

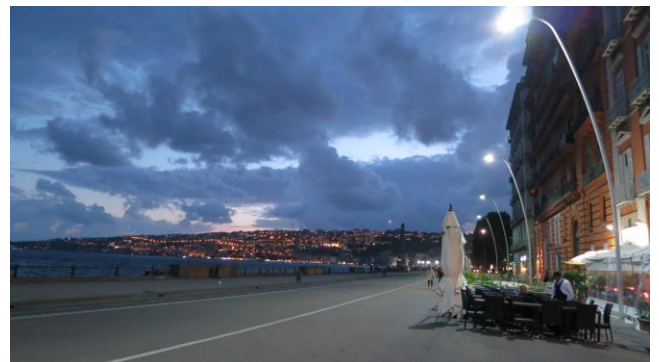


Amalfi Coast and Capri with Naples and Rome **May 23 to June 9, 2013**

We thought of this as our big trip of the year; I thought of it as the riskiest one of the year. We'd just had some family health issues and one of us wasn't worried at all while the other worried continuously. Guess who? At ages 68 and 78, trip insurance is probably in order but we've felt strongly that we needed a positive attitude, to keep going, be healthy and thus self-insure. Do I sound mentally healthy? NOT! Fortunately we both ARE physically healthy now.

Highlights

- 2 nights in Naples before starting hike
- 7 day - 6 night hike with www.CountryWalkers.com
- 5 nights in Sorrento – i.e., 3 add-on to the hike
- 5 nights in Rome
- All hotels upgraded to big balconies and bigger views



Traveling

We might be healthy and still going strong, but we are old enough to do whatever it takes to travel easily and that includes getting a lie-flat bed on the night flight to Rome. But luxury aside, it is a flight and it does entail losing six hours so by night time the second day I was ready to either take a nap or spit nails. Tom wanted dinner and we ended up having what most times would be a delightful long walk along the seaside looking for just the right place for famous Neapolitan pizza.



Rental car

All the while I was offering to be the driver of the European car, I was plenty fearful that my offer might actually be called upon. Italians are known to be crazier drivers than the French where I did drive for five years. Besides, this trip would be on narrow and curvy roads along the steep cliffs of the Italian coastline and into tiny towns nearly carless for good reason. Tom, who loves tiny roads, would later say that this was the hairiest driving he had ever encountered. We would note that pretty much all cars had dings and/or scrapes.

Naples – and you ask why?

Naples was first on our tourist list and the pick-up site of the 7-day hiking trip with www.CountryWalkers.com. Yes, everyone who has been to Naples has stories of its danger but I hadn't felt it on my trip a couple years ago and I didn't feel it on this trip either though I did take

precautions. Country Walkers chose the hotel well and Tom chose the room even better: we had a great view of the city and bay from our top 30th floor executive room.

I would later hear stories of purse snatching and even about piles of empty purses piled up on back streets. We didn't see any of this.

Gotta Eat Pizza

We first went searching pizza and why not? It may sound weird that the first thing to do or see in a city is actually something to eat, but this is, after all, the birthplace of pizza (probably Italy's most popular food export) and the locals take their signature dish *very* seriously. We were told to go to a pizzeria that's serving "pizza vera napoletana," true Neapolitan pizza, and even on tables of marble where pizza is served without need for a plate. There is also *pizza fritta*, or fried pizza, to go – it's deep-fried pizza dough with (usually) cheese and (sometimes) meat inside and folded up. Sounds like me but Tom felt there was too much dough on all of our pizzas.



Wander Aimlessly in the Historic Center

Just get lost. I do this in NYC and Naples is even more interesting. No plan. No thinking. Just go. The *storico antico* is both ancient and modern – the street plan is older than the hills and the buildings have contained shops and apartments for centuries. But unlike some kind of preserved museum piece, the old center is very much alive. What's spilling out of those shops may have changed over the last several hundred years, but the fact that it's a storefront hasn't. It's a densely populated area and the locals don't slow down for tourists. It's frantic if not frenetic and I'd not go there alone at night and even our guide had us remove any jewelry before entering. This is one of the top ways to see Naples alive with photo opportunities everywhere. It was hard to stop taking pictures of narrow streets.



Nativity scenes

So we collect Christmas tree ornaments. The Italians collect nativity scene pieces. There were blocks in the old section of Naples to purchase moving scenes and background. At one point in a village we saw a nearly full scale village that would be left out all year. At Caserta Palace there was an entire room of an ancient 1700s village. In Sorrento's Duomo there was a famous one of nearly the same size.



From the web: *Traditionally, the main focus of Christmas decorations in Italy is the Nativity scene, presepe or presepio in Italian. Every church has a presepe and they can be found in squares, shops, and other public areas. Displays often go beyond the manger scene and may even include a representation of the entire village. Presepi are usually set up starting December 8, the Feast Day of the Immaculate Conception, through January 6, Epiphany but some are unveiled on Christmas Eve. Many people set up a Christmas crib in their house and figurines for nativity scenes are made in many parts of Italy, with some of the best coming from Naples and Sicily. Although the presepe is usually set up before Christmas, baby Jesus is added on Christmas Eve. The Nativity scene is said to have originated with St. Francis of Assisi in 1223 (see Saint Francis in Italy when he constructed a nativity scene in a cave in the town of Greccio and held Christmas Eve mass and a nativity pageant there. Greccio reenacts this event each year.*

Shopping

We rarely shop but in this case we did because Tom needed a jacket at our first stop of Naples. It was never warm like we expected. He would later bend to the shopping frenzy of Capri and acquire both a lovely sweater and a ritzy scarf. In Sorrento we would laugh at the non-existence of socks for sale until we learned that there are shops simply for undies to include the missing socks that we'd hunted all over town to find.

