

Postcard from Amalfi Coast

Perfect views, food and spas

Writer Judy Chapman



John Steinbeck once 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.”

The Amalfi Coast is a 30-mile stretch of Italian coastline of hidden coves, rocky slopes, sleepy villages, glittering seaside and lemon groves. Charming towns and islands include Positano, Sorrento, Amalfi and Capri. Must-do’s are the open-air concerts at hilltop Ravello and the walk along the dramatic cliffs of the Path of the Gods. And the spas of course. Some are set in former convents and medieval monasteries with others in palace-like summerhouses, all some of the most memorable in the world, sparkling with history, romance surrounded by the scent of lemon and rosemary.

THE SPA AT MONASTERO SANTA ROSA HOTEL & SPA

For a once-in-a-lifetime experience, ascend to Monastero Santa Rosa Hotel & Spa, set in a former 17th-century monastery atop dramatic cliffs tumbling into the sea between the towns of Amalfi and Positano.

The spa is located underground and was a former apothecary where nuns created medicinal elixirs for the local village. Today the intimate spa with its historic vaulted ceilings honour ancient Roman bathing culture with hydrotherapy, thermal steam, a rock sauna and pomegranate-infused foot wash. You can even book a massage under a pergola in the private gardens. Must-try treatments include the Bitter Orange Peel Powder Scrub and Arnica Body Wrap with bee pollen facials and candle massages. The Santa Maria Novella range of creams and balms are handmade by Dominican monks from rare recipes revived from the 13th century, and only available at select spas worldwide. All the hotel suites are named after local medicinal herbs and botanicals, and offer sea views. Facilities are first class and the service impeccable – this is the ultimate secluded romantic hideaway. www.monasterosantarosa.com

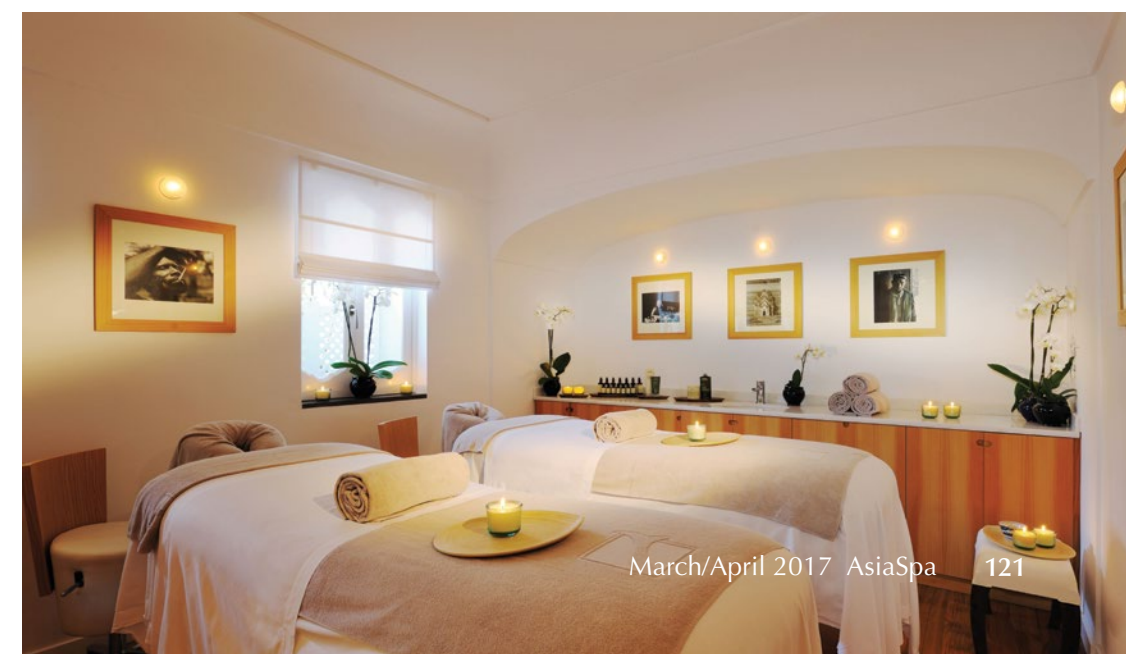
LE SIRENUSE SPA AT LE SIRENUSE

The feel is old Hollywood glamour at Le Sirenuse, possibly the most iconic hotel in the Amalfi Coast, if not Italy. Fondly referred

