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FUNICOLARE



Clockwise from top left: Public transport on Capri is good; Marina Grande; Church of S. Sofia, Anacapri; Washing in Anacapri; A great way to see the island is by boat; Blue Grotto; Fish is a speciality of the island.





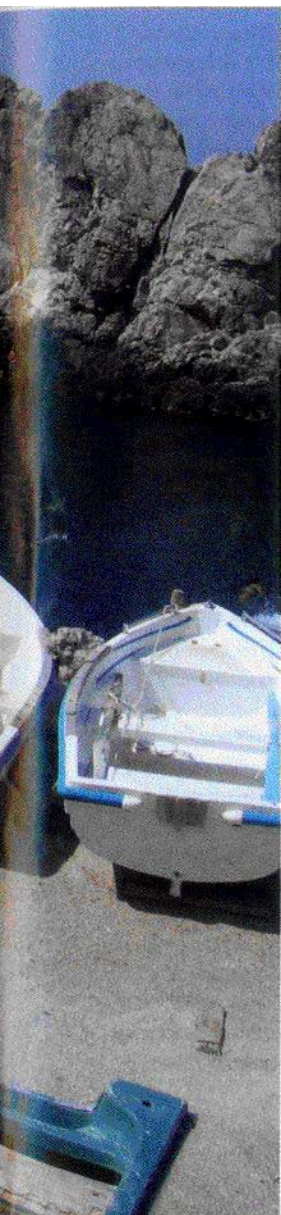
48 HOURS IN...

Capri

Rich in history, glamour and beauty, Capri is also the perfect size for a couple of days' exploring. **Rebecca Burgess** gives her highlights of this gem of an island.

The island of Capri, rising out of the shimmering Tyrrhenian Sea, has long held an allure for some rather illustrious characters, with figures as prominent as Charles Dickens and Graham Green among those who have lauded the pleasures of this captivating destination. "There is no spot in the world with such delightful possibilities of repose as this little isle," eulogised Dickens. "For me there is a sense of peace and joy in Anacapri that I have never found anywhere else in the world," decried Greene. But is there a touch of poetic licence in the outpourings of these literary grandees or is Capri really as good as all that? I decided to find out on a short weekend trip, but first I had to get there.

The island's landscape is not blighted by an airport, which means that Capri is reached only by boat or helicopter. One of the most direct routes is to first travel to Naples, then take a short ferry or private transfer to the island. I was lucky enough to travel via the latter on board a private motorboat, courtesy of Capritime – a fitting start to a visit to an island renowned for its indulgences. Capri is perfectly sized for a weekend's exploring and is divided into four distinct areas: the town of Capri, Marina Grande, Marina Piccolo and Anacapri. Over 8,000 people live in the town of Capri, the central, more conspicuously touristy and wealthy area, while a further 7,000 live in Anacapri, which is quieter and more typical of the Caprese people. Capri is served by the Marina Grande on the eastern side, where a fabulous assortment of private yachts dominates the berths and where the ferries and hydrofoils dock, and Marina



WHERE TO STAY

HOTEL GATTO BIANCO - 1

Via Vittorio Emanuele, 32

☎ +39 081 837 5143

www.gattobiancocapri.com

Historic hotel in the centre of Capri, built in the 1950s by the Esposito brothers. In its early years, the hotel's restaurant was a meeting place for the island's rich and famous. Rooms are modern and comfortable, with breakfasts served in a flowered courtyard. Double room from €150

LA SCALINATELLA 2

Via Tragara, 6/8

☎ +39 081 837 0633

www.scalinatella.com

A luxury five-star hotel, La Scalinatella is located in a panoramic and peaceful area of central Capri. With whitewashed walls, lemon trees and stunning architecture the hotel also has plenty of amenities including a garden, tennis court and swimming pool. The hotel has a charming ambience and an excellent restaurant specialising in Caprese cuisine. Double room from €250

SAN MICHELE - 3

Via G. Orlandi, 1, Anacapri

☎ +39 081 837 1427

www.sanmicheltecapri.com

Threestar hotel located in a large garden with breathtaking views of the island. Built in a neoclassical style in the 1870s, the hotel was a favourite haunt for famous artists, writers and nobility, including Axel Munthe and Swedish royalty. There are 60 rooms and a sun terrace. Seaview double room from €160