Must take a Day-Trip to Pompeii

I'd been there before (after the Rome marathon, then prior when I was a teenager) and glad to go again. I'd really like to hike up to Mt Vesuvius but other things called to me first. This look into ancient Roman life is unforgettable and anything like it in the world is unknown. When you get tired of seeing Roman ruins, you need to see Pompeii since the 79AD town was pretty much left intact, and has an abundance of modern features such as water piping and fast food restaurants, not to mention brothels and signs very clearly indicating where they are (carved penises in the street.)



Eat Sfogliatelle

Yes, Italy is food and if its gelato or pasta or Sfogliatelle, we're there to try it all. This is allegedly Naples' signature sweet pastry, the *sfogliatella* and it's a study in contradictions – light layers of flaky pastry dough on the outside hide a dense filling of sweetened ricotta cheese on the inside. There are two varieties – called *riccia* and *frolla*. One has the flaky exterior (and is more difficult to make), the other has a smooth outer crust (and is no less delicious). We found them on the breakfast buffets. They're sweet enough to satisfy a dessert-like craving, but not so sweet as to make you ill.



The Veiled Christ at Capella Sansevero

Tour guides and art books often use words like “the statue seems to come to life” to describe well-carved marble figures. Every tour book recommends it despite the steep price. It's the centerpiece of the Sansevero Chapel, carved in 1753 by Giuseppe Sanmartino, and shows the figure of Christ lying under what looks like a piece of the thinnest of fabrics. The facial features are clearly visible, as are the body and even the crucifixion wounds, but the entire body is covered by the delicate folds of a cloth. The visual effect is truly stunning. Yet there are other sculptures of note here that equally defy any sense of logic such as the robed netting on one figure.



But don't drive

We wisely parked the car and left it underground first in Naples and then anywhere else we could. When we put the car into the Naples hotel garage I was very doubtful we'd be able to find it again for such a collection and mess of cars parked hodge podge and no control ticket given to us. But the Italians know how to manage chaos apparently, and must considering all the chaos they create and live with. Tom, who readily drives any and everywhere in the world, said this was the toughest traffic and hairiest driving he'd ever encountered.

Bruce Springsteen

Coincidentally he was appearing the night we arrived and much of the town could hear the concert. Bruce lives about 6 miles from our home and often shows up in nearby Asbury Park's Stone Pony where he began his career. Now in Naples!

Hiking and Walking Tours

Both my hiking tour companies won National Geographic's '50 Trips of a Lifetime' awards this year. Country Walkers has won it year in and year out whereas Timberline Adventures runs with a small staff and thus inexpensive tours so they wouldn't have made the time to submit. I'm happy with both companies and especially with www.Timbertours.com when it's Steve and Nola guiding, or Megan and Kristi. The past owners have been stupendous but are now in the process of retiring. I'm holding my breath that the new owners keep Steve and Nola busy and on the tours I want. I've been asked to compare the tour companies so here's a try:

www.Backroads.com: We've taken many of their bike trips such as Bryce, Zion, Grand Canyon, San Juan Islands, Vermont, and Prague to Vienna and only quit them when our last trips was so big as to require a giant bus. Couple that with two very young guides and we thought we were paying too much for what we got. They are at least double the cost of Timberline and yet often are at the same hotel and the same restaurants. Someone has to pay for their voluminous and numerous catalogs. They now use their own guides instead of local knowledgeable guides. In their defense they give their guides a few days to orient themselves locally. Many think they tend towards being stuffy; I really don't want a table set up and melon balls for my snack; I'm just as happy with a granola bar.

www.Timbertours.com: I've taken about 20 of their hikes. The price is hugely less since they are bare bones. Their administrative staff is limited and getting an email answer is usually frustrating. Paperwork is limited and they've been known to forget to bill a hiker. Their repeat business is very high as much because they have a few excellent guides. But they have some who shouldn't lead a tour. It is yet to be seen what the new owners do with the business. Hotels are simple (like a Best Western) but when in the Parks it's the same as Backroads. Food for breakfast and dinner is off the regular menu and unlimited and usually at the best places available; dinner is provided every night versus a couple meals on your own with other companies. (I'd prefer at least one evening alone and usually opt out once.) Lunch is a pack-your-own-sandwich-and-snacks picnic. They do the most miles and while strenuous they offer lesser options. Their 6-day hike is a full 6 days instead of little to nothing first and last day. Their numbers never exceed a small van of about 12 hikers.

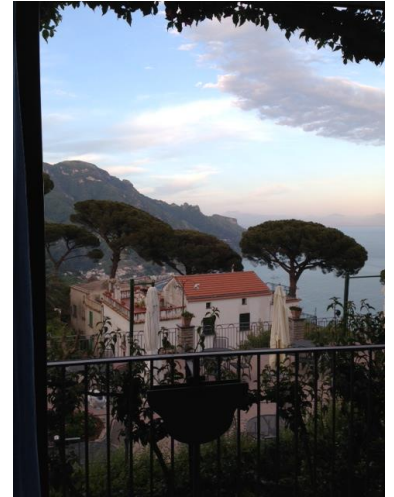
www.CountryWalkers.com: I've only signed up for three (Machu Picchu, Canyonlands and (Amalfi Coast now but have another one booked (Cinque Terre). I'm convinced they are an in-between with pricing and mileage. Their tour guides are local and impart a lot of education before, during and after. Their administrative staff is large and extremely diligent as evidenced by the package being the most complete of all. Their mileage is also in-between and I've wished for more strenuous hiking. I find the food too much with restaurant extravaganzas both at lunch and dinner; but then with 1 or 2 meals on your own. Like Backroads, the first day may be very light and the last day is only breakfast so a 7-



day counts as a 6-day at most. They average 10-12 hikers but have gone up to 18 which I do not like. Their vans are larger and luxurious mini-buses and with a professional driver so the tour guide is free to educate us during rides.

