



Le Sirenuse's restaurant terrace



DESTINATION
ITALY

Pompei



Hotel Santa Caterina

10 REASONS TO HONEYMOON ON THE AMALFI COAST

With spectacular coastal scenery, hidden coves, clifftop hotels and colourful villages, Italy's Amalfi Coast is romantic, glamorous and beautiful, writes Yvonne Gordon

1 Start with a drive on the famous Amalfi Coast road, one of the most beautiful stretches of road in the world. The road weaves and twists its way along the cliffside, set between the turquoise and blue **Mediterranean Sea** far below and the steep hills which stretch up into the sky. As you pass through tunnels, over bridges and around bends, you'll catch glimpses of tiny boats moored in rocky coves and vast villas with pools and terraces carved into rocky ravines.

2 Drop into the **famous village of Positano** to admire the rows of pastel-coloured houses with their flower-filled balconies, all set on steep terraces overlooking the sea. Explore the arty boutiques and galleries along the narrow streets, then relax at the small pebbled beach at the foot of the village, with fishing boats, restaurants and cafés. For fresh seafood, check out La Cambusa on the seafront.

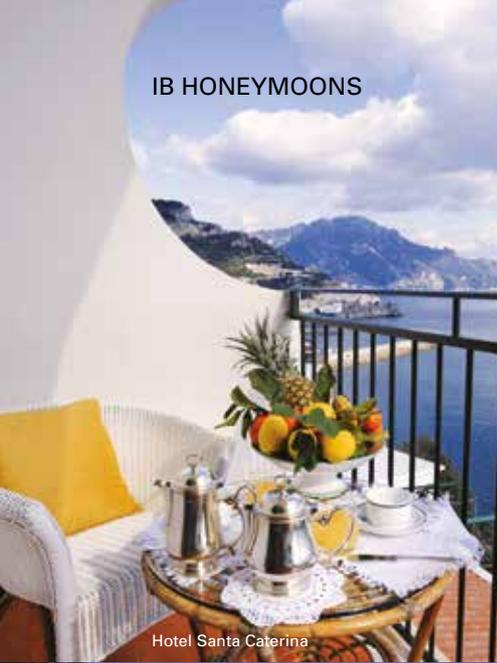
3 For the ultimate in honeymoon luxury, check into one of the **exclusive hill-top hotels** along the coast, with their private beaches, cliffside pools and romantic outdoor dining on

ocean-view terraces. In Positano, book into Le Sirenuse (sirenuse.it) where the glamour factor is high on the champagne and oyster-bar terrace. Or stay at the exclusive Il San Pietro di Positano (ilsanpietro.it), which is just outside the town and has spacious gardens on the cliff plus a lift down to a private beach. A honeymoon suite at the Hotel Santa Caterina in Amalfi (hotelsantacaterina.it) has private gardens, a Jacuzzi and a heated infinity pool overlooking the sea.

4 In the town of Amalfi, spend time people-watching or eating gelato from one of the **cafés at the harbour**, a hive of tourist activity, with buses and boats coming and going. In the main town piazza, the impressive 9th century Duomo di Amalfi (cathedral) is worth a climb up the steep steps. Reward yourselves with coffee and pastries from Pasticceria Andrea Pansa afterwards. Make sure to explore the network of covered alleyways and the tiny shops and workshops towards the back of the town too.

5 Rent a boat or take an organised boat trip from Amalfi harbour to see the coast from the water and to admire the luxury villas, stopping at secret bathing coves along the way. Visit the Grotta dello Smeraldo – **the Emerald Grotto** – a cave full of unusual rock formations, where light filtered by the rocks gives the waters an intense green colour. You can also take a boat to Li Galli or Sirenuse, the three islands just offshore, said to be the home of the enchanting sirens from Greek mythology.

IB HONEYMOONS



Hotel Santa Caterina



Villa Rufolo



Le Sirenuse



Pool, Le Sirenuse



Night views of Positano



Positano

6 Find a **hidden beach** – if you're exploring by boat, you'll find lots of hidden bays along the rocky coastline. Or on foot, from the Spiaggia Grande in Positano, facing the sea, take the path along the Via Positanesi D'America, to the right. This will lead you along the cliff to Spiaggia Fornillo, a small beach. Spiaggia di Laurito is another tiny beach, two miles from Positano. To get there, take one of the regular shuttle boats from Positano harbour or a shuttle bus from the main road (if you're up to a steep hike back up to the bus).

7 Lemon groves add bursts of yellow to hills and terraces all along the Amalfi coast and you'll often notice the scent of the **famous Amalfi lemons** in the air. You'll find lemons everywhere – try a tasty and sweet limoncello liqueur as a digestive after dinner, and find a bakery to try some delizie al limone - lemon delicia cake, a local speciality made from soft sponge filled with a lemon cream. When setting off for the day, ask your hotel to prepare a picnic with local produce such as mozzarella, ricotta, tomatoes, olives and citrus fruit.

8 Head into the hills to the romantic village of Ravello, a peaceful village where you'll be rewarded with elevated sea views and no sounds of traffic. From the railings of the

11th century Duomo in the central piazza, you can marvel over the **hillside terraces and houses** built on the edges of precipices, with their overhanging rooms and gardens. The best sea views are from the gardens at Villa Cimbrone or Villa Rufolo, which dates to the 13th century and is said to have inspired the opera Parsifal by Wagner. If you're in Ravello during the summer music festival, book in for one of the villa's outdoor classical music performances.

9 For some history, take a day trip to **Pompeii** to explore the ruins of the old streets and houses which were preserved when nearby Mount Vesuvius erupted in 79AD – covering the city in volcanic ash. Or visit the lesser-known site Herculaneum, another Roman town which was lost in the same volcanic eruption and has well preserved ruins including Roman baths and coloured mosaics.

10 Finally, if you're feeling energetic, check out one of the **walking trails** above Positano for bird's-eye views of the entire coast. A stairway of 1,700 steps leads up from Montepertuso village to where the Sentiero degli Dei or Path of the Gods begins – an elevated trail which passes vineyards, farms and gorges, with spectacular coastal views. ■