



HISTORIC CENTRE OF NAPLES

“Who knows! Who knows what Naples really is. There are times when I think that Naples, the one I have in my mind, may not exist as a city, yet it certainly exists as a concept, as an adjective. And so I do think that Naples is the most Naples I know, and that wherever I may go, there is a need for a little bit of Naples.”

Così parlò Bellavista, Luciano De Crescenzo

The 3000-year-old historical centre of Naples, inscribed as a UNESCO World Heritage Site for its extraordinary monuments, is the largest in Italy, one where the ancient Greek street layout is still preserved, and in use. As one of the oldest cities in Europe, founded by the Greeks in 470 B.C., Naples attracts tourists worldwide to explore its museums, catacombs, cloisters, palaces, monasteries, and the “street of cribs”, San Gregorio Armeno, where a one-way pedestrian circulation is imposed at certain times of the year because of the large turnout. So many rulers have tried to subdue Naples, from the Byzantines to the Normans and the Angevins; the Aragonese embellished it with a Royal Palace, while the Bourbon family were the driving force behind its flourishing arts, culture, and science. Every single one of them, may he be oppressive or visionary, has left his mark on its body, and yet the soul of Naples and of the Neapolitans is far from broken thanks to the sense of identity they have nurtured over the centuries. This is the proud human character of this city, by far its priceless treasure, more than any masterpieces of art, history, and architecture.



CULTURAL HERITAGE
UNESCO DOSSIER: 726 BIS
PLACE OF INSCRIPTION: BERLIN, GERMANY
DATE OF INSCRIPTION: 1995



CRITERIA FOR SELECTION: From the Neapolis founded by Greek settlers in 470 B.C. to the city of today, Naples has retained the imprint of the successive cultures that emerged in Europe and the Mediterranean basin. This makes it a unique site, with a wealth of outstanding monuments.



*“Naples is numberless colours /
Naples is numberless fears / is the voices
of the children / raising higher and near /
and you know you’re not alone.”*

**A poetic description of Naples’ countless facets
by Pino Daniele in one of his most famous songs in
1977. Here is an itinerary across the historical centre’s vibrant
streets, between lights and shadows of this bewitching city.**

First destination is the **1 Church of Gesù Nuovo** with its piperno ashlar façade. A property of the Sanseverino family, in 1547 Pedro de Toledo, Viceroy, confiscated and handed it over to the Jesuits, who turned it into a church. Some scholars believe that some of the ashlars were carved with musical notes, so that the façade could be considered as a huge score. Walk on to the monumental Gothic **2 Basilica of Santa Chiara** and a few steps further to its **Convent** and astounding **Cloister**, a radiant gem in central Naples. Once a vegetable garden, it was decorated with as many as 30,000 majolica tiles on top of citrus trees and wisteria at Queen Maria Amalia of Saxony’s will. Just around the corner is another unmissable location, the **Museo Cappella Sansevero** and the **3 Veiled Christ**, commissioned

by Raimondo di Sangro, Prince of Sansevero, to Giuseppe Sanmartino. It is a 18th-century work of art surprising the visitor for the lifelike depiction of a sculpted body – you would say a person in the flesh. It is now time to descend on the lower decuman known as **4 Spaccanapoli**, a long street that cuts through the ancient core of the city, whose most popular stretch is **Via San Biagio dei Librai**, then to climb up again along **Via San Gregorio Armeno**, the “street of cribs” (or “shepherds”), where you can also access the **5 Complex of San Gregorio Armeno** and its Church bursting with works of art. Another within reach must-see is the lavishly decorated **6 Church of the Girolamini** shaped as a Latin cross. It hosts the oldest library in Naples opened to the public in 1586 that contains 160,000 volumes and an

astonishing hall named **Sala Vico**. You are now getting closer to a sacred place for the Neapolitans: the **7 Cathedral and Treasure of San Gennaro**, where the blood of the saint is preserved while waiting for it to melt three times a year. Among the riches forming the Treasure is the saint’s reliquary bust and the 18th-century mitre studded with 3694 precious stones. Visit the **8 Pio Monte della Misericordia** to admire Caravaggio’s *Seven Works of Mercy*, but if you are a lover of contemporary art, **9 MADRE Museum** in the 19th-century Palazzo Donnaregina should be your haven. Finally, a visit is due to **10 MANN**, the world’s major archaeological museum of Roman artefacts with its 250,000 masterpieces, including the Farnese Atlas and the Mosaic of Alexander.



THE HISTORY OF THEATRE

*“What a sky! This sky is a turquoise,
crystal clear curtain. That’s how
snow covers Mount Vesuvius in Naples.”*

A neva, Eduardo De Filippo

San Ferdinando, a historic Neapolitan performance venue, the real temple of Neapolitan drama, is one of the oldest theatres in the city. Eduardo De Filippo decided to buy it on 25 February 1948, committing all his assets to its post-war renovation, but was forced to close it in 1961 due to indebtedness. After alternating fortunes, the theatre was reopened in 2007 staging the 1982 Neapolitan Baroque translation by Eduardo of Shakespeare’s *The Tempest*. The theatre pays homage to the Neapolitan playwright preserving its furniture, tools and a trunk full of stage clothes in a dressing room open to the public as well as with a permanent exhibition in the lobby that recounts the history of theatre, from *café chantant* to curtain raiser, through comedy and avant-garde theatre, by means of numerous relics, such as Eduardo’s manuscripts and Totò’s popular Pinocchio suit – guided tours are scheduled every season.