Ravello

This was our first stop on the hiking tour and what a little utopia! Tom had upgraded the room to a magnificent and perfect view; the room was large with a sitting room. The top floor restaurant was a really dramatic with an even better sea view effect. The village is small enough to be enchanting but large enough to not be boring. It has villas and gardens to visit and lovely little cafes to enjoy. Tom was on his own and then he dined with some of the hikers while I did what I do best – nothing. Every once in a while I just need a peanut-butter sandwich and no restaurant and no chit chat. Tom would never give up a restaurant and in this town there were many to choose from.



From Ellen after receiving this picture: Ravello is a little bit of heaven, isn't it? Her son had just returned from a nearby village where we hiked through: Nocelle. Our guide had been married in Nocelle.

Capri

Tom to friend: Diana's hiking with the group, Country Walkers, and I'm along just luxuriating. This was taken yesterday from our hotel balcony in Capri and we've moved by ferry to Sorrento and will be here for five days - Diana hikes two days there then we have three on our own before returning to Rome for a few days then home. Tough life, but as they say, somebody's gotta.



From Ellen: That's THE view! Isn't it just splendiferous?!

From Judy who was here for her honeymoon: Wow...I'm pretending I'm there too! Are you feeling crowded with me at each of your hotels? New words from Judy to describe the area: Awesomely gorgeousioso!!! She had suggested it was time for Tom to sing again so he did with a return "Oh solo mio!"



Sorrento

Lush and lovely grounds and sea view from our Sorrento hotel. A view of the Bay of Naples and Vesuvius to the other side. There is something eerie about looking out over Vesuvius and knowing it's scheduled to erupt again in 20-25 years and that there is currently NO evacuation plan.

Sorrento is probably the safest and easiest of all the towns to stay in if one needed to choose just one. But Ravello would remain our favorite, and Naples of course had the most offerings.

From Sorrento we made a day trip to Caserta though we'd intended to do this on Tuesday when we were driving from Sorrento to Rome. But it was closed on Tuesdays. The drivers were not and I think the day's ugly traffic might have been compounded by a train and public transportation strike. It was memorable – the drive even more than the palace.

Caserta https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Palace_of_Caserta

Said to be one of the finest palaces in all of Europe and even outstripping Versailles in extravagance, I'm not so sure I could go that far but it was worth the trip. Or it would have been had we not been driving with the Italians on Italian wee roads. The Italians have no money and Caserta's lack of upkeep reminds one of that.

Rome

Villa Pinciana was within walking distance of the St Regis Grand Hotel where we'd stayed for the Rome marathon and where we stayed again for the first two nights of special deal before moving to the Villa.

We had the upper floor penthouse suite with two huge decks overlooking the city. There was a Turkish bath that we never took the time to look at. It was near to a main park and museum and a bit of a different area than what we'd previously known. Here I am luxuriating in the outdoor patio where breakfast was served. I'd managed a bit of allergy or cold and I knew the sun would help cure it. Yes!

Italy is for foodies

This was said to be one of the Country Walkers best trips for hotels and for restaurant experiences and I can agree that it was special. We continued the good food experience on our own and especially in Rome. We would have extravagant lunches in out of the way places and even in a restaurant known for its Slow Food Movement, and once in a tree house looking restaurant.

Having two tour guides who were locals helped. Alessandra was from an old family with Naples background and we even learned a story about one famous island that her great grandfather once owned. Luigi lives on the Isle of Capri with a multi-generational family who all live in the same block

and he too had old roots background and stories. Both were able to take us back streets, introduce us to restaurants a tourist could never find, and regal us with historical stories rarely found in tour books.

One evening we had a fish extravaganza down a back alley and upstairs in a surprisingly local place. A three piece strolling band was summoned and an impromptu dance floor was made.





Tom to friend: The coast road and all roads around here are some of the hairiest I've ever encountered but the little Mercedes 108 automatic is doing fine and I've only had to back up twice for a bus. Avis gave me the Mercedes for the same money instead of the VW Golf I'd reserved so I'm happy. Fortunately, this hotel in Sorrento has a garage as parking is almost impossible anywhere in this area. About 25 bucks a day but it's only . .

Diana's walking tour ended with a big farewell dinner at a most unique farm/restaurant out in the boonies - really good and very rustic as you'll see. This hotel is so special I arranged to spend three more nights before we head back to Rome for a few days.

Here is Trish and John during the last evening's dinner when we celebrated John's birthday. And two group photos at the Slow Food restaurant for a lunch and at the Last Supper.



Photos

I'll leave most of the tourist photos to Tom and he'll hopefully catch up soon and have a photo show on www.TomsKoi.com under Photo Shows. Here's a selection from the hike. The hiking description and details are in the itinerary below.



