town is sure to enchant you.

Our hotel for the next two nights is Villa Cimbrone, an early 20th-century paradise perched 1,500 feet above the Gulf of Salerno. Stroll through the villa's magnificent formal gardens to the Belvedere of Infinity, famous for incomparable views that seem to stretch forever along the coastline and across the Tyrrhenian Sea. Tonight's dinner is fun and casual as we savor authentic Neapolitan home cooking at the private abode of Mamma Agata. *Lodging: Villa Cimbrone*

#### DAY 5

**VALLEY OF THE MILLS ROUTE 4.8 MILES (470-FOOT ELEVATION GAIN)**

**LONGER OPTION: RAVELLO LOOP 6.5 MILES (1,660-FOOT ELEVATION GAIN)**

Begin the day with a gentle ascent to the medieval village of Pontone, poised on a lofty mountain perch. After pausing in Pontone's main piazza, descend via steps and cobblestone pathways to Amalfi through the lush green Valle dei Mulini (Valley of the Mills), past centuries-old paper mills and bubbling streams lined with ferns and wildflowers. Be sure to wander awhile in bustling colorful Amalfi. There's an interesting museum here, showcasing the town's long maritime history and paper-making tradition, as well as a grand cathedral (the Duomo di Sant'Andrea) and an atmospheric old Arab quarter wound with narrow alleyways. You may want to grab a bite to eat at one of Amalfi's many fine *trattorie* or stash a *panino* (sandwich) in your daypack before shuttling back to Ravello. If you have extra energy, ascend to Ravello on foot through the labyrinthine lanes and sleepy seaside village of Atrani. This evening we enjoy our last dinner together in Villa Cimbrone's elegant restaurant. *Lodging: Villa Cimbrone*

#### DAY 6

**VISIT VILLA RUFOLLO 45 MINUTES**

**SHUTTLE TO NAPLES 2 HOURS**

After breakfast, consider a walk through the extensive gardens of Ravello's 13th-century Moorish Villa Rufolo. It's a worthwhile jaunt with breathtaking sea views! Later, we shuttle to Naples and say our goodbyes. Please see "Arriving & Departing" for end-of-trip logistics



### Route Rating *to map your activity level*

Backroads' route rating system is the most comprehensive and accurate in the travel industry. To find out how these ratings translate into varying levels of physical challenge and activity, please visit our Web site

—[www.backroads.com](http://www.backroads.com)—

and select the route rating button for the trip of your choice.

**LEVEL 1**  
2-5 miles/day  
2-3 hours/day

**LEVEL 2**  
5-7 miles/day  
2-4 hours/day

**LEVEL 3**  
7-9 miles/day  
3-5 hours/day

**ASK FOR REFERENCES  
FROM PAST GUESTS  
WHO HAVE TAKEN THE  
TRIP THAT INTERESTS  
YOU**

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## ARRIVING & DEPARTING

Please note that meeting and departing times provided here were current at the time of printing, but are subject to change. **PLEASE DO NOT BOOK YOUR FLIGHTS UNTIL YOU ARE CONFIRMED ON YOUR VACATION AND HAVE VERIFIED THE DETAILS OF ARRIVING & DEPARTING WITH YOUR TRIP CONSULTANT.**

### MEETING TIME AND LOCATION

On the first day of the trip, we meet at the Hotel Excelsior in Naples at 10:30 a.m. The hotel is located at Via Partenope 48 (phone: 081-764-0111). The best way to get to the Hotel Excelsior is to take a cab from the Naples airport or train station. Cabs from the airport cost \$40–\$50; from the train station they cost about \$25.

Look for your Backroads Trip Leaders, who will be wearing Backroads T-shirts, in front of the main entrance to the hotel. From here, we shuttle 1½ hours by private coach to the Sorrento Peninsula. **Please be dressed in your walking clothes with a daypack handy when we meet in Naples.**

### CONCLUSION OF THE TRIP

On the last day of the trip, Backroads provides a private coach shuttle to the central train station in Naples, arriving around 12:30 p.m. From here, you may catch an afternoon train to Rome, Florence or other Italian destinations. The coach can also drop you off at the Hotel Excelsior.