'LET MAN TALK, DESCRIBE AND PAINT AS HE MAY - TO BE HERE IS MORE THAN ALL. THE SHORE, THE CREEKS, AND THE BAY, VESUVIUS, THE CITY, THE SUBURBS, THE CASTLES, THE ATMOSPHERE! [...] I CAN PARDON ALL WHO LOSE THEIR SENSES IN NAPLES [...]

The words of Goethe, the legendary German write, resound with enthusiasm for Naples, as expressed on a trip to the city during his Grand

Tour, the extensive journey typically undertaken by young European aristocrats through continental Europe that included Italy as one of its usual destinations. Let's get as excited as he did along this itinerary through Naples starting from **1 Castel Nuovo**, also known as Maschio Angioino, a medieval Renaissance castle whose ancient halls and dungeons, once used as prisons, captivate children and youngsters alike. No need to be Napoli football club supporters to plan a visit to the two **2 murals of Diego Armando Maradona** in the Quartieri Spagnoli neighbourhood – an unmissable stop, even more so after Napoli won the Italian championship ("Scudetto")

in the 2022/2023 season! Another amusing place for both children and adults is the **3 Royal Mineralogical Museum**. Housed in a beautiful 16th-century palace in the city centre, it boasts a collection of 45,000 minerals divided into various categories. Yet, there is one more special spot for young mystery lovers to highlight on the city centre map: **4 Santa Luciella ai Librai**. It is a church dating back to 1327, whose crypt preserves a mysterious skull with ears, no less! This unusual skull has mummified cartilages on each side that resemble ears. Even the most demanding children are guaranteed to love another place shrouded in magic, i.e., **5 Ospedale delle Bambole**, the renowned Doll Hospital to which people from all over the world send their broken dolls or puppets in need of repair. A short walk from here is **6 Via San Gregorio Armeno**, the "street of cribs", where you can choose the most beautiful figurines for your nativity scene, as well as **7 il Cartastorie**, the Museum of the Historical Archives of Banco di Napoli, where stories and characters lurk among the writings of the ancient Neapolitan public banks. Also worth considering are the activities for children organised at **8 MANN**, the National Archaeological Museum of Naples, including creative workshops and plenty of other opportunities for the youngest visitors. Another two stops to go before you can call it a tour are **9 Presepe Favoloso**, a wonderful nativity scene with more than 100 shepherds set up inside the Basilica di Santa Maria in Sanità district, and the city **10 Botanical Garden**, rich in poisonous and insect-eating plants, a tropical greenhouse, a camellia garden, a tactile olfactory museum, and other areas of marvellous nature.



NAPLES in books

Reading suggestions to reach out to the very heart of Naples.

• **Italian Journey**, Johann Wolfgang von Goethe (1816-17). The chronicles of the great German writer's Grand Tour in Italy, with a section dedicated to his stay in Naples in the late 18th century: two months that so enraptured his heart he would call it "the most wonderful place in the world".

• **Il ventre di Napoli** (The Belly of Naples), Matilde Serao (1884). A collection of articles about late 19th-century Naples. A complex, non-simplistic, rather modern vision of the city showing its lights and shadows.

• **L'oro di Napoli**, Giuseppe Marotta (1947). A collection of short stories formerly published in *Corriere della Sera*. A portrait of Naples and its inhabitants through stories of love and redemption, despair, and rebirth.

• **Le poesie di Eduardo**, Eduardo De Filippo (1975). The renowned

Neapolitan playwright recounts his beloved hometown in verses.

• **Così parlò Bellavista**, Luciano De Crescenzo (1977). Debut novel by De Crescenzo as a choral dialogue between several characters. A portrait of a city that is never banal and is at its finest through the art of living.

• **The day before happiness**, Erri De Luca (2009). The story of Don Gaetano, handyman, and *Smilzo*, an orphaned boy, set in the 1950s, when Naples was as bustling as it was wild.

• **My brilliant friend**, Elena Ferrante (2011). The first novel in Elena Ferrante's series leads us into a genuine, post-war suburban Naples, where we challengingly attempt to look at the future through the eyes of Lenù and Lila.

• **The Bastards of Pizzofalcone**, Maurizio De Giovanni (2013). The first novel of a literary series – and inspiration for a huge TV success – set in contemporary Naples, in Pizzofalcone police station to be precise. Heading the investigation

is Inspector, or better, *commissario* Giuseppe Lojacono.

• **Nostalgia**, Ermanno Rea (2016). The beautiful novel from which director Mario Martone drew inspiration for his movie premiered at Cannes Film Festival in 2022. The story narrates Felice's return to his hometown and neighbourhood (Sanità). A dive into the past.

• **Cara Napoli**, Lorenzo Marone (2018). An expression of love dedicated by the author to his city in a collection of his weekly publications released for *La Repubblica di Napoli*. A fresh look into a city that never fails to amaze.

Children's books:

• **Partenope Magica. Miti e leggende della Napoli antica**, Clara Barbara Manacorda (2006). A tour deep in the heart of ancient Naples to discover local legends, from Sansevero Chapel to the palaces of the historical centre, from Colapesce's bas-relief to Castel Nuovo and Castel dell'Ovo, and then into Virgil's tomb, the Church of Santa Maria del Parto, Palazzo Donn'Anna, and many more.