One of Pompeii's major roads; Hotel Rufolo where we stayed in Ravello; the courtyard of the villa.



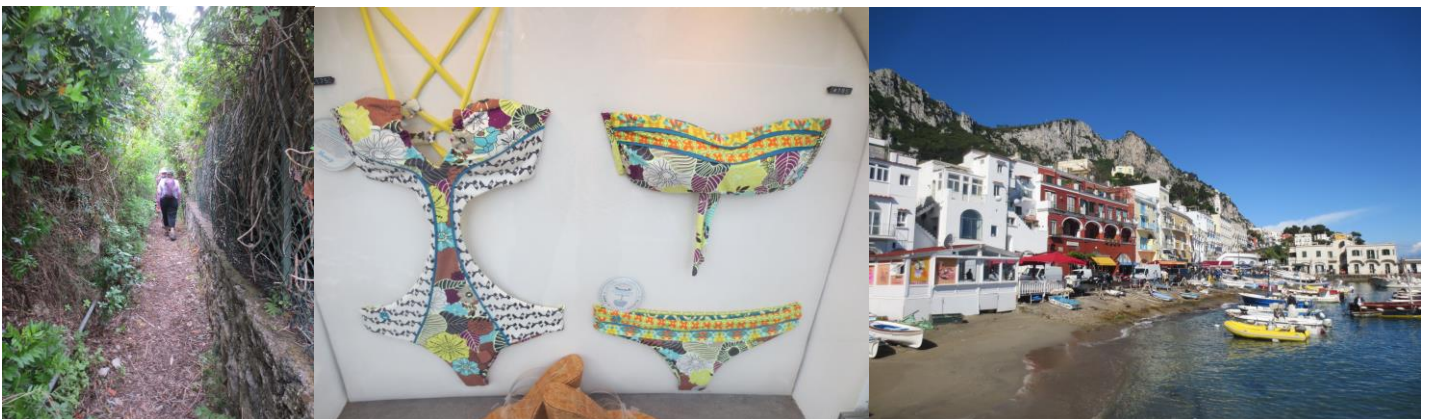
Mules and horses are used to carry trail making materials and supplies since there are no roads.



Path of the Gods and a bit of education from Alessandra.



Shopping on Capri was colorful. No, I didn't. Or I'd have been in the clouds twice.



A pathway behind some noted homes on Capri, before coming into bikini shopping potential again. The bikinis look like jewelry, as do the Capri homes and shops.



Some Slow Food and mozzarella making before consuming.

The End

Amazing place this Amalfi Coast and a trip very much worth doing and doing again. But all things come to an end as did this after an extra three days in Sorrento before heading onto Rome for 5 nights.

But there's No End for us – next up is a trip to Paradise on Michigan's Upper Peninsula for a marathon, followed by Elkton Maryland for a trail half marathon. Then Marie arrives and we head to D.C. for the end of June before she starts her CAD Engineering camp July 1st. It's a week at Kripalu Yoga Retreat in the Berkshires for Boot Camp for Teen Goddesses with me doing Yoga R&R when we rush home Friday night for the three of us to have a Saturday departure to our lovely San Francisco for a week where Tom goes with us and he's found a fancy apartment near to Nob Hill. The end of July I'm to Vancouver again and a 6-day hike in Whistler BC. August Tom and I venture to Deer Valley near to Salt Lake City to renew acquaintances with friends met on this trip before I go to Montana for the start of a hiking trip to Glacier and Waterton Parks. There's more hopefully but I'll spare you and say our usual: Somebody's gotta do it. Life is good.

Itinerary

Thu May 23 – Diana and Tom

5:05pm Depart Newark EWR via UA#960

Fri May 24 – Diana and Tom

7:45am Arrive Rome FCO +1 day

Rental car Avis - Drive to Naples from Rome: A1 and E-45; in Naples take A3 West; then get off at Via Medina.

Summary of tour with www.CountryWalkers.com: *The towns of the Sorrentine Peninsula and Amalfi Coast have been part of the European “Grand Tour” since the 18th century, and with good reason. Dramatic limestone cliffs contrast against the clear, blue sea. Clinging hillside towns, groves of fragrant lemons, silvery olive trees, and vineyards are quintessentially Mediterranean. The draw is indeed ancient, dating to the Greeks, who imagined the rocky coastline to be the home of the Sirens of Homer’s Odyssey, and later wealthy Romans, who chose the area as a site to construct their villas.*

The landscape varies from typical Mediterranean macchia (shrub), where a goat may be peeking down from a nearly vertical hillside, to the cultivated terraces of citrus, olives, or vines, testament to centuries of civilization. In addition to feasting your eyes, you literally feast on the bounty of the region’s incredible variety of flavors. Lemons from the Sorrentine Peninsula have inspired the liqueur limoncello, sipped ice cold after dinner. Fresh seafood, mozzarella, and pasta dishes unique to the region are among other tastes to be savored in this exploration of a mythical coastline. This land of Sirens is, above all, a land of lines and flawless contours. It is a land of classical sobriety, of lime-stone, of blue sea. – Norman Douglas, British writer, 1868-1952

Hotel NH Ambassador Hotel Naples – 2 nights on own
Via Medina, 70; Molo Beverello, 80133 Naples, Italy
Tel 011 39 081 4105111, Fax 011 39 081 5518010; Contact: Mr. Pasquale Milone
Email p.milone@nh-hotels.com or nhambassador@nh-hotels.com
www.nh-hotels.com; parking 25 Euros a day; Free Wi-Fi; breakfast included