### FLIGHT ARRANGEMENTS

We recommend that you fly into Rome's Leonardo da Vinci (Fiumicino) Airport (airport code: FCO; [www.adr.it](http://www.adr.it)) and then catch a domestic flight to Naples International Airport (NAP; [www.gesac.it](http://www.gesac.it)).

For help arranging air transport to and from your Backroads trip, please work with your own travel agent, the airline directly or an online travel site. For assistance locating a travel agent please visit [www.backroads.com/gettingthere](http://www.backroads.com/gettingthere). (Note that most travel agents and online travel sites charge a fee for their consulting services.)

### TAKING THE TRAIN TO NAPLES

*From Rome:* If you fly into Rome, you can take a 30-minute ride on the commuter train directly from the airport to Roma Termini, the city's main train station. The trip costs about \$9. A taxi ride from the airport to the train station costs \$50–\$60. From Roma Termini, there are several daily departures to Napoli Stazione Centrale. Average travel time on Eurostar Italia is 1 hour 45 minutes.

*From Florence:* Trains from Florence to Naples also run frequently. Travel time is 3½-4 hours. Eurostar Italia trains are the fastest and provide direct service to Naples. The slower regional trains may require a transfer in Rome. See below for details on purchasing train tickets, making reservations and more.

### NEAPOLITAN TAXIS

Although the current city administration has made great strides in regulating Naples' taxi system, there are still many "renegade" drivers in Naples, who charge unknowing visitors exorbitant fares. If you travel from the Naples airport or main train station, be sure to



Note

While the information presented here details this trip's planned routes, activities, accommodations, meeting and departing times, we are constantly seeking new opportunities to enhance this itinerary and your experience. Naturally, we will keep you up to date on any changes that may affect your arrival, departure or lodging.

ORGANIZE A BACKROADS PRIVATE TRIP FOR YOUR FAMILY, FRIENDS OR COLLEAGUES FOR THE TRIP OF A LIFETIME

catch an officially licensed taxi from a taxi stand. If you're delayed on the first day of the trip and take a taxi to our first night's hotel, negotiate the rate prior to entering the taxi to avoid extra charges due to traffic or other factors that might increase the fee. For shorter routes, you should always request that the driver switch on the fare meter before you enter the vehicle. Supplements are charged for weekend and holiday travel, service between 10 p.m. and 7 a.m., trips to and from the airport, transportation of luggage and radio calls.

WHERE TO STAY BEFORE & AFTER YOUR TRIP

SUGGESTED ACCOMMODATIONS

For help arranging pre- or post-trip hotels in conjunction with your Backroads trip, please work with your travel agent or the hotels directly. For assistance locating a travel agent please visit www.backroads.com/gettingthere. (Note that most travel agents charge a fee for their consulting services.)

Of course, we also recommend extending your stay at any of the hotels that we visit on this trip; see the sidebar above for details.

Please refer to the Hotel Room Rate Guide in the sidebar for starting double-occupancy rates. Note that the chart reflects the Internet and/or Best Available rates, which were accurate at the time of printing, but hotel rates are always subject to change.

Rooms on the street tend to be noisy, so you might want to request a room overlooking the hotel's garden or courtyard. Make your reservations early during the busy season, as rooms book well in advance.