MONTE SOLARO B&B - 4

Via Monte Solaro, 30, Anacapri

☎ +39 081 837 0868

www.montesolarocapri.com

An excellent B&B a few steps from the centre of Anacapri, with views across the island. The rooms are airconditioned with private bathrooms and telephones. A large terrace is open to all residents and guests. The hotel only has three bedrooms, so it's advisable to book in advance. Double room from €70

GRAND HOTEL PARKER'S - 5

Corso Vittorio Emanuele, 135, Naples

☎ +39 081 761 2474

www.grandhotetparkers.com

An antique-filled five-star hotel overlooking the Bay of Naples and only a ten-minute walk from Plebiscito Square, the Royal Palace and National Museum. It is located 2km from Porto Santa Lucia, where the ferries and hydrofoils depart for Capri and is an ideal stopover when travelling to or from Capri. Double room from €255



Capri has several grottos but the Grotto Azzurra is the most famous.

DON'T MISS

THE FUNICULAR
Cars are a rarity on the island of Capri, so travel is principally by bus, taxi, walking and the indispensable funicular

railway. The funicular links the Marina Grande to the centre of Capri. It takes only a few minutes and is the most cost efficient and environmentally friendly way to travel. A one-way ticket costs 1.30. Alternatively tackle the 30-40 minute uphill climb along walled alleyways up the hillside.

> Piccola on the southern side, with its beach and restaurants.

Getting around Capri is easy, particularly if you make use of all the island's modes of transport: boats, buses and the funicular railway. The funicular, which runs from Marina Grande (where visitors arrive) to central Capri, takes only a couple of minutes and is a wonderful way to travel. In addition, orange buses scurry endlessly between the marinas,

streets. The Piazzetta has been described as the "drawing room of the world" and is a magnet for writers, actors, artists, politicians and the international jetset community. The numerous outdoor tables are always full and the clothes, jewellery and hairstyles are a sight to behold. Here, weary shoppers relax after boosting the island's economy in the designer boutiques, including Armani, Dolce & Gabbana and Prada.

The Piazzetta is an inevitable meeting point for actors, artists and jet setters...

Capri and Anacapri, and although a bit of a squash at peak times, you never have to wait long for another.

CAPRI TOWN

I soon discovered that while Capri's popularity with tourists vetoes peace and quiet, it offers hours of peoplewatching. Hordes of day trippers, diamond-crusted ladies shopping in the lanes and smooth men comparing the size of their yachts in the marina provide plenty of entertainment.

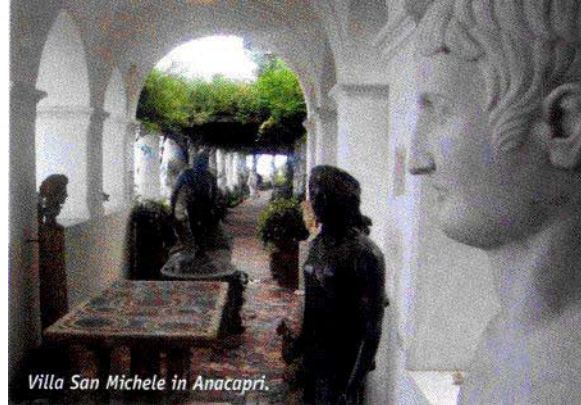
The best place to soak up this theatre is in the 'Piazzetta', also known as the Piazza Umberto I. This square in Capri's centre sits above the Marina Grande and is the focus of a labyrinth of cobbled

There is also a collection of first-class hotels, with more reasonably priced ones, such as the threestar Gatto Bianco, still available in the heart of Capri. The Gatto Bianco was the meeting place for the island's rich and famous in the 1950s, including King Farouk, Clark Gable, Sofia Loren and Jacqueline Kennedy. From the hotel, it's a short walk through the winding cobbled streets to the Gardens of Augustus on the far side of the island. The gardens are teeming with beautiful scents and flowers, but more often than not also tour parties.