From web: *With its 30 floors, the NH Ambassador is Italy’s tallest hotel—offering enchanting views over the Bay of Naples. Located in the historic heart of the city, this business-style hotel is within walking distance to the main port (where ferries depart for Sorrento and Capri) and nearby cultural and historic attractions. Room rates include tax and breakfast: recommend Superior Double-for-Single-Use.*

Sun May 26 - Tom

Drive Naples to Amalfi via A-3; back to E-45 and go south;

Hotel Rufollo has parking available; expects to join group for dinner

Sun May 26 - DAY 1 of Hiking - Diana

2:00 pm. CW guide(s) will be wearing a Country Walkers shirt; they will be at the NH Ambassador prior to 2:00 pm to greet you and load baggage; please plan on leaving the hotel no later than 2:00 pm, ready for an easy walking tour of Pompeii.

Walking tour of Pompeii; 2 miles, easy - (sneakers acceptable). Transfer to Ravello. Upon meeting in Naples, you drive a short distance to the archeological excavation site of Pompeii. A guided two-hour walking and historical tour provides a fascinating glimpse into the Roman town frozen in time in 79 A.D. by the eruption of nearby Mt. Vesuvius. In the early evening you arrive at the picturesque village of Ravello, perched high on a hilltop above the seaside town of Amalfi. Both Ravello and Amalfi, powerful towns in the Middle Ages, are rich with art and history. Ravello, the smaller and quieter of the two, has enchanted writers, artists, musicians, and travelers for centuries—Richard Wagner, D.H. Lawrence, and Virginia Woolf all spent time here. Its cobblestone ways are free of traffic and

bordered by gardens and elegant villas, including the stunning 13th-century Villa Rufolo, famous for its spectacular gardens.

After checking into your hotel—a family-run, Old-World style property situated in the historic center of Ravello—an evening stroll in the lively main square, the Piazza Duomo, provides an opportunity to see the town's 11th-century cathedral. From your hotel's expansive terrace and dining room, where dinner is served, you are able to enjoy the breathtaking views of mountains plunging into the Tyrrhenian Sea.

Hotel Rufolo, Ravello – 2 nights

Via S. Francesco, 1, 84010 Ravello (SA) Italy Tele: +39 089 857 133 Fax +39 089 857 935

Email info@hotelrufolo.it WiFi limited

An Old-World style, family-run hotel in the historic center of Ravello with a swimming pool (seasonal), new spa, and sweeping views of the Amalfi Coast from lovely terraces. This intimate four-star property also features spacious and elegantly decorated guest rooms with spectacular views over Mediterranean gardens and the sea.

From website <http://www.hotelrufolo.it/en/chisiamo.asp> - Hotel Rufolo is an ancient house overlooking the famous Villa Rufolo gardens. The style and colour of its architecture has been well preserved during renovation and blend perfectly with the landscape and the world famous panoramic views. All this engenders feelings of relaxation and wellbeing, which will ensure a happy stay. The hotel, situated in the historic centre of Ravello, has welcomed its guests with the warmth and the friendliness, which typifies the spirit of Ravello (for which Ravello has been known for) for more than a century. The gates of the Hotel open into a courtyard, which provides parking space under a shady pergola. The entrance of the hotel leads to the reception, large lounge and the bar area with marble flooring, comfortable sofas, enhanced by antique Neapolitan style furniture, this opens onto a beautiful terrace from where a few steps descend to a large swimming pool, (usually open from May to October) a lemon grove and lawn terrace. On the second floor there is a SPA with a spacious terrace furnished with wrought iron tables and chairs. A few steps take you to a gym. The restaurant is located between the second and third floor with the most spectacular view of the sea and Amalfi Coast.

Directions from Napoli, Highway A3 exit Angri and then go on the Valico di Chiunzi-Ravello.



Mon May 27 – Tom

Lunch at San Giovanni, Via S. Maria (with group?)

As group dinner is on our own, expects to be with Diana this evening

Mon May 27 - DAY 2 of Hiking – Diana

Villa Cimbrone. Ravello to Torre dello Ziro to Valle dei Mulini to Amalfi; 5-7 miles, easy to moderate, several elevation gains and losses of 100-350 ft each. Today is spent in the valley between the towns of Ravello and Amalfi. First, a short walk brings you to the Villa Cimbrone, an original 19th-century estate where the splendid and slightly wild garden seems to literally hang on the cliff's edge over the Italy Amalfi Coast & Capri sea. Fragrant rose gardens, small temples, pavilions, and bronze and stone statues lead you to the Belvedere dell'Infinità (Belvedere of Infinity) to take in an awe-

inspiring panorama, deemed by former Ravello resident Gore Vidal to be “the most beautiful in the world.” You then leave Ravello on foot for the tiny village of Pontone, the route weaving through cobbled ways and former mule paths, once the only roads connecting the network of hill farms and villages. From here you walk up a lengthy flight of steps and through an open pine forest to the Torre dello Ziro, a medieval tower perched on a crag with spectacular views over Amalfi and the waters below. Returning to Pontone, you are welcomed inside an inviting trattoria by Michele and Tina, a husband-and-wife team. A traditional lunch is prepared—perhaps risotto with wild mushrooms or homemade linguine puttanesca—from the fresh, seasonal ingredients of community farmers.

