



Travel Stories by Amaru & Suzanne



The Winding Roads of the Amalfi Coast

by Amaru & Suzanne, Sept 5th 2007

While researching the different ways of getting to Positano we found out that most people recommended to take the train to Naples, change to the local train which takes you to Sorrento and then from there take the bus.

This all sounded way too complicated, could this place really be worth all this hassle?

Well, we decided to do it slightly different, we caught the train to Salerno and then the plan was to catch the boat to Positano. Unfortunately we found out in Salerno that they weren't running any boats since the ocean was too rough according to them..... we looked at the ocean and could barely see any ripples.... Italians!

Now to get to where we wanted to go (and had accommodation booked) we had to first catch a bus to Amalfi and then another bus to Positano. Alright, two buses... can't be that bad now can it?



The clear waters of the Amalfi Coast



After a long walk from the bus stop We finally found our Pensione

No, it was worse. First of all the bus in Salerno was way overloaded, all the seats were taken and people were almost standing on us.... the door could barely close because of the standing people. Secondly the roads along the Amalfi coast are very narrow and very, very winding.

After about 80min we reached Amalfi, found our next bus and off we were again.... This ride had slightly less passengers but turned out to be even worse. Suz and I found some good seats in the very front so we could actually see where we were going and after approximately 20min a stench started spreading through the bus. It turned out that a woman in the back could not hold it anymore and threw up next to the back door.

A man on the bus made the driver stop and moved her to the front where she could see the road.... unfortunately the damage was already done and we had to endure a good hour with that stench on the bus (and we were the lucky ones in the front of the bus).

Arriving in Positano we quickly got off the bus and started walking towards our place of accommodation, the Pensione Maria Luisa.

After 5min we realized that we should have stayed on the bus a bit longer and gotten off at the other end of town, that way we would only have had to walk down the hill to get to where we wanted to go. Now we had to walk uphill....bummer!

Well, we managed and eventually found the place!



Our Terrace at Pensione Maria Luisa



The place is absolutely gorgeous, we opted for a room with a terrace and what a good choice that turned out to be. We could just sit there and gaze out over the coast line and the ocean. And the owner, Carlos, is such a friendly host. We felt straight away that this would be a great place to stay in....

After we settled in we left the Pensione and walked down to the centre of the village. Positano has a main road that runs through town, allowing one way traffic only (there is a slightly bigger road that runs around the village that the bus runs on) making it easy to spot traffic.

We got off the road though and followed a small path that took us down all the way to the beach.

And it's quite a nice sandy beach, most beaches around here are very rocky. The weather unfortunately didn't allow us to jump in the ocean, sure it was nice and sunny but the temperature had dropped quite a bit during the last few days.

So, we lounged, walked around, had a snack and some gelato (still not as good as the one in Rome) and later on picked up some wine, cheese, olives, crackers and some bread to have on our terrace.

That night we spent sitting on our terrace, having our food, writing the blogs and just enjoying the sunset that we got to experience from where we were.... not bad at all!

The next morning we decided to do a day trip to the ruins of Pompeii!



Pompeii must be the world's most famous volcano disaster area. When Mount Vesuvius erupted in 79 AD it totally buried the town under ash and rock. Arriving here Suz and I weren't quite sure how big the area would be, but we sure were surprised when we found out how big it actually is.

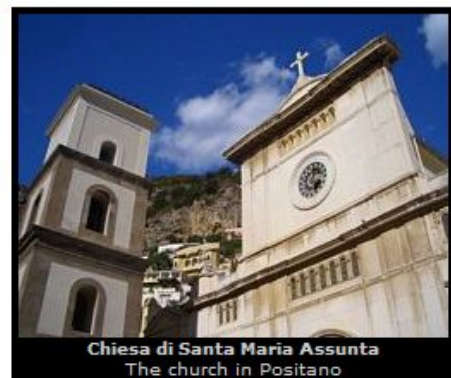
We picked up a map and a small guide to Pompeii and went exploring the town. We walked along ruins and more ruins, some of them containing some very interesting art on the walls and some of them just very interesting in their design. We also found a few plaster casts of some of the victims, what they do is pour liquid plaster into the cavity left in the bed of ashes. The body has long since decomposed so what you are left with is a reproduction of the body's shape.

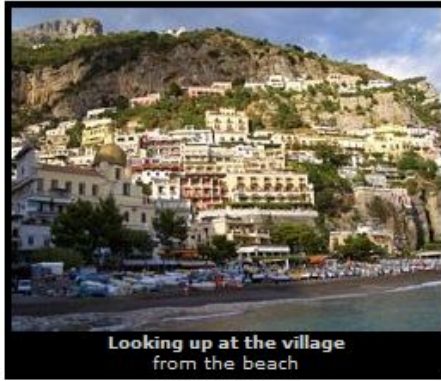
Interesting but at the same time quite chilling to see the states the bodies are in, this is obviously the way they died!

On a happier note, we found a house which had a painting of a dog on a leash on its front step. Both Suz and I thought of the modern signs of "Beware of the Dog". A bit later that afternoon while reading about Pompeii we actually found out that that "Cave Canem" (which was written under the dog) means exactly that!

The fast-food places that it contains was also quite funny.... it appears that we haven't civilized as much as we thought we might have.

Well, after a good 3-4 hours we called it quits and left for home.





Looking up at the village
from the beach

After another lovely little bus trip (note the sarcasm) we finally got to Positano and barely made it back to the Pensione before the skyes opened and totally drenched the area. The lightning and thunderstorm actually knocked the power out for a few minutes. All in all it was really cool to see the light show that we were offered.

