Satisfy Your Wanderlust with 4 of Italy's Dreamiest Cities

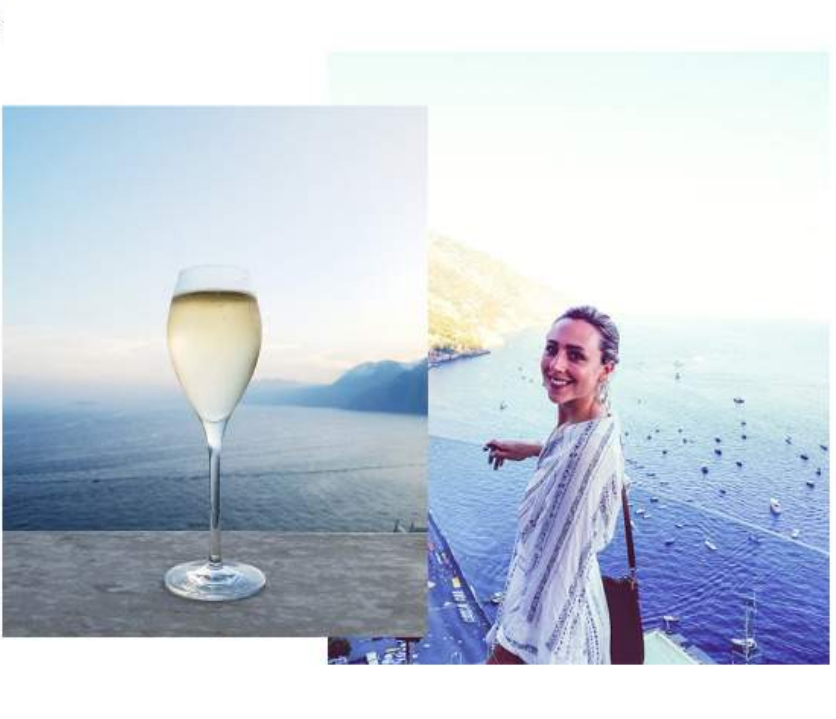
by Erin Cauley | August 24, 2017 | in Discover | 0

At Sakara we *love* ourselves a well-deserved vacation to recharge our batteries, deep dive into our most bold and fearless selves and get re-inspired to manifest our dreams—which is exactly why we are always so excited to share our wellness + travel guides with you! Behold, *Sakara's Insider Guide to Italy.*

Italy is well known for many things: romance, culture, cafes on cobblestone streets, breathtakingly beautiful views of the Mediterranean Sea, wine, gelato, pasta…*so much delicious, handmade pasta*! After spending 10 days in Rome, Positano, Praiano and Capri, I can say all of those existed in abundance, but there is so much more to Italy than just the initial ideas we have of it. This is truly a magical corner of the world with so much to offer, and we hope this guide opens the door to some of the magic and charm you will have once you experience it for yourself!

First up, Capri.