NAPLES

GRAND HOTEL VESUVIO

This member of Leading Hotels of the World, built in 1822 and recently renovated, is known for its understated elegance and old-world atmosphere. Almost every room offers a view of the Mediterranean, Mount Vesuvius, Capri or Sorrento. Grand Hotel Vesuvio has attracted a loyal following of royals, heads of state and celebrities thanks to its exceptional, personalized service. Via Partenope 45; Phone: 39-081-764-0044; www.vesuvio.it; Rates: ♦♦♦♦♦; 167 rooms

HOTEL EXCELSIOR

Only steps from the bay, this 1908 hotel was originally established for artists and writers seeking private accommodations along the Mediterranean. The Excelsior's distinguished décor includes carefully selected antiques, sparkling chandeliers and elegant fabrics. The resourceful staff will let you know which areas of town are worth exploring. Savor some of Naples' finest cuisine at the hotel's La Terazza restaurant. Via Partenope 48; Phone: 39-081-764-0111; www.excelsior.it; Rates: ♦♦♦♦♦ (includes buffet breakfast); 136 rooms

HOTEL MIRAMARE

The Italian Liberty-style Hotel Miramare is a delightful small hotel with unbeatable views of the bay, Mount Vesuvius and the Sorrento coastline. Great care has been taken in creating a warm and inviting atmosphere, as seen in the colorful floral room schemes, handcrafted Italian ceramic tiles and friendly reception upon arrival. Via Nazario Sauro 24; Phone: 39-081-764-7589; www.hotelmiramare.com; Rates: ♦♦♦♦♦; 30 rooms

Hotel Room Rate Guide (U.S. dollars per night) table with price ranges and diamond ratings.

### **HOTEL MAJESTIC**

Hotel Majestic is ideally positioned near antiques markets, elegant boutiques, nightclubs, 18th- and 19th-century palaces, the Museum of Villa Pignatelli and the oldest aquarium in Europe. The guest rooms are simple and comfortable—request a room with a view. Largo Vasto a Chiaia 68; Phone: 39-081-416-500; [www.majestic.it](http://www.majestic.it); Rates: ♦♦; 91 rooms, 6 suites

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## **ROME**

### **HOTEL DE RUSSIE**

Set on the Piazza del Popolo and stuccoed in a distinctive salmon color, the Hotel de Russie has an atmosphere of tranquility that feels more like an elegant private home than a 122-room hotel. The hotel's contemporary décor, by trendsetting designer Tommaso Ziffer, who also renovated Florence's Hotel Savoy, maintains the color palette of celadon green, violet and ice blue that complement the elegant and streamlined furnishings. Every detail has been thoughtfully considered, from the divine Italian linen sheets and the carefully selected artwork to the luxurious spa and magnificent gardens. It's no wonder this hotel consistently earns a place on *Condé Nast Traveler's* Gold List. Via del Babuino 9; Phone: 39-06-32-8881; [www.hotelderussie.it](http://www.hotelderussie.it); Rates: ♦♦♦♦♦; 89 rooms, 33 suites

### **HOTEL EDEN**

Already renowned for its gracious sophistication, the Hotel Eden has established itself as one of Rome's premier properties. Chic yet not exclusive, the hotel has attracted the Hollywood set for years. The décor reflects a contemporary sensibility enhanced by Roman details, from rich fabrics, marble bathrooms and gilded cherubs to bronze statues and terrazzo floors. La Terrazza, the acclaimed rooftop garden restaurant, offers spectacular views of Rome and the seven hills. The hotel is close to all of Rome's attractions. If you'd like to take in the views from the privacy of your own geranium-filled balcony, be sure to request a room on the fourth floor. Via Ludovisi 49; Phone: 39-06-47-8121; [www.starwoodhotels.com](http://www.starwoodhotels.com); Rates: ♦♦♦♦♦; 121 rooms

### **ALBERGO DEL SOLE AL PANTHEON**

Operating as a hotel since 1467, this charming property is best known for its outstanding view of the Pantheon. Guest rooms are simply decorated with white stucco walls, antique wooden beds and arched doorways accented by colorful and lovingly restored 15th-century hand-painted ceilings. Although the price is comparable to grander and more chic hotels, its value lies in its location. Be sure to request a room away from the piazza if you're sensitive to noise. Piazza della Rotonda 63; Phone: 39-06-67-80441; [www.hotelsolealpantheon.com](http://www.hotelsolealpantheon.com); Rates: ♦♦♦♦♦; 31 rooms