After lunch, a 15-minute and 150-foot ascent through terraced lemon groves and grape arbors leads to a saddle, the highest point of the afternoon’s walk, with views of the entire valley. You then descend a steep limestone-paved path to a brook rushing down from the mountain ridge, once a power source to the numerous paper mills for which Amalfi was famous. The trail descends stone steps through a shaded forest and follows contours of the hill into the Valle dei Mulini (Valley of the Mills). You walk past ruins of the mills into the heart of Amalfi, where you are free to explore the maze of whitewashed alleys, do a bit of window shopping along the Via Lorenzo d’Amalfi, or visit the stunning 11th-century landmark cathedral in the Piazza Duomo. Later, you return to the tranquility of Ravello via the tiny town of Atrani. Upon arrival at the hotel you may choose to relax, or browse the colorful ceramic shops in this delightful town before dinner on your own at one of Ravello’s many fine restaurants.

Hotel Rufolo, Ravello – 2nd night – see above

Tue May 28 – Tom

Lunch – not joining group but going to Sorrento Hotel and leaving car in parking area then to Capri to meet up with group and probably join group for dinner

Tue May 28 - DAY 3 of Hiking - Diana

Bomerano to Sentiero degli Dei to Montepertuso to Positano; 6 miles, moderate, elevation gain of 300 ft and loss of 1,000 ft, possibility of vertigo in certain places. Transfer to Capri - Today’s walk begins on a southern slope above the Amalfi Drive, one of the most stunning coastal routes imaginable. The route today is the Sentiero degli Dei (Path of the Gods), one of the classic walks of the Amalfi Coast region. The path winds westward below the limestone ridge of the south-facing mountains with spectacular views of the sea and dramatic coastline. From grassy terraces ingeniously clinging to the hillsides, you walk past grazing sheep and goats, through bushes of heather, rosemary, and rock rose, and on to a mixed forest of oak and chestnut. You arrive in the enchanting hillside town of Montepertuso for a well-deserved lunch of local cheese, cold cuts, and grilled vegetables at a favorite family-run restaurant. The country restaurant is part of the Slow Food Movement, an international association promoting food and wine culture, while also protecting local food and agricultural biodiversity worldwide. Later you continue descending many ancient stone steps (elevation loss of approximately 1,000 feet) to Positano, where pastel-colored houses built into the steep hillside spiral down narrow streets to the café-lined beach. Once a small fishing village, Positano is now a chic seaside resort—thanks in part to John Steinbeck who, after a visit there in 1953, wrote: “Positano bites deep. It is a dream place that isn’t quite real when you are there and becomes beckoningly real after you have gone.” Following a visit in Positano, you shuttle to Sorrento’s port to board a ferry for the short ride to the Isle of Capri (between 25 and 40 minutes). This nautical approach provides excellent views of the Sorrentine Peninsula and the striking “teeth” of Capri, the Faraglioni cliffs. Upon arrival at Capri’s Marina Grande, you board the funicular and ascend to the island’s elegant main square, Piazza Umberto I, or as the locals simply call it, La Piazzetta. After checking in to your cliffside hotel, you may enjoy an aperitivo on the terrace overlooking the Sea view from Ravello through the umbrella pines waters below or among the citrus trees of your hotel’s garden. Dinner, likely the fresh catch from the waters below, is served at the hotel’s restaurant.

Hotel Luna, Capri – 2 nights

Viale Matteotti, 3 - 80073 Capri (Napoli) Tel 011 39 081 8370433, Fax 011 39 081 8377459

Email luna@capri.it Wi-Fi yes

Accessed through a charming wisteria-covered pathway, this lovely four-star hotel enjoys a stunning, secluded location facing the sea and Faraglioni cliffs. Additional features include panoramic terraces, an outdoor lounge bar, and large swimming pool (seasonal). Comfortable rooms are furnished with antiques and face the quiet courtyard.

Directions: located in the center of Capri, bordered by the sea, the Gardens of Augustus and the Charterhouse of San Giacomo. To get to Hotel Luna from the port, guests should take the funicular railway from Marina Grande to the Piazzetta and from here proceed along the shop lined Via Emanuele, until reaching a pergola, dripping in great cascades of pink bougainvillea, which seems to lead directly to the sea but, instead, leads directly to Hotel Luna.

Wed May 29 - Tom

Lunch – group lunch is on own so maybe joining Diana

Dinner – group dinner is on own so maybe joining Diana; ask tour guide for suggestions

Wed May 29 - DAY 4 of Hiking - Diana

Anacapri to Belvedere Migliera to Monte Solaro to Anacapri. Moderate to challenging option is 6 miles with an elevation gain of 1,300 ft and possibility of vertigo. Easier option is 4 miles with an elevation gain of 400 ft and a chairlift ride. Additional afternoon option of Belvedere delle Noci or Arco Naturale; 3 miles, easy to moderate. Capri's early-morning light invites exploration as you drive up the winding road via public bus to Anacapri, a small town of 5,000 residents, formerly connected to the Marina Grande only by the Phoenician Steps—a flight of 800 stone steps reputed to have been built by the Greeks. The morning's walk brings you to the Belvedere della Migliera viewpoint with vistas of neighboring Ischia and Procida islands, and the Punta Carena lighthouse. Some may choose the challenging option—to reach Capri's highest point, Monte Solaro (1,926 feet above sea level), on foot; the less strenuous ascent is by the 12-minute seggiovia (chairlift)! After enjoying a refreshment and stunning view over the Bay of Naples and the Amalfi Coast, you return to the base of Monte Solaro—again, either on foot or by chairlift—and are free to enjoy lunch on your own in the village of Anacapri. Regrouping after lunch, your guides lead you to the Church of San Michele, an 18th-century gem whose majolica tiles of Adam and Eve are one of the finest examples of Neapolitan Baroque artwork.