xx, **Erin**

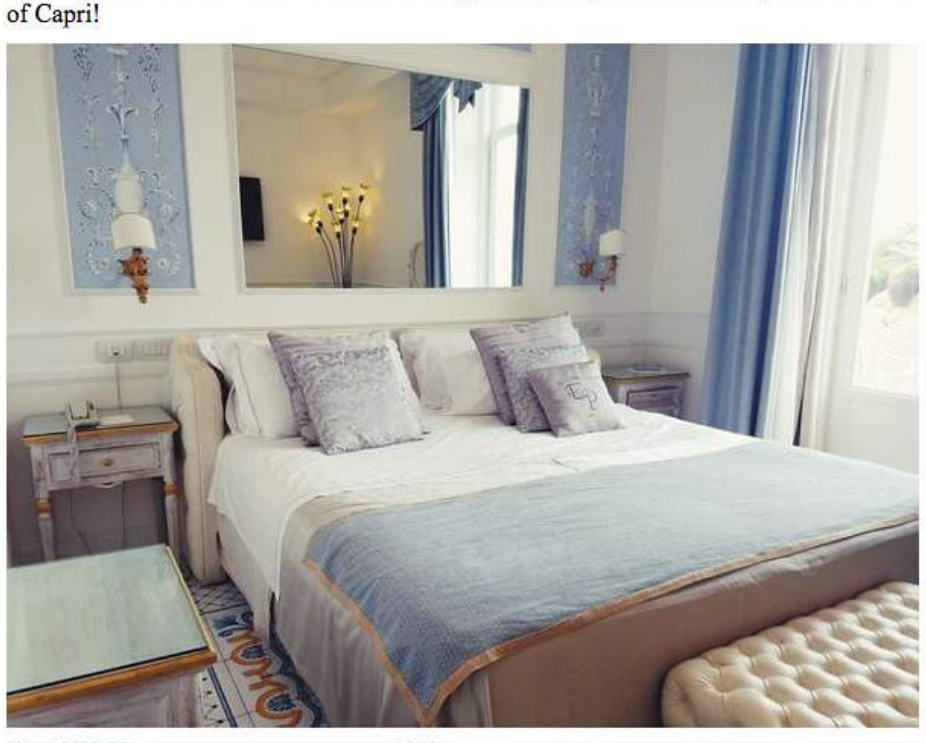


CAPRI

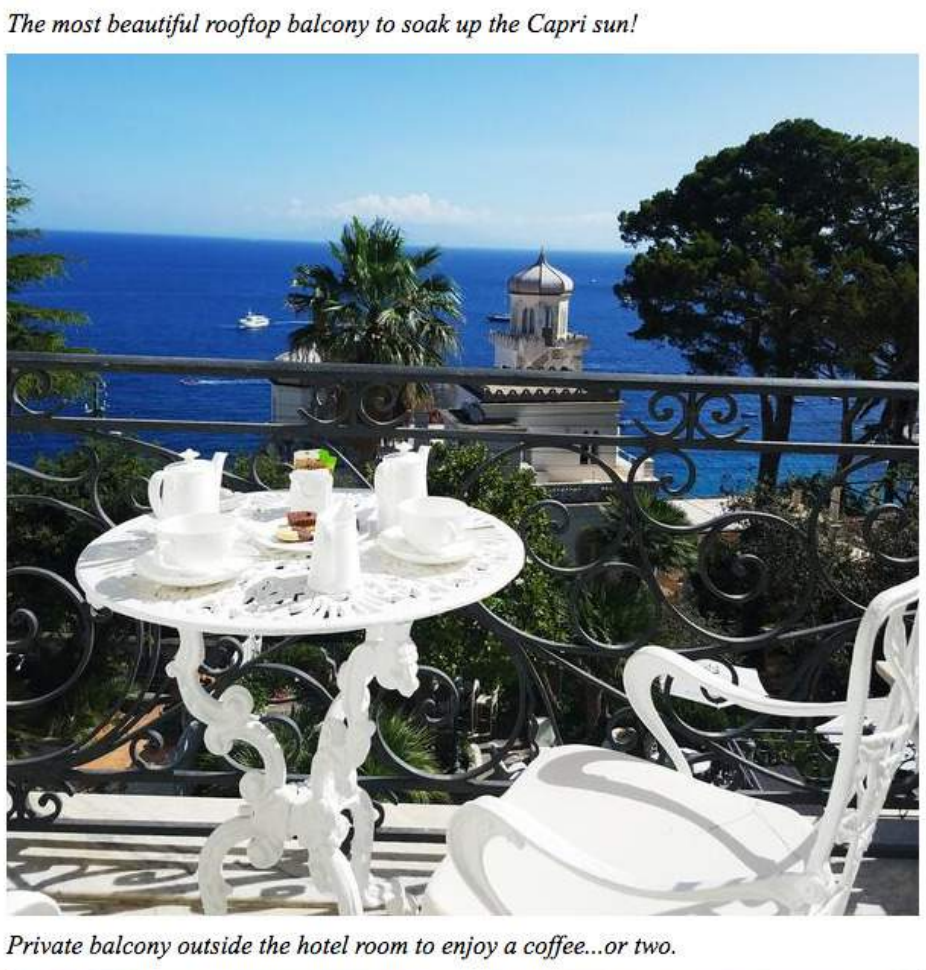
Where to stay: ***Excelsior Parco***

With just 11 rooms and the most accommodating staff one can imagine, Excelsior Parco easily checks every box on the list. Not only is the location perfect (it's walking distance to both Marina Grande and Capri Center), but it boasts timeless Italian architecture and decor, luxury rooms with private outdoor jacuzzis and an impeccable attention to detail to ensure every guest is both comfortable and pampered. Once a private villa, Excelsior Parco maintains that intimacy by making you feel like family from the moment you walk in the door. Every staff member (*especially Viviana!*) is more than happy to help you plan your best stay in Capri, and the complimentary shuttle makes it incredibly easy to get around if you choose to forego walking by foot.

