



# CapriIsland

HISTORY  
SEA  
EXCURSIONS  
PERSONALITIES  
ART & ARCHITECTURE

*of the Blue Island*

*by*  
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Imago

# Summary

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ENGLISH VERSION  
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ISBN 978-88-904084-5-8

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Naples

Procida

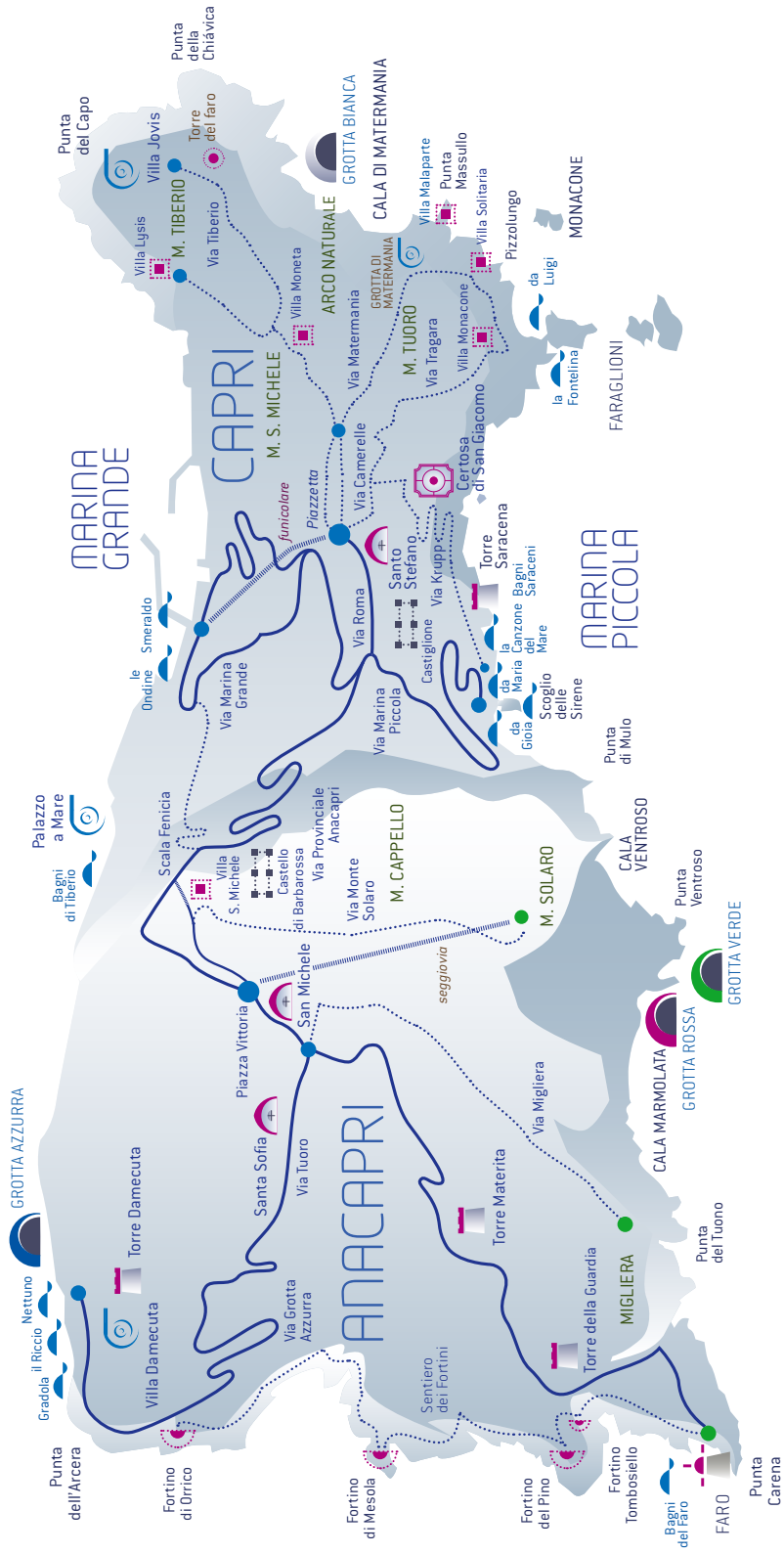
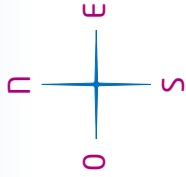
Ischia

# GULF OF NAPLES OF NAPLES

Sorrentine  
Peninsula



CAPRI





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## I. LOCATION

Lying just off the Tyrrhenian coast, Capri is the most enchanting of the islands in the Bay of Naples and one of the world's most beautiful, with its seductive natural beauty, its incomparable views, its flourishing vegetation, charming towns and villages, and fascinating architecture.