### **HOTEL LORD BYRON**

In a superb location near the Borghese Gardens, Via Veneto and the Spanish Steps, this small boutique hotel is a peaceful oasis amid the bustle of Rome. Drawing a distinguished and loyal following, this Karen Brown favorite and member of Leading Hotels of the World has received accolades for its refined Art Deco décor, accommodating staff and exceptional setting. For a special treat, dine at the hotel's exclusive restaurant, Relais le Jardin. A minimum two-night stay is required. Via Giuseppe De Notaris 5; Phone: 39-06-32-20404; [www.lordbyronhotel.com](http://www.lordbyronhotel.com); Rates: ♦♦♦♦♦; 32 rooms

### **HOTEL TEATRO DI POMPEO**

Resembling a Tuscan farmhouse with wood-beamed ceilings and red-tile floors, this quaint property was constructed over the ruins of the Theatre of Pompey, the site on which Julius Caesar was assassinated in 44 B.C. One section of the theater excavation includes a cave-like room that now serves as a breakfast nook. The guest rooms are spacious, pleasant and quiet. Largo del Pallaro 8; Phone: 36-06-68-72812; [www.hotelteatro dipompeo.it](http://www.hotelteatro dipompeo.it); Rates: ◆◆◆; 13 rooms

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## FLORENCE

### **HOTEL SAVOY**

This Ferragamo family-owned property is one of the hottest addresses in Florence. With its décor of white chaise lounges accented by brightly colored pillows, graphic prints, sleek glass-and-steel furniture, it appeals to anyone who appreciates playful yet elegant contemporary design. Found on *Condé Nast Traveler's* Gold List, the Savoy is ideally located on the on the Piazza della Repubblica and only steps from the Duomo. Request a room at the corner (04 and 06) or a room on the top floor for spectacular city views. Piazza della Repubblica 7; Phone: 39-055-27-351; [www.hotelsavoy.it](http://www.hotelsavoy.it); Rates: ◆◆◆◆◆; 88 rooms, 14 suites

### **GRAND HOTEL**

Deemed one of Europe's finest hotels, this historic landmark displays a noble Renaissance style highlighted by the ornate brass chandeliers, lavish Italian fabrics, marble details and frescoes spanning the guest room walls. With an extraordinary staff bringing sincerity and warmth to every encounter, the Grand Hotel's clear objective is to ensure that your every need is met. Make your stay even more special by requesting a room with a view of the Arno River. Piazza Ognissanti 1; Phone: 39-055-271-61; [www.grandhotel.hotelfirenze.com](http://www.grandhotel.hotelfirenze.com); Rates: ◆◆◆◆◆; 90 rooms, 17 suites

### **HELVETIA AND BRISTOL**

Considered by many to be the quintessential Florentine hotel, the Helvetia and Bristol has a timeless sophistication. A discreet clientele adds to the hotel's distinguished flavor, as it has been a favorite of diplomats, celebrities and the British nobility for more than 150 years. A lengthy restoration and a wealth of period décor, such as carefully selected antiques and oil paintings, have returned the hotel to its original ambience and splendor. As soon as you enter, you'll feel as if you've been transported to the late 19th century. Additionally, you'll value the ideal location between the Piazza Repubblica and Via de' Tornabuoni. Via dei Pescioni 2; Phone: 39-055-266-51; [www.royaldemeure.com](http://www.royaldemeure.com); Rates: ◆◆◆◆◆; 44 rooms, 23 suites

