

An Italian journey

THE GOOD AND THE BAD OF NAPLES, ITALY

By
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Amalfi

An Italian Journey

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LET'S BEGIN WITH BEAUTY

The dramatic coastline of the Campania region, along with ancient ruins steeped in history and mouth watering pizza, makes it an ideal destination for travellers.

In the heart of the city lies the Museo Archeologico Nazionale di Napoli (National Archaeological Museum), a magnificent former palace that functions as a historical treasure chest. Its grand halls contain an impressive collection of ancient masterpieces.

Nearby, the Quartieri Spagnoli (Spanish Quarter) established in the 16th century to house a large contingent of Spanish troops during their rule over Naples from the 16th to the 18th century has a notorious past associated with crime and vice.

Having said that, it has undergone a significant revitalization and has become a popular tourist destination. The narrow, cobbled alleys, lined with shops and tavernas on either side, often contend with vehicles for space, while tourists stroll shoulder to shoulder, soaking in the atmosphere.

However, for a deeper exploration of beauty and history, a short train ride is necessary.

Pompeii

In 79 AD, the eruption of Mount Vesuvius buried the city of Pompeii beneath layers of volcanic ash and pumice. Today, ongoing excavations allow visitors to see well-preserved streets, houses, temples and everyday items. The archaeological efforts to restore the city to its pre-disaster splendour have made it a UNESCO World Heritage site.

Amalfi

The Amalfi Coast is lined with small towns such as Amalfi and Ravello that are precariously perched on steep cliffs that overlook the Mediterranean Sea. Here, you can get your fill of rugged mountains, lush

greenery and stunning coastal views, which is why it has UNESCO status.

Sorrento

About thirty miles down the road is Sorrento, another scenic cliffside town with bustling marinas below. From there, a ferry ride takes you to Capri, which I affectionately refer to as Lemon Country. Lemons are everywhere you look, some the size of watermelons! Here, you'll find lemon cake, ice cream, beverages, and even pizzas! Limoncello, the renowned lemon liqueur, is strongly associated with this area.

NOW FOR THE BEAST

Just behind Naples's lively main avenues, the atmosphere changes dramatically. It feels as if you have moved from an inviting neighbourhood into a dilapidated zone.

Large bins overflow with rubbish that hasn't been emptied for weeks. As you navigate the uneven and crumbling cobblestones, you have to tread carefully - not only to avoid tripping but also to dodge dog faeces that is everywhere. It resembles a gigantic dog toilet.

Another problem is over-tourism, especially on the Amalfi Coast and Capri. There are crowds everywhere, and amongst them, pickpockets lie in wait. Thankfully, I didn't get robbed, but that was only because the would-be thieves were unsuccessful in their attempts. That, however, is a story for another day.

I left with thoughts of Constantine the Great (born 272 CE) and Julius Caesar (born 100 BCE), two remarkable Romans who played pivotal roles in the growth and prosperity of the Roman Empire.

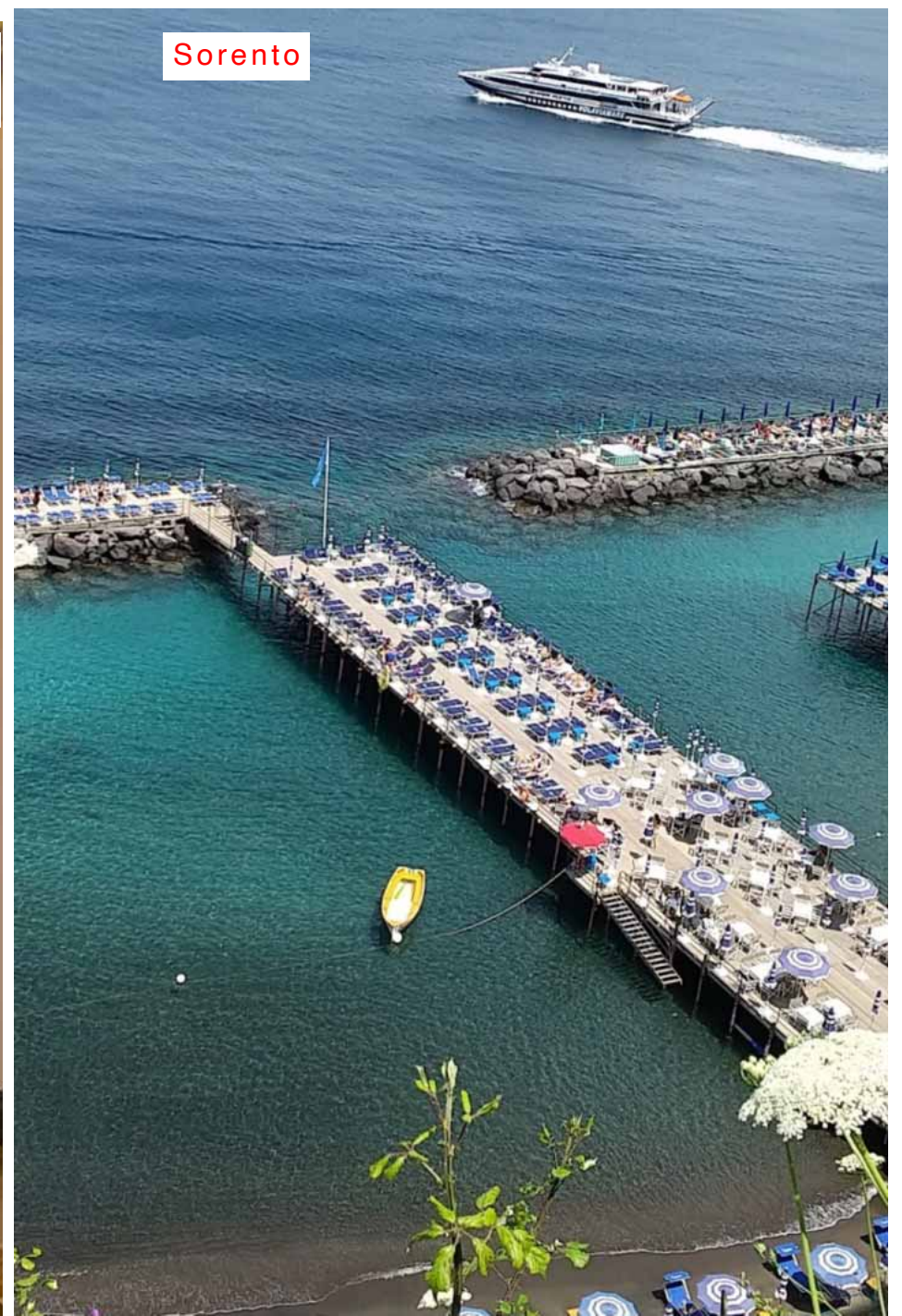
I couldn't help but wonder what would they say about certain parts of their homeland now littered with trash, pickpockets and dog poop?