The breakfast here is something to write about too, and had to have been the most health conscious we'd seen during our time in Italy. The menu is filled with organic ingredients and couldn't have been easier to navigate for vegan or vegetarian options (*and offered some insanely delicious whole wheat croissants to pair with our almond milk latte*). Need something to eat later while in your room? Easy – the room snacks and mini bar drinks included coconut water and gluten-free quinoa chips. This is a must stay if you want a more intimate and low-key experience from the larger resorts in Capri Center. Take a peek below for some of our favorite gems within **Excelsior Parco** and the island of Capri!



The most beautiful rooftop balcony to soak up the Capri sun!



Private balcony outside the hotel room to enjoy a coffee...or two.

Make sure to use their reserved seating at the beach in Marina Grande!

Where to eat in Capri:

1. **Lo Sfizio** – A local spot tucked away just outside the main strip of Capri Center, perfect for anyone who wants to ditch the flashy restaurants and bars for a more authentic dining experience. Be prepared to walk up a steep hill, but it's well worth it for the meal and the hospitality. Order any of their vegetable sides (we loved the roasted eggplant with tomatoes, and the sautéed mushrooms with fresh herbs), as well as a few seafood starters (the salmon with arugula and tomatoes was amazing!). Pizzas here are delicious and fresh out of their wood-burning oven, but the homemade pastas are a must! This place is a true gem.

2. **Da Gelsomina** – From the moment you step out of the car and see the views from this restaurant, you know you're about to have a special experience. Not only is there a beautiful view of the Mediterranean Sea, but once at your table you're looking right out onto their garden where they grow many of their vegetables, and even produce their own wines (*definitely order their red!*). Once again all of their pastas are homemade and we highly recommend the ravioli (which we were told is the best in Capri and we stand by that) as well as their Putannesca. Did we mention they have a pickup and drop-off shuttle service to your hotel?

3. **Buonocore (for gelato!)** – Don't ask, just go. This is by far the best gelato in Capri. Get the pistachio flavor in one of their waffle cones which they make right in front of you.

What to do in Capri:

1. **Blue Grotto/boat rental -** Rent a private boat with a tour guide or go on one of the group tours, but seeing the island from a boat is breathtaking! You get an up close shot at the seaside cliffs as well as a peek inside the famous Blue Grotto. It can be a wait to get inside, but it's worth it.

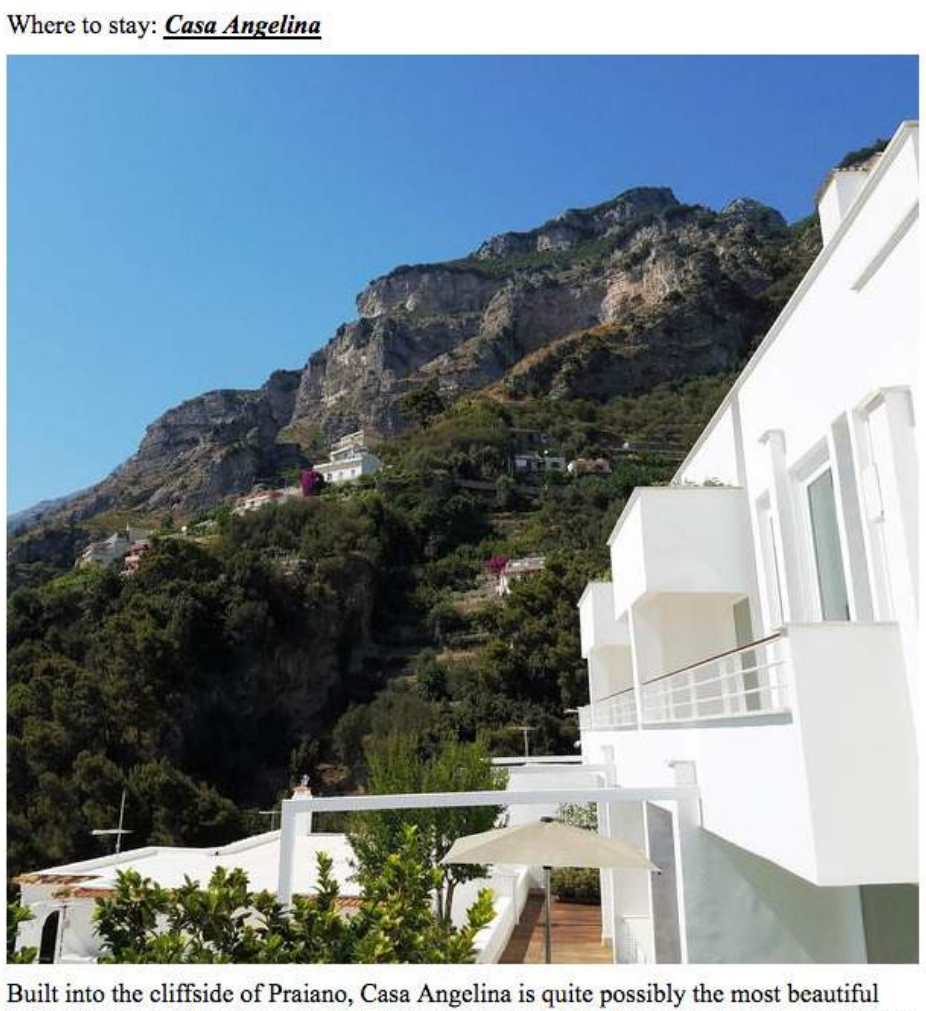
2. **Marina Piccolo** – Take a few hours and make the walk down to Marina Piccolo, a beautiful swimming spot with both beach clubs and a free public beach area. Grab a panini from Da Gioia, sit near one of the windows facing the water, and soak it all in. The walk back up into town can be long (buses are available too), but opt in for the stair workout!