to as the prima donna of Positano, just a handful of celebrities who have stayed include Richard Burton, Elizabeth Taylor, Sienna Miller, Anne Hathaway and Reese Witherspoon. Once the summerhouse of the four Sersale brothers from an aristocratic family, in 1951 they transformed their home into a stunning 58-room establishment. Le Sirenuse is an absolute beauty with several floors cascading down to the sea. Le Sirenuse Spa was designed by prolific Italian Architect Gae Aulenti, who modelled the space after a luxury yacht. The treatment rooms are designed like cabins

featuring round boat windows on the doors. The signature massage showcases Aveda products and is performed on a hot water bed, for a fluid motion as your lower back, feet and scalp are pampered with warm lemon oil. The floating sensation and the warmth along your spine feels incredibly soothing. They also offer the popular Margy’s Monte Carlo facials. www.sirenuse.it

PREVIOUS PAGE: Stunning vistas from Le Sirenuse. THIS PAGE: Monastero Santa Rosa Hotel & Spa is perched atop dramatic cliffs; Le Sirenuse Spa is modelled after a luxury yacht. OPPOSITE PAGE: Monastero Santa Rosa Hotel & Spa is a former apothecary





SPA AT CONVENTO DI AMALFI GRAND HOTEL

There's a hint of Arabian soul at the Convento di Amalfi Grand Hotel set into the cliffs high above Amalfi town with glorious sea views along the coast. The hotel is set in a historic 13th-century monastery that was originally an abbey of Cistercian monks, surrounded by pretty Bougainvillea. Highlights include its cave-like entrance, glass cliff-side lift and infinity pool. The spa is small and contemporary with a hammam its centrepiece, incorporated into tempting rituals such as the Ritual d'Exfoliation Peau Neuve that comprises fruit seed powders and an exfoliating massage. As for the rest of the hotel, it's dreamy whitewashed Mediterranean style with tiny rooms featuring terracotta floors and marble bathrooms, with balcony and postcard-worthy sea views, alongside an outdoor heated swimming pool and two restaurants. www.ghconventodiamalfi.com

THIS PAGE: Capri Beauty Farm's Leg School treatment includes bathing in the Kneipp path; the Spa at Convento di Amalfi Grand Hotel is a cosy respite. OPPOSITE PAGE: Capri Beauty Farm features Mediterranean decor



CAPRI BEAUTY FARM AT CAPRI PALACE HOTEL & SPA

Take a ferry over to beautiful Capri island and check into the famed Capri Palace Hotel & Spa that has long been a favourite among film stars and royalty including Jackie Onassis, Julia Roberts and Elizabeth Hurley to name a few. Capri Beauty Farm is Europe's first certified medical spa and regarded as one of the world's best. Decor is

palazzo white, spacious and Mediterranean. The team is led by Professor Francesco Canonaco, a specialist in immunology and aesthetic medicine. While the menu comprises of everything from medical check-ups, nutritional consultations and food intolerance tests to advanced facials including some incorporating the renowned Sarah Chapman range, a must-try is the signature Leg School treatment patented

by the professor. Designed to address vascular disorders of the lower limbs and combat cellulite, stretch marks and treat vein and capillaries, the sequence moves from cold seaweed lower leg applications to medicated bandage wraps and concludes with extreme cold and hot bathing in the Kneipp path, finishing with a cold gel application for the leg. www.capripalace.com



THIS PAGE: Miramare Sea Resort & Spa is set on the volcanic Ischia Island; the Spa Centre at Miramare offers authentic and holistic experiences.
OPPOSITE PAGE: The Miramare Sea Resort & Spa enjoys spectacular sea views

THE SPA CENTRE AT MIRAMARE SEA RESORT & SPA

At the other end of the scale, a short ferry from Naples and within sight from Capri lies the volcanic Ischia Island known by locals as the 'spa island' where Italians go for their annual holidays (you won't find many tourists here). Ischia is ideal for those seeking a more authentic and historic spa experience. Discover mineral-rich open-air natural springs, bubbling thermal waters and bathe in rock pools. A highlight is the ancient Roman baths at Cavascura Natural Springs, where natural cave saunas are heated by hydrothermal springs much like how the Romans used to steam and sauna. As well as the natural thermal and mud spas, the Miramare Sea Resort & Spa houses the Aphrodite Apollot consisting of five pools of pure thermal water rich, ranging between 26 and 40 degrees Celsius, a relaxation area, natural saunas, Kneipp paths, salt water swimming pools, a small yoga room and fitness centre.