### **J.K. PLACE**

This delightful and unexpected find is situated in the heart of Florence on the Piazza Santa Maria Novella. The hotel has a sleek, stylish décor with a fashionable cream-and-gray color scheme accented by 1950s-style lamps. However, it maintains an atmosphere of old-world warmth and hospitality by combining these chic touches with traditional elements, such as classical sculpture and a marble Louis XVI fireplace. It's an atmosphere that perfectly complements Florence and lives up to the goal of general manager Ori Kafri, who strives for "precious details and impeccable service." After a day of discovering the city, you'll find yourself eager to retreat to J.K. Place to relax and enjoy the views from the atmospheric rooftop terrace. Piazza Santa Maria Novella 7; Phone: 39-055-264-5181; [www.jkplace.com](http://www.jkplace.com); Rates: ◆◆◆◆◆; 20 rooms

### **ALBERGOTTO HOTEL**

A recent renovation has given new life to the delightful Albergotto, a former gathering place for European literati and musicians. Light-wood floors give the place a fresh lift, while antique furnishings and walls in mustard hues lend an elegant cozy touch to spacious guest rooms. With an enviable situation on the fashionable via de'Tornabuoni, overlooking the magnificent Palazzo Strozzi, the hotel is a great base from which to explore the city. It's an excellent choice, according to the team at *Karen Brown's Guides*, with a friendly staff and all of the modern amenities. Via de'Tornabuoni 13; Phone: 39-055-239-6464; [www.albergotto.com](http://www.albergotto.com); Rates: ◆◆◆◆; 22 rooms

### **HOTEL IL GUELFO BIANCO**

The three-star Hotel Il Guelfo Bianco may not be deluxe, but if you're looking for a pleasant place to stay in the heart of Florence, *Karen Brown's Guides* thinks this is it. The personal touch of owner Alessandro Bargiacchi is seen and felt as soon as you cross the threshold. Just 200 yards from the Duomo, it offers individually decorated guest rooms—some overlooking the quiet courtyards and roofs of the Via Larga—with marble-topped desks, antique furniture and exposed-beam ceilings. Some rooms feature painted wood or frescoed ceilings and carved wooden doorways. On the ground floor, you'll find a bar and a reading room. Via Cavour 29; Phone: 39-055-28-8330; [www.ilguelfobianco.it](http://www.ilguelfobianco.it); Rates: ◆◆◆; 40 rooms

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## MILAN

### **FOUR SEASONS HOTEL MILANO**

Heading up *Condé Nast Traveler's* Gold List and *Zagat Survey's* World's Top Hotels and Resorts, the Four Seasons Hotel Milano ranks as one of the top hotels in the world. Originally a 15th-century convent, the hotel has a magnificent colonnaded courtyard and a sophisticated décor of restored original frescoes, granite columns, vaulted ceilings and parquet and terrazzo floors. Adding to this elegant atmosphere are Il Teatro (Armani's favorite restaurant), a superb location and a staff that provides impeccable service. If you plan to stay here in October during the fashion shows, book your room far in advance. Via Gesù 6/8; Phone: 39-02-77-088; [www.fourseasons.com](http://www.fourseasons.com); Rates: ◆◆◆◆◆; 77 rooms, 41 suites

### **GRAND HOTEL ET DE MILAN**

Opera lovers will adore this majestic hotel, a member of Leading Hotels of the World, which is located close to La Scala Opera House between the fashionable Via Montenapoleone and Via della Spiga. The old-world décor features fine antiques, traditional crème wood paneling, bronze statues, marble floors and fireplaces, and oriental carpets. The hotel offers two classic Milanese restaurants, Don Carlos and Caruso. Both are among the city's premier spots to dine. Via Manzoni 29; Phone: 39-02-72-3141; [www.grandhoteletdemilan.it](http://www.grandhoteletdemilan.it); Rates: ◆◆◆◆◆; 77 rooms, 18 suites