A good escape is down the Via Krupp a winding road cut into the



Preparing traditional ravioli alla Caprese.



Villa San Michele in Anacapri.



The chairlift up to Monte Solaro.

rock in the early 1900s by the German industrialist Friedrich August Krupp. Described as one of the most panoramic roads in the world, it leads to the relative tranquillity of Marina Piccola, on the western side of Capri.

ANACAPRI

To experience the Capri beyond the tourists, it's best to stay in Anacapri, or at least spend a little time exploring there. While Anacapri is also hugely popular with tourists, it is actually where the majority of people who live and work in Capri have their homes. It was here that the Swedish writer and doctor Alex Munthe chose to build Villa San Michele, an imposing residence built on the ruins of an ancient Roman villa. A tour of the villa shows the rooms laid out as Munthe lived in them, with displays of his work and ancient Roman archaeological finds. The gardens are stunning and are worth exploring, with panoramic views of the island.

Two other mustsees are the artistic delights of Casa Rossa, literally a red house, and Chiesa di San Michele. Casa Rossa was built between 1876 and 1898 by an American colonel, JC MacKowen, and is home to a permanent collection of paintings many depicting scenes of Capri throughout the centuries. Chiesa di San

Michele, on the other hand, houses its breathtaking artwork on the floor in the form of a shining carpet of majolica created by Leonardo Chiaiese. The church floor is covered by a vast painting, depicting Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden, the serpent and an array of wild and domesticated animals.

Anacapri is also home to the chairlift, which transports visitors on a tenminute ride from Piazza Vittoria to Monte Solaro, the highest point on the island at 589 metres. At the summit there is a café and spectacular views across the island and to mainland Italy. To descend either take the chairlift and enjoy a serene downward drift into Anacapri or, if you're feeling more energetic, try the 50minute walk passing Santa Maria, a monastery created by 14thcentury Carrhusian monks.

TO THE SEA

Being an island the call of the sea is strong on Capri. The perfect day out is a boat excursion, whether on a Caprese gozzo (a motorpowered boat with tarpaulin shade and sunbathing area), a chartered yacht or a larger tourist boat. By boat you can explore the rugged coastline, anchor for a swim in the blue seas, and investigate the beaches and restaurants.

WHAT TO SEE

CASA ROSSA, Anacapri, - 6

Built between 1876 and 1898 by American colonel JC MacKowen, the red house surrounds the Aragonese Tower built by the residents of Anacapri in the second half of the 14th century to defend their town. It is home to an exhibition of paintings depicting the island between the 19th and 20th centuries.

CARTHUSIA - 7

www.carthusia.com

The first perfume was created on Capri in 1380 when an arrangement of the most beautiful flowers on the island was prepared for a visit of Queen Giovanna D'Angio and left in a vase for three days, creating scented water. The technique was perfected by Carthusian monks and is still used today at the Carthusia factory.

CHURCH SAN MICHELE, ANACAPRI - 8

The church, built on the wishes of a nun from Capri, Mother Serafina di Dio, was built between 1698 and 1719. It has one of the most beautiful tiled floors in the world, dating from 1761, and created by Leonardo Chiaiese, one of the best majolica craftsmen from Abruzzo.

THE GROTTOS - 9

The Blue Grotto is the most famous, but there are many other grottos worth a visit. These include the Green Grotto, the Grotto of the Cannon, the Red Grotto and the Grotto of the Sea Bull, formerly home to a seal colony. Join one of the boat trips from the port to explore the grottos.

ALEX MUMTHE VILLA, Anacapri - 10

Famous Swedish physician and author Alex Munthe built his Villa San Michele one stone at a time on the slopes of Monte Solaro, in Anacapri, on the ruins of an ancient Roman villa. It is now a museum and home to a collection of ancient Roman archaeological finds.

MONTE SOLARO - 11

Take a tenminute chairlift from Piazza Vittoria, in Anacapri, to Monte Solaro, the highest point on the island at 589 metres. It offers a spectacular panorama. The return walk to the centre of Anacapri takes about 50 minutes, or jump back on the chairlift for an easier descent.