On our last day we decided to make it over to the town of Amalfi for a few hours, it's quite cute as well but since they allow traffic on their small streets you always have to move to the sides to avoid being run over.

Going back we decided to try something different and caught the boat, and what a difference that made.

It might not be faster than the bus but it definetely isn't slower, you sit in the open with fresh air and can walk around as well.... perfect!

We liked the boat so much that the next morning we got it as well.... back to Salerno and this time they were actually running. So instead of taking two buses which contains people with motion sickness (at least on a boat you can just throw up over the railing) and spending a good 3 hours getting there... the boats got us there in around 90min. In Salerno we got on the train to Bari where we were going to board a ferry to take us to Croatia.

We would recommend anyone to take the boat over the bus, even though the boat might be a bit more expensive.



Need sandals?
...only 5 min!

So what did we think of the Amalfi Coast?



There are many, many and many
steps in Positano

To be perfectly honest, we didn't like it as much as we thought we would! Sure, Positano and Amalfi are two gorgeous little villages, the area with the mountains and cliffs that drop into the ocean is also impressive to see.

But..... it's just not very Italian anymore, all over the place you find newstands that sell every major newspaper from the UK, USA, Germany, Ireland etc. It looks and feels like these big resort areas that are catered for bus loads of tourists. After all that we've heard about the Amalfi Coast and also after Cinque Terre we had high expectations for this area.

It's gorgeous, don't get us wrong... but it's just not for us!

We've enjoyed Italy and have had lots of fun here, of all the places Venice and Cinque Terre are our favorites and places that we would love to come back to in the future. As for Florence, Pisa, Rome and the Amalfi Coast.... we feel that we've seen what we needed to see from those areas and might not feel the need to return in the future.

The next time we come back (in 10 years or whenever it might be) we will make sure to rent a car and just travel the countryside and also exploring the islands of Sardinia and Sicily!



Working on the blog
on our terrace



Watching the Sunset
while sitting on our terrace



Our view from this Pensione is just amazing!



The village of Positano and its beach



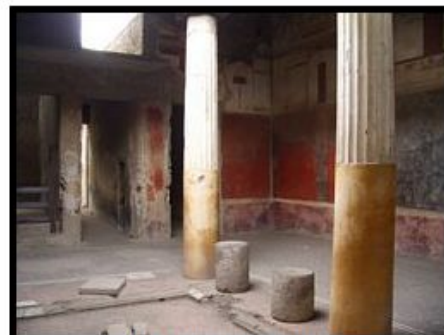
Suz amongst the ruins of Pompeii



The ruins of Pompeii with Mt Vesuvius in the background



The "Small Theatre" was more impressive than the big one



Walking through some remains of a few houses



Some of the art is still visible



Sign outside a food place



Plaster casts of some of the victims



The remains of two adults and one child



The pillars of the great Palestra



A house containing a painting of Venus in the shell



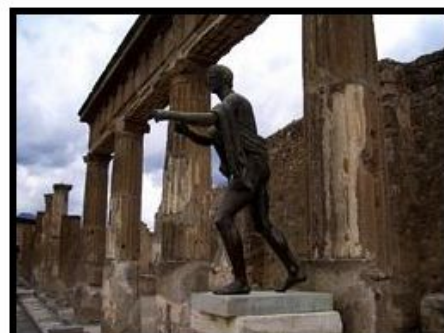
Found a few more plaster victims on display



Strolling through Pompeii



"Cave Canem" which means "Beware of the Dog"



The Temple of Apollo The most ancient sanctuary in Pompeii



Positano
by night



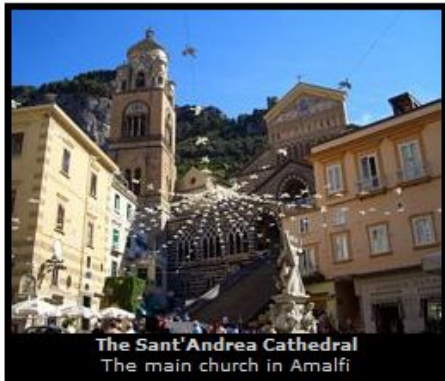
It's a tight squeeze
for these buses on this road



A very nice house
situated on a very high cliff



Approaching the village
of Amalfi



The Sant'Andrea Cathedral
The main church in Amalfi



Can you spot Suz's reflection?
She's in there somewhere...



The fountain
on Piazza Duomo



"Viagra Naturale"
Chilies as Viagra... not sure about that!



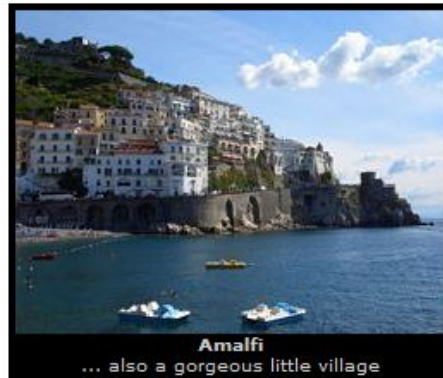
The donkeys
used to transport rubbish



Lemons and more lemons
The are everywhere around this area



"Italia Soccer"
...wouldn't it be more French?



Amalfi
... also a gorgeous little village



The beach
in Amalfi



On the boat
heading back to Positano



See the road?
Amazing to build that!



Arriving by boat
into Positano

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