3. **Day or overnight trip to Anacapri** – Known as the quieter side to the island, Anacapri should not be missed. While Capri is well known for their high-end shopping (hello Dolce & Gabbana), Anacapri is quaint and has a variety of local boutiques. They also have a chairlift to the highest point in Capri where you can get the only 360 degree view of the entire island.

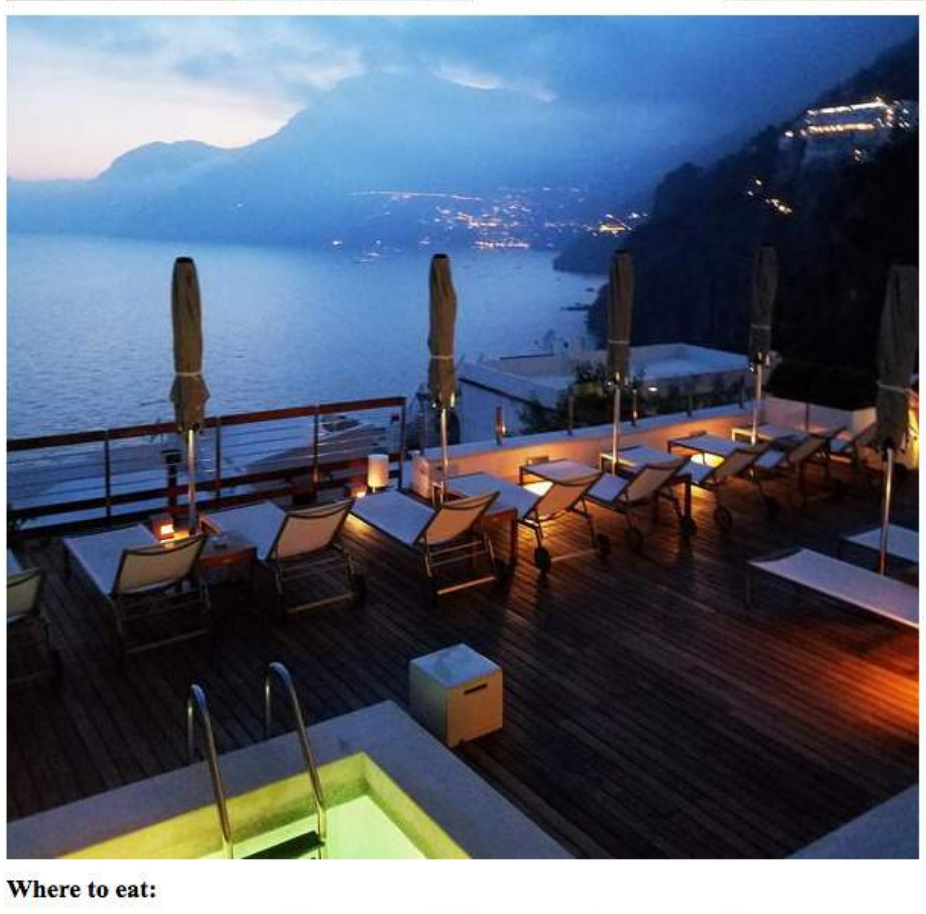
4. **Shop or wander through Capri Center** – While Capri is very busy with daytime tourists, the island quiets down around 5PM when they all leave on the ferry. Wait to come into town then to really enjoy the scene. Grab a cappuccino from one of the many amazing cafes, stroll through the streets and discover some insanely photogenic side streets with sweeping views of the Mediterranean. Most people don't eat dinner here until late, so you'll have plenty of time to wander and people watch before you settle in to eat.