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Inside the archaeological museum



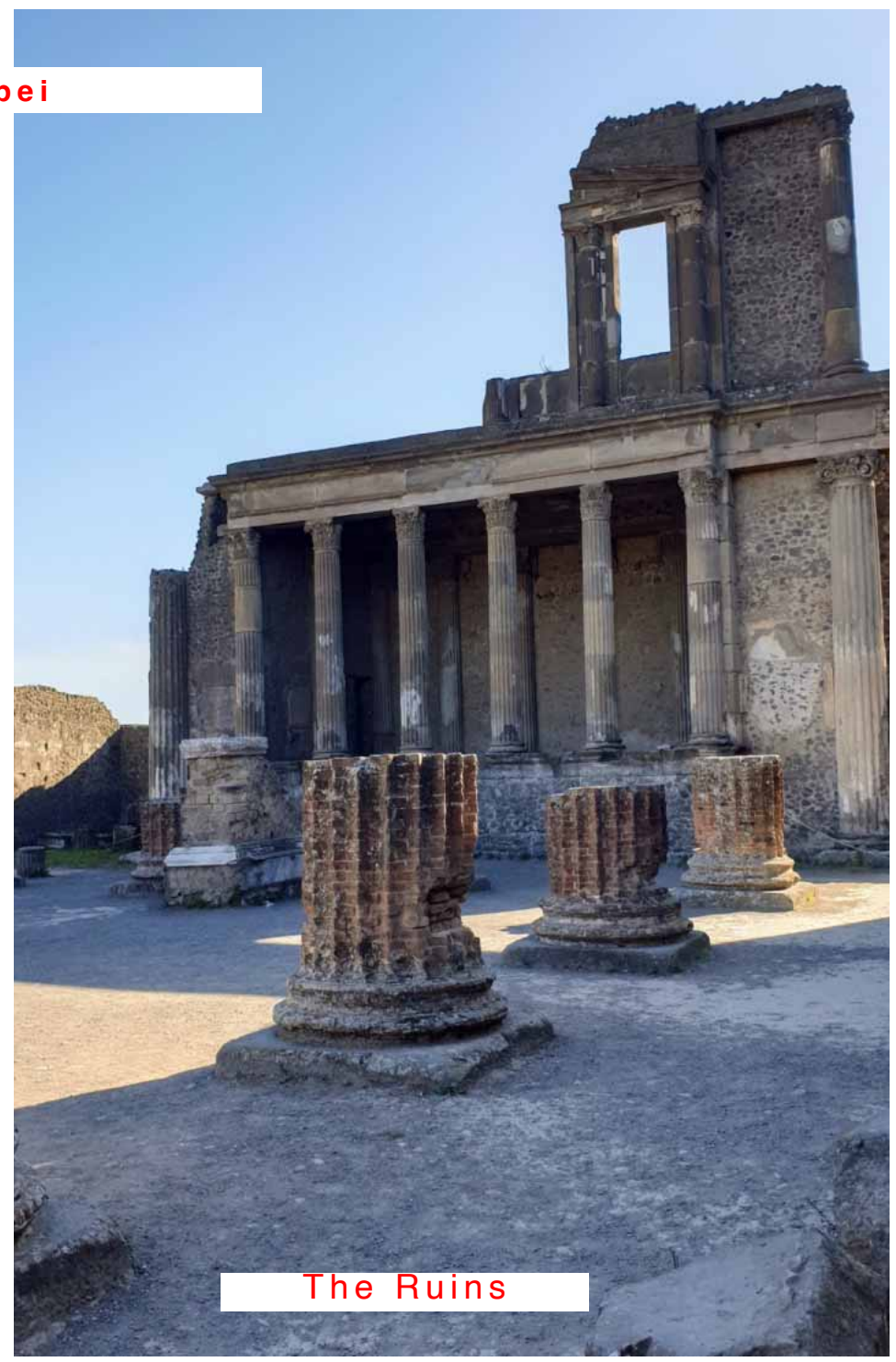
Sorrento

Piers extended into the sea with sun beds for sunbathing



Pompeii

These "bodies" of the victims of the eruption are plaster casts made from the voids left by decomposed bodies in the solidified ash



The Ruins