BEACHES

Capri's beaches are sophisticated bathing establishments with restaurants, waterbased activities, sunbathing areas, ropedoff swimming sections and lifeguards. As a result there is a charge for the privilege of enjoying a day on the shores. Among the best are Bagni di Tiberio, Palazzo a Mare, at €8, Da Luigi, Faraglioni, at €14 or Da Gioia, Marina Piccola, at around €10.

DON'T MISS

SHOPPING

Shopping is the essence of Capri and a full-time occupation for many tourists visiting the island. There

is a glittering array of designer boutiques, fabulous

jewellery stores and luxury merchandise,

including Armani and D&G. Visit the

quieter streets of Anacapri to pick up pottery, local artwork, Capri's sensuous perfumes, fine wines and other delicacies.

WHERE TO EAT AND DRINK

RISTORANTE DA PAOLINO - 12

Via Palazzo a Mare, 11, Capri

☎ +39 0818 376 102

A Large and friendly restaurant set among overhanging lemon trees decked with lanterns along the coast of Capri, about two kilometres from the port. The restaurant has a tantalising menu of speciality dishes and a sumptuous buffet. Meal for two about €60

LA CAPANNINA - 13

Via Le Botteghe, 12/14, Capri

☎ +39 0818 370 732

Located in the heart of the historical centre of Capri, this elegant restaurant is run by Antonio, Aurelia, Francesco and Renata De Angelis and has a sister shop, La Capannina Più, offering delicacies such as aubergines stuffed with ricotta, the traditional ravioli alla Caprese and the island's freshest fish catch. Meal for two about €70

IL TINELLO - 14

Via L'Abate, 1/3

☎ +39 0818 377 673

A small and homely restaurant tucked away in the alleyways behind the central square in Capri, this typically Caprese restaurant serves wonderful food homemade by the owner, who caters the menu for the day's freshest ingredients and his own specialities. Booking is essential. Meal for two about €30

RISTORANTE LA RONDINELLA - 15

Via G Orlandi, 295, Anacapri

☎ +39 0818 371 223

A picturesque warm and welcoming restaurant in a quieter street in Anacapri, with a flowerdecked terrace. Specialities include scialatielli with zucchini and smoked mozzarella, griglia alla pesce and pezzagna forno can patata. Meal for two about €40

PIAZZA UMBERTO I - 16

Capri The main square of central Capri is surrounded on all sides with openair cafés, providing the perfect place to see and be seen while sipping a martini or starting the day with a cappuccino. Take a seat at the Piccolo Bar, Pulalli Wine Bar, Gran Caffè or Bar Tiberio.