PRAIANO

Where to stay: ***Casa Angelina***



Built into the cliffside of Praiano, Casa Angelina is quite possibly the most beautiful hotel on the Amalfi coast with an ocean view to match. The design is sleek, modern and clean, with all-white interiors and what one may call an "obsession to perfection" to keeping the hotel as immaculate and white as possible (it's not uncommon to see one of their staff members walking around with white paint to ensure there are no nicks on the wall). Casa Angelina was crafted for ultimate relaxation, and between the incredibly accommodating staff and the sweeping views of the Mediterranean Sea one can never run out of places to enjoy this breathtaking view. Get breakfast or dinner from their upscale rooftop restaurant (Un Piano Nel Cielo), sit on your room's private deck, hang out by the pool and order lunch (which we might add had the best olive oil we tasted in Italy), or lay out by their private beach club which is just a 10 minute stroll downhill. Plus, for guests who want to stay on their workout regimen while on vacation, Casa Angelina is the place to do it. Their fitness center is well equipped with the latest workout machines as well as a wading pool and a yoga deck surrounded by lemon trees. In short, this stay is for the Sakaralite who wants to relax and feel like a true VIP. Need we say more?



Where to eat:

1. **Kasai** – Ever wander into a restaurant that immediately felt special? Such is the case with Kasai. Maybe it was being greeted at the door with a glass of prosecco to enjoy while waiting for our table, or it could have been the owner walking around and giving locals and tourists alike advice on what to order, but Kasai immediately felt like a place you'd want to visit time and again. Try and grab a seat outside under the twinkling lights and order a bottle of white wine to enjoy with your seafood, because that's the name of the game here when you're on the Amalfi Coast. Kasai has a daily specials board which we highly recommend ordering off, or even better, ask the owner or chef what some of their favorite dishes are on the menu.

What to do:

1. Rent a kayak and explore the hidden coves surrounding the Praiano coast.

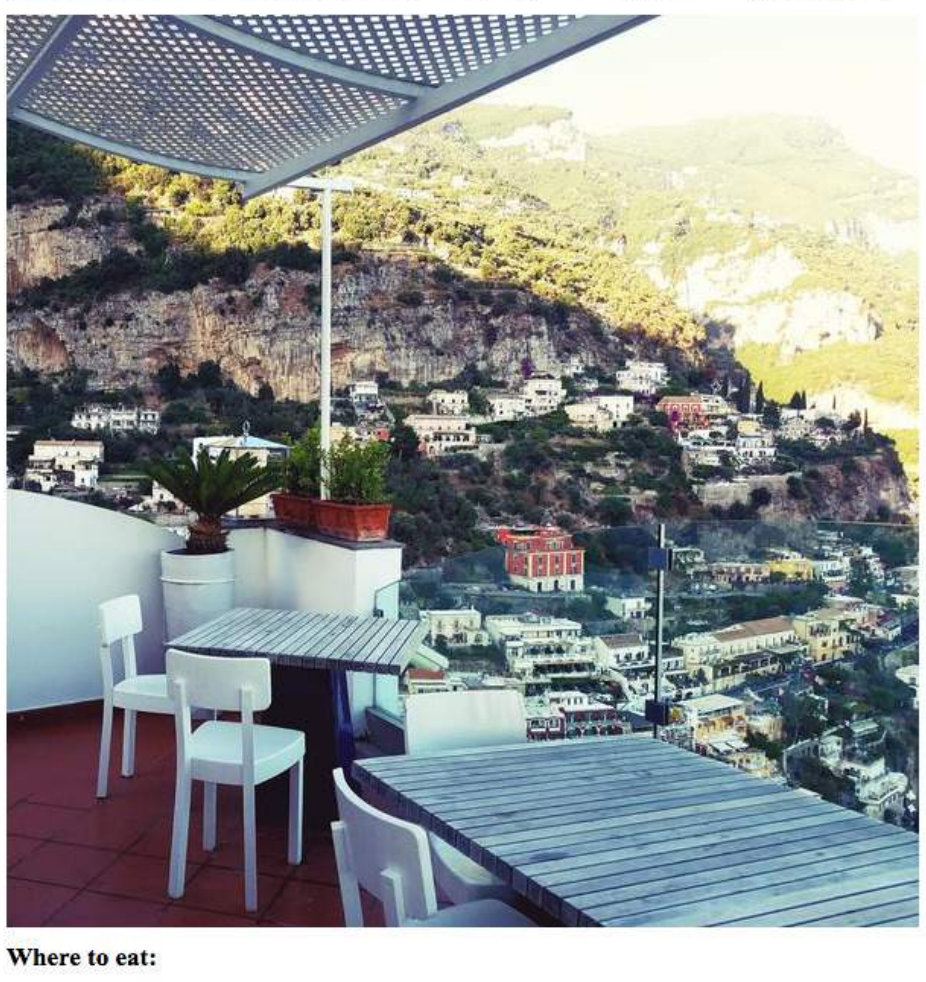
2. Spend a day by the water at one of the beach clubs in Praiano. If you're staying at Casa Angelina, lounge on one of their orange beach chairs and order lunch from One Fire for the perfect lazy day.