The island rises from deep below the sea and is formed from a mass of limestone with sheer, bare cliffs dotted with over 65 caves carved out by the sea, some of which are unsurpassed in beauty: the *Grotta Azzurra* (Blue Grotto), *Grotta Verde* (Green Grotto) and *Grotta Bianca* (White Grotto).

The action of the sea has also hewn out spectacular columns of rock, the most famous being the Faraglioni, around the inaccessible coastline.

Capri lies 5 km off *Punta della Campanella*, the tip of the Sorrentine Peninsula of which Capri is the geological continuation, and has a surface area of 10.36 km<sup>2</sup>. It extends for 6.25 km, and measures 1.2 km at its narrowest point, widening to a maximum of 2.75 km.

Umringed by the populations of the towns of Capri, Anacapri and Marina Grande, the island has a population of around 12,000 inhabitants.

The eastern half of the island has two broad inlets on its southern and northern coasts: Marina Piccola and Marina Grande, dividing the island into 3 areas from east to west – the eastern, the central and the western areas.

The western part is very steep, both to seaward and inland, and constitutes the island's highest point, Monte Solaro, at 589 m. The town of Anacapri is located on a sloping plain on Monte Solaro.

The town of Capri itself looks down onto the narrow central spine of the island that leads northwards to Marina Grande, Capri's port.

The eastern part faces the lower rocky mountain to the west (Monte Tiberio, 334 m).

The non-stratified grey-white limestone from which Capri is formed dates from the Urganian or Tironic periods, as the typical fossil remains found here show. Augite crystals are present on the surrounding sea bed.

The common evergreen *macchia* grows naturally in the higher areas and is made up of broom, arbutus, heather, myrtle, juniper, and mastic. Among the fauna of the island is the rare *lucertola azzurra* (*lacerta coerulea faraglionensis*) which lives on the seaward side of the Faraglioni.

The blue skies of the island are due to exposure to the wind, which dissipates vapour rising from the sea and which moderates thermal variation, with the lowest temperatures in January around zero to two degrees celsius, and the highest in August rising to around twenty-eight to thirty.

There are approximately 70 cloudy days per year.



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## II. HISTORY

Prehistoric findings reveal that Capri, an extension of the Sorrentine Peninsula, was inhabited even in Palaeolithic times.

*Capreae*, the island's Latin name, derives from the presence of wild boar and goats. The first to colonise the island were the Greek Teleboæ from Acarnania: The name Anacapri is also of Greek origin (upper Capri). The *Scala Fenicia*, or Phœnician Stairway, dates back to the Greeks, with its 159 steps cut from the rock, which used to connect Marina Grande and Anacapri.

The Emperor Augustus [ p. 132 ], by offering the larger island of Ischia (29 B.C.) in exchange, removed the small settlements of Capri and Anacapri from Neapolitan control. He resided here, and repeatedly carried out important construction work.

His successor Tiberius [ p. 133 ] used the island as his residence during the last 10 years of his life (27-37 A.D.), cloistered in voluntary exile without however withdrawing from his imperial functions. His presence brought fame to the island, fuelling myths among the people about the secret vices of the elderly Emperor. According to Tacitus, twelve villas were built by Augustus and Tiberius, dedicated to the twelve major divinities. Thus far, three have come to light: the famous Villa Jovis (the name is documented by Suetonius) atop the hill of Santa Maria del Soccorso opposite Punta Campanella, Villa Damecuta in Anacapri and the so-called Palazzo a Mare at the *Bagni di Tiberio* to the west of Marina Grande. With the death of Tiberius, the island gradually fell into obscurity.

Around the tenth century the forays of 'Saracen' pirates led the inhabitants to abandon Marina Grande to take refuge in the higher central areas. Between 1371 and 1374, Giacomo Arcucci [ p. 135 ], Secretary of State of Joan I of Anjou, built the