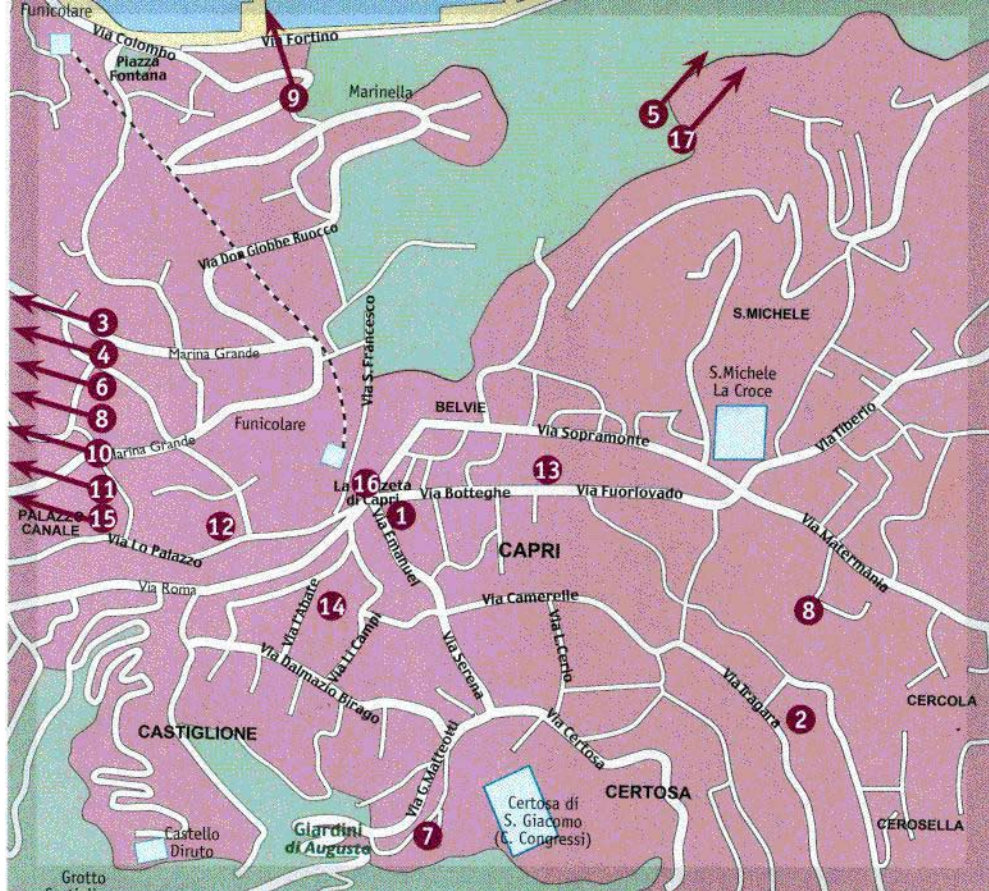
GEORGE'S RESTAURANT - 17

GRAND HOTEL PARKER'S

Corso Vittorio Emanuele 135, Naples

☎ +39 0817 612 474

The rooftop restaurant of this hotel offers stunning views and is a favourite with Neapolitans. Delicious Mediterranean cuisine with interpretations of the region's classic dishes. Meal for two about € 70.>



DON'T MISS

BLUE GROTT
The Blue Grotto is renowned for its cobalt blue waters, which are visited by thousands of tourists each year. Hans Christian Andersen said of it: "I saw a clear blue star which cast a single, long ray of light, pure as ether, over the mirror of the water." The grotto is open every day from 9am to one hour before sunset. Visit either on a boat from Marina Grande or after a 50-minute walk from Anacapri.

Although it's very much on the tourist trail, no visit to Capri would be complete without a visit to the infamous Grotta Azzurra (Blue Grotto). Capri has many grottos, but the Azzurra is the island's most famous since its rediscovery by German painter August Kopisch, in 1826. I visited the grotto as part of a daylong boat excursion with Capritime, but it's also

and further along stand the Faraglioni two gigantic rocks breaking out of the sea a home to the rare Blue Lizard and commonly used as a symbol of Capri.

Then comes Marina Piccola, the island's southernmost landing place, set in a picturesque inlet at the foot of Mount Solaro, which grew from a collection of fisherman's cottages into an international centre of restaurants,