3. Hike the Path of the Gods if you're feeling a little more adventurous or in need of a workout.

POSITANO

Where to stay: ***Hotel Villa Franca***

Get ready for views on VIEWS. Perched on top of the Positano coastline is Villa Franca, a beautiful hotel above the Mediterranean Sea with a rooftop pool and a gorgeous view in every room. Positano itself is about as magical of a town as it gets, with winding streets draped in flowers and vines, twinkling lights, local shops and boutiques and even better restaurants (with the freshest seafood caught right off the coast!). Much of the beauty of being in this town is simply soaking up the views and the sights, and Villa Franca could not be better for it. The décor is classic Italian with a modern twist for ultimate relaxation, and immediately upon entering the hotel you feel how airy, light and elegant it is. It has a way of celebrating the natural beauty surrounding it, while catering to the comfort of their guests at the same time. Enjoy views of Positano from the privacy of your room's patio, lounge out by the rooftop pool for a light lunch or sip a cocktail in the chic yet cozy hotel bar. Want to venture into town? Though Villa Franca looks so high above the rest of Positano, it's actually an easy and fun walk down the steps to get to the main shopping area or beach, and when you need to get back up Hotel Villa Franca's shuttle service will take you right back up. The perfect stay in Positano!



Where to eat:

1. **Chez Black** – Beachside dining that makes you feel like you're also sitting on a yacht, in the best way possible. From the locally crafted plates and bowls, hints of turquoise and pinks sprinkled throughout the décor, a lively staff ready to serve you and a bustling atmosphere full of music and diners, this restaurant makes you feel like you're in the best spot in Positano. Seafood is the highlight here, so order the local catch of the day over pasta, a side of their caprese salad and a cold bottle of wine and you'll be in great hands.

2. **Collina Bakery** – Perfect for a café latte, a breakfast pastry, casual Panini and post-dinner pistachio gelato. There are handfuls of cafes in Positano, but this one was consistently delicious and great for any time of day.