www.miramaresearesort.it



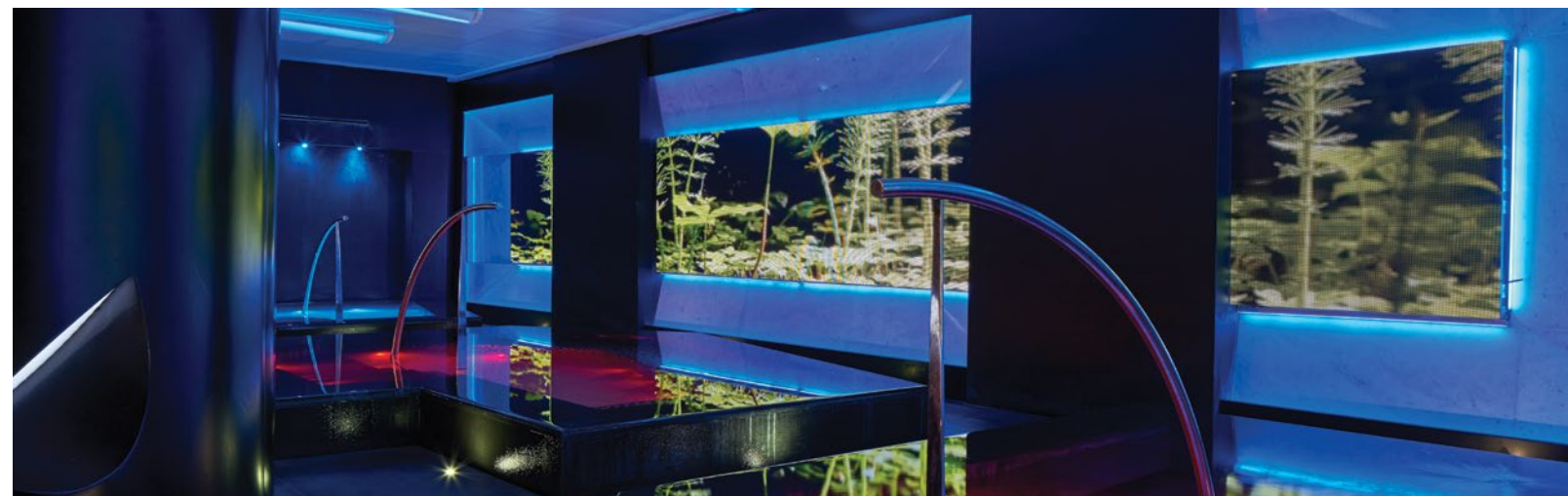


DOGANA DEL SALE SPA AT ROMEO HOTEL

Back in Naples, the Dogana del Sale Spa at the waterfront Romeo Hotel is considered one of the hippest in the city. Designed by Japanese architect Kenzo Tange & Associates, many of the original features of the 16th-century building are still intact, such as the brick facades, volcanic rock foundations and domed ceilings. The spa is located on the lower ground floor and its theme pays homage to the Roman bathing heritage with contemporary heat and water experiences including a steam bath and a

glass-walled infrared sauna (ideal for jet lag recovery). The wow factor is the relaxation Himalayan salt room, an amazing space to recuperate after thermal experiences and massages. The spa is minimalist in design, dimly lit and feels like an urban sanctuary. Unique treatments include massages featuring Himalayan salt pouches for stiff necks, Berber argan oil and warming ginger massages. The designer hotel features 82 rooms with marble bathrooms, a games room, Michelin-starred restaurant, kids club, gym and rooftop pool.

www.romeohotel.it 🌿



CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT: Romeo Hotel's Dogana del Sale Spa's contemporary design makes it one of the city's hippest; enjoy heat and water experiences inspired by the Roman bathing heritage; unwind post treatment at Dogana del Sale's relaxation area