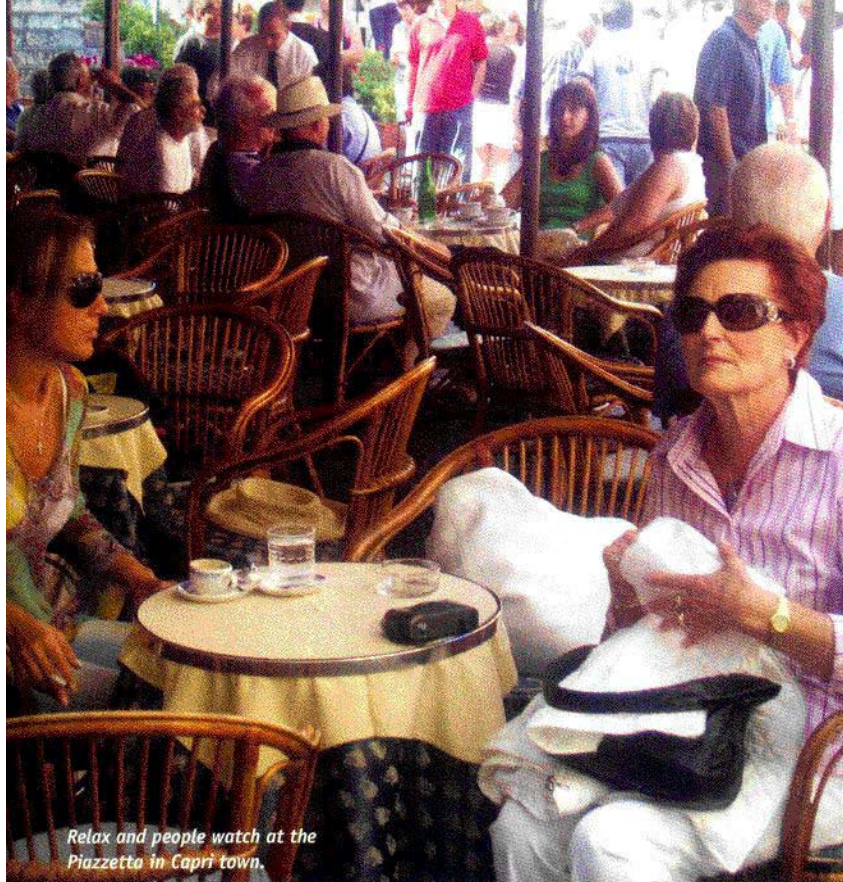
The cavern opens up into a magnificent space, filled with rich cobalt-blue water.

easily accessible by bus or on foot. Entrance to the grotto is gained through a tiny gap in the cliff face and outside the bay is filled with a flurry of rowing boats queuing to enter, manned by Capri's expert oarsmen.

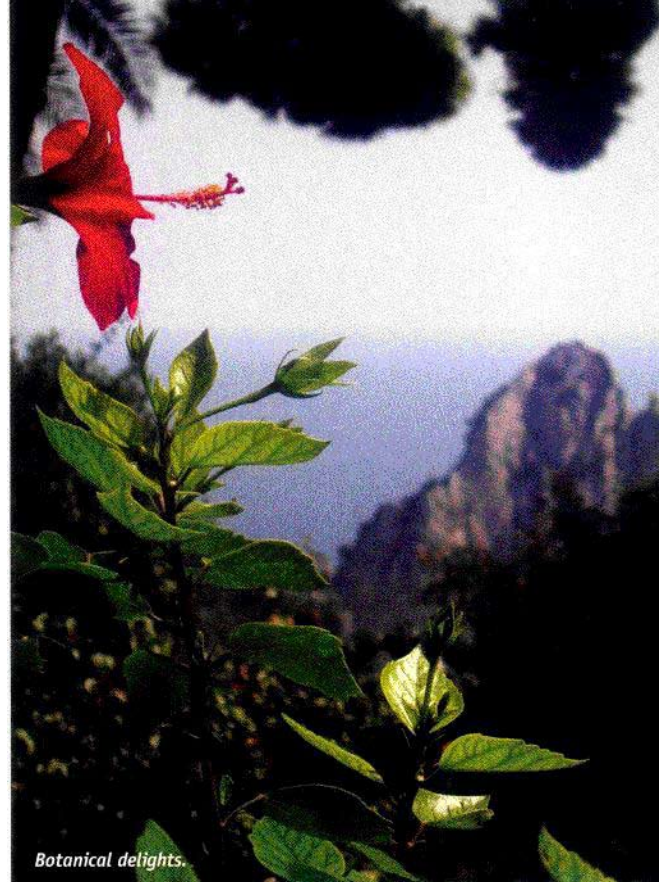
Once inside the cavern opens out into a magnificent space where the refracted light turns the water an intensely rich cobalt blue. But the Grotta Azzurra is by no means the only grotto on the island. Others include the Red Grotto, the Green Grotto, the Grotto of the Cannon - named because of its booming noise - and the Grotto of the Sea Bull, formerly home to a seal colony. Sailing round the shore, you also come across the red home of the communist writer Curzio Malaparte

sunbathing terraces and water sports. Here palm trees offer shade in June and July when the area is awash with the vibrant colours of oleander, hibiscus and geraniums. It is the jewel in the crown of several beaches along this shore, but you must pay a daily entrance fee to make use of sun loungers, bars and a supervised swimming area.