In the later part of the afternoon you have several options for exploring Capri at your own pace. You may choose to browse in the island's chic and inviting shops, enjoy a swim in the hotel's outdoor pool, or take an easy walk to the Arco Naturale, or Belvedere delle Noci, permitting a close-up look at the island's limestone rock formations carved by the sea.

For dinner on your own, you can venture into one of Capri's numerous restaurants to enjoy, perhaps, a signature insalata caprese followed by perfectly grilled fish or scampi.

Hotel Luna, Capri – 2nd night – see above

Thu May 30 – Tom

Dinner – join group for dinner in Sorrento

To get to Sorrento early enough to verify proper room accommodations

Thu May 30 - DAY 5 of Hiking – Diana

Transfer to Sorrento. Afternoon option of Monte San Costanzo to Termini; 4 miles, easy to moderate. Catching a late-morning ferry to Sorrento, you arrive in time for an excellent lunch and some free time for browsing. The afternoon walking option is at the tip of the Sorrentine Peninsula, where from the chapel atop Monte San Costanzo there are outstanding views of the entire region; the Bay of Naples laid out on the right and Capri rising starkly from a glistening blue sea straight ahead. You descend from the summit across the grassy hillside, rich with Mediterranean scrub (macchia) and sprinkled with orchids and various types of broom, and continue on to the small village of Termini. Returning to Sorrento and checking into your historic seaside hotel—a luxurious property with an expansive terrace and swimming pool—you soon depart for a group dinner at a restaurant displaying an artistic display of Amalfi soaps nearby for a taste of traditional Sorrentine cooking.

Grand Hotel Royal, Via Correale, 42, P.O. Box 83, 80067 Sorrento Napoli – 2 nights with CW plus 3 on own

Tel 011 39 081 8073434, Fax 011 39 081 8772905, Email ghroyal@manniellohotels.it and royal@manniellohotels.com <http://www.royalsorrento.com/en/index.php> Wi-Fi yes for a fee

Set in a late 19th-century villa, this luxurious four-star, superior-rated hotel commands a breathtaking view over the Bay of Naples and Mount Vesuvius. Elegant guest rooms feature local Vietri-tiled flooring, inlaid furnishings crafted from traditional Sorrentine wood, private balconies, and spectacular sea views. The Grand Hotel Royal also boasts a private beach, swimming pool, restaurant, and lounge bar.

Directions by Car: Follow the signs Sorrento peninsula (penisola sorrentina) on the motorway A1 Rome-Naples which will take you at the motorway A3 Salerno-Reggio Calabria. Leave the motorway at the exit Castellammare Di Stabia and follow the signs Penisola Sorrentina on the coast road 145 from Castellammare di Stabia to Sorrento. Once you get to Sorrento follow the signs to our Hotels.

By Hydrofoil: From the harbour of Naples Molo Beverello there are hydrofoils to Sorrento almost every hour. The port of Sorrento "Marina Piccola" is very close to the centre and to the Grand Hotel Royal. The journey takes about 40 minutes.

See map of Sorrento and to hotel in file.

Fri May 31 - Tom

Lunch – join group in Apola at restaurant for speciality of the house: Regionali Bolco

Fri May 31 - DAY 6 of Hiking – Diana

Colli di San Pietro to Monte Vico Alvano to Arola; 5 miles, moderate, elevation gain of 1,000 ft and elevation loss of 230 ft. A splendid view of Mount Vesuvius and the Bay of Naples greets you at breakfast. Today's walk begins at the estate of Colonna Castle in Colli di San Pietro, a short coach transfer from Sorrento. A few long switchbacks on a sustained ascent lead to a small plateau at the center of Monte Vico Alvano. From here you may ascend another 95 feet to reach the peak and a large iron cross from where there are fantastic views over the Bay of Naples and the Gulf of Salerno. As you descend through a chestnut forest to the saddle between Monte Vico Alvano and Monte Comune, wonderful views of the Amalfi Drive and the Sentiero degli Dei (Path of the Gods) open before you. This saddle is the watershed between the Gulfs of Naples and Salerno, and in the springtime is filled with wild asphodels, rock roses, and orchids. You continue the descent to Arola where our friends Tony and Camillo welcome you for a spectacular lunch on the terrace of their family-run osteria overlooking the sea. The Slow Food restaurant features traditional Sorrentine recipes made with farm-fresh produce, including homemade ricotta and provolone cheeses. Soon after you return to Sorrento for some last-minute shopping or exploration, or join your guides

for an easy walk nearby.

This evening you enjoy a farewell dinner, feasting on freshly caught seafood, locally produced vegetables, olive oil, wine, and limoncello.

Grand Hotel Royal, Sorrento – 2nd night with CW – see above

Sat Jun 1 - DAY 7 of Tour – no hiking – Diana

Departure from Sorrento by CW. After enjoying a copious breakfast, your guides assist your departure at your leisure from Sorrento. We stay on for additional three nights.

Hotel add on: Grand Hotel Royal, Sorrento – as above but on own – for additional 3 nights

Order #012528013 for Doppia Premier Vista Mare with buffet breakfast

Parking available for a fee; Wi-Fi for a fee

Roads: While transfers on this tour are not long, many of the roads along the Amalfi Coast are very narrow, winding, and exposed to drop-offs.