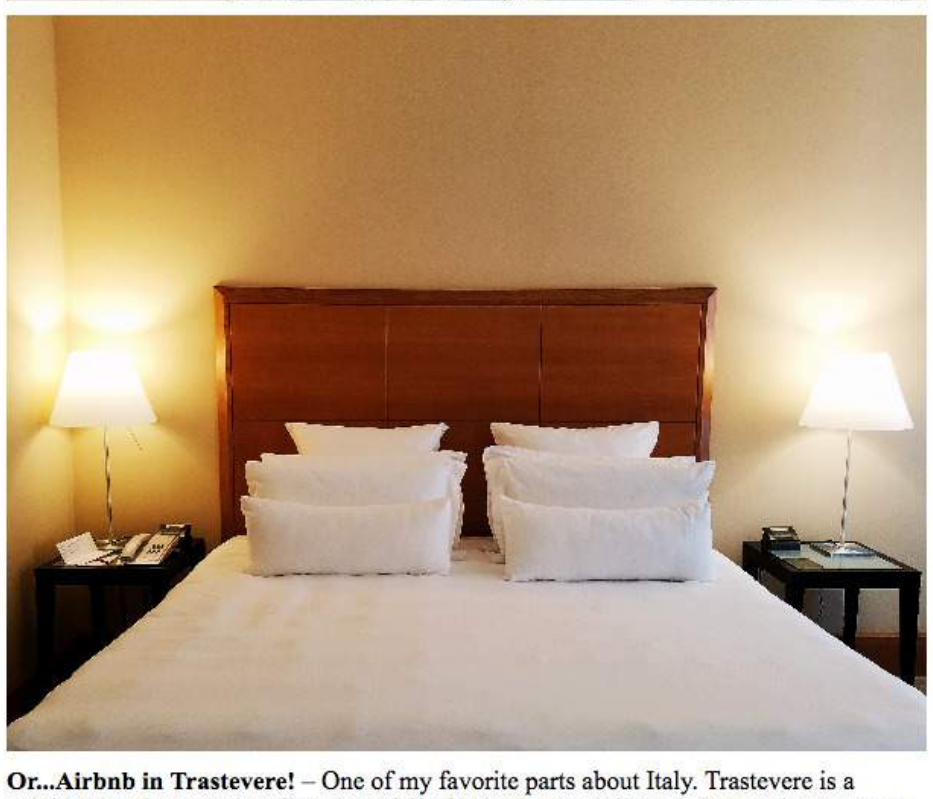
What to do:

1. Shop! Positano is ideal for a day of exploring boutiques and walking up the quant and winding streets and alleyways. Make sure you buy at least one locally crafted ceramic and a bottle of Limoncello for your kitchen. And for the closet? Look no further than La Bottega di Brunella for the perfect linen shirt or dress.

ROME

Where to stay: ***Hotel Capo d'Africa***

Perfect for the Sakara traveler who wants to stay in the heart of Rome's sightseeing! Hotel Capo d'Africa is situated on a quiet street just steps from the Coliseum, which made it ideal for walking to all of the major sights but still felt like an escape from the hustle and bustle of Rome once we wanted to go back and relax. The hotel is so close to the Coliseum that when you're sitting on their rooftop for breakfast, you get a perfect view right from your table—so unique from any other hotel in the city. Talk to their extremely helpful and friendly staff for tips about getting around Rome, their favorite restaurants or even arranging a tour. The hospitality here is what you remember most.



Or...Airbnb in Trastevere! – One of my favorite parts about Italy. Trastevere is a neighborhood across the Tiber river, full of bakeries, panini shops, bars and restaurants, so quaint you almost feel like you're on a movie set. There are no big hotels in this area, so Airbnb is the way to go so you can live as the locals do here.

Where to eat:

1. **Giselda** – The best panini we had in Italy, hands down. You can taste the quality in every single ingredient here, and all of the bread is baked fresh throughout the day. A must if you're in Trastevere for the day! They also have great coffee and pastries.

2. **Fior di Luna** – A small storefront hidden behind draping ivy, this gelato shop is not to be missed. Their gelatos are all made in-house, and are perfectly creamy with many of the ingredients being organic. The fig, coconut, pistachio and hazelnut flavors are a MUST, and if you're feeling like something a little more fruity go for the strawberry (which has real chunks of strawberry throughout!).

3. **Ai Tre Scalini**– With so many restaurants being catered towards tourists in Rome, it can be hard to find something that feels a little more local and off the beaten path. Ai Tre Scalini checked off all the boxes for us in what we wanted in a restaurant. Handmade pastas, a rotating menu filled with daily specials and "whatever the chef feels like making," plus great wine and lively Italian conversation. We ordered the daily specials that night, which happened to be an amazing eggplant and roasted tomato lasagna, seared calamari and a green salad topped with garden fresh tomatoes, cucumbers and herbs. This is the kind of restaurant where you can do no wrong when ordering, a must!

What to do:

1. Sightseeing - The most touristy leg of the trip by far, but well worth it! Rome is for sightseeing and soaking up all of the rich history Italy has to offer. From the Spanish Steps, to the Colisseium, all the way to the Pantheon, it's a *must* to see as much as you possibly can! Be sure to fit in a picnic lunch in Villa Borghese, too.

2. Campo de' Fiore - A bustling market in in the south square of Piazza Navona. Fresh fruit, vegetables, meats, spices, cheese and more!

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