I visited Lido del Faro, a secluded bay with a fabulous restaurant, Ristorante del Faro, where we were able to take part in a cookery lesson making the island's typical ravioli and pezzogna fish, before feasting on our endeavours. The entrance fee for this is between €10 €15 and includes a chair or lounge.



Relax and people watch at the Piazzetta in Capri town.



Botanical delights.

TERRA FIRMA

Back on dry land, more of the island's delights can be discovered in its lush vegetation and botanical secrets. The tourist board has produced a fabulous book called *Capri Blossoming*, which describes 11 walks round the island. It was compiled by botanical expert and photographer Tullia Rizzotti, and it is advisable to buy a copy and take some time to explore on foot.

The island's history is also extremely accessible on foot, as is the opportunity to visit Capri's many ruins. There is evidence of inhabitation dating back 400,000 years, when the island was joined to the mainland. The island seems to have inspired strong emotions in all those who have visited or made their homes there. The island's grandest supporter was Roman emperor Augustus, who arrived on Capri in 29 BC. He was so taken with the place, he traded the island of Ischia to Naples, which then controlled Capri, and the Neapolitans accepted. Later came Emperor Tiberius, who loved the island so much he transformed it into his own miniature kingdom, effectively moving the centre of power from Rome to his island home, and lived there from 26 to 37 AD.

Tiberius is said to have built 12 villas and set up his imperial residency in Villa Jovis, whose ruins can still be visited, along with those of Villa

Damecuta, the ruins of which were unearthed between 1937 and 1948 and which houses a tower added during the 12th century.

THE FLAVOURS

Greek and Roman influences are still visible today in another attraction of the island – its cuisine and wine. The cuisine focusses on simple dishes, principally based on fish from the surrounding seas and vegetables grown on the island. Typical dishes include baked pasta, sweet peppers and aubergines, roast rabbit and the locally caught white fish *pezzogna*.

Capri also boasts its own wines. The white wine is a pale straw colour and made from Aglianico, Biancolella, Fiano and Greco grapes, while the red comes from the vineyard of Piediroso. The Caprese wines were the claim to fame of the historic Caffè Morgano, which formed the heart of the island's social life between the 19th and 20th centuries. There its samplers included Lenin and Graham Greene.

So, if you want to visit Capri simply to experience the high life, why not make like the famous, infamous, artistic and glamorous – take a seat among the glitterati in the Piazzetta, sip a glass of chilled wine, relax and just watch the world drift by.

DON'T MISS

CAPRITIME

The only way to really get to know Capri is from the sea and it's easy to spend days exploring. Capritime Boats offers excursions using local skippers on gozzo or luxury speedboats. Try a day's tour of the grottos. You can also treat yourself to a private transfer from Naples to start a visit on a sophisticated note Visit www.capritimeboats.com

GETTING THERE

► TO NAPLES BY AIR

A number of scheduled airlines offer regular flights to Capodichino Airport in Naples, including British Airways from Gatwick (www.ba.com) bmi Midland from Heathrow (www.flybmi.com) and easyJet from Stansted (www.easyjet.com). See page 90 for more details

► TO CAPRI BY BOAT

The most common way to reach Capri is by ferry or hydrofoil from Naples, either from the port of Mergellina or Molo Beverello. The ferry takes about one hour 30 minutes and costs around €5, while the hydrofoil takes half the time and costs about €15. The timetables change regularly, so it's wise to check with the tourist office or your hotel before travelling. For a list of operators visit www.capritourism.com

Several companies offer private boat transfers to the island, including Capritime, which can arrange for a driver to meet you at the airport or train station, and then transfer you to the port where a luxury speed boat will whisk you to the island. Here you will be met and transferred to your hotel or villa. For prices and further information visit www.capritimeboats.com

► TO CAPRI BY HELICOPTER

To arrive in style why not take a helicopter ride from Naples airport to Capri? To find out more visit Elipartenope on www.elipartenope.com or Sam on www.capri-helicopters.com