Expect: Two expert, local guides (for groups of 8 or more), with you 24/7; All meals except for 1 lunch and 2 dinners; local wine included; All accommodations (with private bathrooms) while on Tour; Transportation from the meeting to the departure point; Entrance fees and special events as noted in the itinerary; Basic travel insurance coverage.

Gratuities for all hotels, meals, and services that are included in your tour price will be paid by Country Walkers. Should you wish to tip your Country Walkers guides, the standard in the industry ranges from 8 to 12 euros per person, per guide, per day and is preferred in local currency. Gratuities for your bus driver are included in the tour price.

Tue Jun 4

Depart Sorrento via car to Rome

Hotel The St Regis Rome – for 2 nights

Via Vittorio E. Orlando, 3, Rome 00185 Tele: 39 06 47091 Fax: 39 06 4747307

Thu Jun 6

Move hotels

Hotel Hotel Villa Pinciana – 2 nights

Via Abruzzi, 11, Area Via Veneto, Rome 00187, Tele: 390696042921

Free Wi-Fi; breakfast included

See suggested Rome pre or post tour ideas by CW: Discover the timeless enchantment of Rome on this four-day stay, touring its most well-loved monuments and hidden treasures, one day on foot with an expert guide ... and the next day, on a chauffeured Vespa, with a safe and steady driver to do the navigating! An elegant four-star boutique hotel, perfectly situated, is your base to venture out to the nearby Spanish Steps, the Piazza del Popolo, and the Via Condotti, within walking distance of a plethora of shops, restaurants, and theaters.

DAY 1 - Upon your arrival in Rome you check into the historic Hotel Piranesi, which occupies the 19th-century Palazzo Nainer designed by Roman architect Giuseppe Valadier. Within walking distance of many of Rome's main sites and attractions, the hotel's elegant street, Via del Babuino, is replete with art and antique galleries and is also near the Spanish Steps and the Piazza del Popolo. There are no scheduled activities this afternoon, leaving you time to settle in and begin to enjoy

Roman life. From the settlements of the early Etruscan civilization in the region, Rome grew to rule a vast empire and, of course later, the city became the center of the Christian world. Artists and architects flocking to work for the popes and their families, notably in the Renaissance and Baroque periods, created some of the city's most magnificent buildings and monuments. The legacy of this uninterrupted millennial history can be seen all over the city and the surrounding area.

DAY 2 - After enjoying breakfast in your hotel, your expert local guide joins you to lead you on a walking tour through the beautiful Campo Marzio. A perfect welcome and introduction to exploring the highlights and atmosphere of Rome, some of the sites and stops on this walking itinerary are: the Spanish steps, Fountain of the Barcaccia, Building of the Propaganda Fide, the Trevi Fountain, and the Virgo Water Aqueduct. You continue onto the Via del Corso (Rome's longest road), reaching the political center of Italy with the Palazzo Montecitorio, the House of the Deputies, Palazzo Chigi (the office of the Prime Minister), the famous Obelisk used inside the Pantheon, which is the best preserved Roman temple. The tour concludes in Piazza Navona, at the baroque Fountain of the Four Rivers of Gianlorenzo Bernini, and a perfect spot for an aperitivo and lunch at one of the square's many open air bars, restaurants, and pizzerias. You may continue your exploration of Rome on your own this afternoon and evening. You may choose to visit Vatican City, the world capital of Catholicism and the world's smallest state. Occupying 106 acres within high walls watched over by the Vatican Swiss Guards, it was the site where St. Peter was martyred (~AD 64) and buried, which then became the residence of the popes who succeeded him. The papal palaces, next to the great St. Peter's Basilica, are home to the Sistine Chapel and the eclectic collections of the Vatican Museums, as well as being the residence of the Pope.

DAY 3 - Chauffeured Vespa tour of Rome - This morning, after breakfast in your hotel, you set off on the ultimate Roman experience—a four-hour tour of the city on an authentic vintage Vespa. Don't worry, you're not driving! Your driver/navigator is experienced, drives with maximum attention to safety, and doesn't exceed a speed of 30 kilometers per hour (~19 miles per hour), and you both wear helmets equipped with earphones and microphone for communicating. On the real life set of your own "Roman Holiday" you discover the hidden Rome—along the lesser known routes to the small squares and quiet streets beloved by Romans themselves. Highlights may include the Basilica San Giovanni, the Giardino degli Aranci, Piazza San Pietro, and Piazza Gianicolo.

DAY 4 – departure following breakfast in the hotel.

Hotel Piranesi, Via del Babuino, 196; Rome, Italy; Tel 011 39 06 328 041, Fax 011 39 06 361 0597 Email info@hotelpiranesi.com. An intimate boutique hotel located in the historic Palazzo Nainer near the Piazza del Popolo on a street known for art and antique galleries, its spacious guest and public rooms are elegantly furnished with rich fabrics and antiques, parquet floors, and marble bathrooms. Amenities also include a fitness room, sauna, and massage on site.

Sat Jun 8

Move to airport hotel

Hotel Hilton Rome Airport – 1 night
Via Arturo Ferrarin 2 Fiumicino, Rome Italy 00054 Tele 39 0665258

Sun Jun 9

9:50am Depart Rome FCO via United #53 – wait list
1:35pm Arrive Newark EWR

Links/Tourist ideas:

www.summeritaly/guide/nocelle per Rob/Ellen