### **HOTEL PRINCIPE DI SAVOIA**

Evoking the decadence of the Belle Époque period, this member of Leading Hotels of the World is flooded with opulence. Built in 1927, all of the rooms have been refurbished in 19th-century Lombard style and lavished with plush damask fabrics, gilt and neoclassical antiques. You'll appreciate the hotel's central location on the Piazza della Repubblica as well as the warm hospitality of the staff. Piazza della Repubblica 17; Phone: 39-02-62301; [www.hotelprincipedisavoia.com](http://www.hotelprincipedisavoia.com); Rates: ◆◆◆◆; 401 rooms and suites

## **HOTEL SPADARI AL DUOMO**

Fashionably hip and whimsical, with its all-blue interior and contemporary Milanese art, this modern boutique hotel offers a marked contrast to the grande dames. If you appreciate imaginative fresh design and love to stay at the hottest spot in town, you'll delight in the Hotel Spadari al Duomo. You can request a room overlooking the Duomo or the lemon tree-filled courtyard. Via Spadari 11; Phone: 39-02-72-002371; [www.spadarihotel.com](http://www.spadarihotel.com); Rates: ◆◆◆◆; 40 rooms

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## **EXTENDING YOUR VACATION**

### **NAPLES**

Naples is a fascinating city, with secrets best revealed by hiring an expert local guide. Consider joining a walking tour of the city and be sure to visit the elaborately decorated Baroque church of Gesù Nuovo, regarded as the historic heart of the city of Naples. Make a stop at the Chapel of Sansevero to view the amazing *Veiled Christ*, carved entirely out of marble, or a stroll through the labyrinth of narrow streets and alleyways of the Spaccanapoli, where laundry hangs to dry over the narrow streets and friendly shop owners greet you and invite you to browse their wares. If you enjoy museums, the National Archaeological Museum is a must-see and features many artifacts from the ancient cities of Pompeii and Herculaneum, as well as exhibits depicting the history of Naples. Follow your visit with a walk up the Capodimonte hill to the National Gallery of Capodimonte and view an exquisite collection of majolica and porcelain, as well as one of the finest collections of paintings in Italy, including works by Raphael, Botticelli and Caravaggio. You can also take an exhilarating ride on the funicular to the posh neighborhood of Vomero to visit the Certosa di San Martino and admire the stunning views of the city, the Bay of Naples, Capri and, on a clear day, Mount Vesuvius.

### **POMPEII OR HERCULANEUM**

A visit to one of these ancient cities is an unforgettable opportunity to step back in time and envision life during the heyday of the Romans. There's so much to see at Pompeii, you'll probably want to spend close to a full day at the site in order to fully appreciate this amazing archaeological discovery. Herculaneum, on the Bay of Naples, is a much smaller site that can be explored in a couple of hours.

To visit one or both of these sites after your Backroads trip, you can take the Circumvesuviana ([www.vesuviana.it](http://www.vesuviana.it)) train from Naples' central train station at Piazza Garibaldi; board the train for Sorrento and disembark at either the Ercoli Scavi or the Pompeii Scavi station. The ride will take you between 20 and 40 minutes, depending upon the time of day.

Expect to encounter crowds throughout the year, but do not let that deter you if you're an archaeology or history buff—Pompeii and Herculaneum are well worth a visit!

### **ISLAND OF PROCIDA**

This tiny and unpretentious Neapolitan island, accessible by ferry or hydrofoil from Naples, is a great spot to visit if you're looking for a taste of old-world Italy with relatively few foreign tourists. Easily explored in just a few hours, Procida (where *The Talented Mr. Ripley* and *Il Postino* were filmed) is packed with faded crumbling houses of every pastel hue imaginable. Its streets are cobbled, twisting, strung with flapping laundry and full of character. Its coastline is rimmed with black volcanic beaches and battered old fishing

boats. Part of the island's charm is its authenticity, so don't expect to find big hotels and fancy restaurants here. (Hooray!)

**We hope you've found this information useful, but nothing substitutes for speaking with one of our experienced Trip Consultants. Please call 800-462-2848 Monday-Sunday, between 7 a.m. and 5 p.m. Pacific time.**