



HOW TO SPEND IT IN... Naples

The art dealer Thomas Dane, who opened his second gallery here in 2018, reveals his ongoing love affair with the city. Portrait by Danilo Scarpati

The first time I came to Naples was in 1995, on a trip to see an exhibition of British artists in nearby Caserta. I fell immediately in love with its chaotic beauty and authenticity – it hasn't been overrun by tourists and doesn't feel precious, like living in a museum. Instead, it fills me with a great sense of freedom and energy.

"The bar at the Excelsior Hotel is the perfect spot for a Negroni at sunset"

I would end up with a beautiful apartment. I always tell people to stay at the Eurostars Hotel Excelsior, which is the first hotel I ever stayed in here. It has the most amazing views over the Bay of Naples, and also a kind of faded Faulstich Towers grandeur about it; but if you can get a room overlooking Vesuvius or Capri, it's heaven. I still stay here and as soon as I arrive I go across the road to eat at La Bersagliera, with its sign in green neon. I can't believe it remains exactly the same as it appeared in Roberto Rossellini's 1954 classic *Journey to Italy* – a film I've always

all offer that classic Italian service with waiters wearing crisp starched uniforms. Naples can still be a very traditional city. That's why it has remained so steeped in history and culture. The scale and beauty of its buildings are a constant reminder of how it was once one of the most important cities in the world. Any visit should include the Museo e Real Bosco di Capodimonte – incredible in itself because no one's in it, unlike the rest of Italy where everything is so packed. You must see Caravaggio's *The Flagellation*

of Christ (1607) – a painting I return to again and again because it's so extraordinary – and the museum's room of Titians. Giuseppe Sanmartino's marble sculpture *The Veiled Christ* in the small Sansonevò chapel museum is breathtaking. In and among all the Greco-Roman antiquities, famous Farnese paintings and ancient mosaics, you don't want to miss the Museo Archeologico Nazionale, which is one of the most beautiful museums in the world, for the Gabinetto Segreto – the "secret cabinet" of erotic art excavated from

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The first was an enormous palace with domed ceilings, which I thought was just nuts; the second was the 19th-century Villa Ruffo, the former home of the German consulate. They left it in rather a mess and, although I could see the restoration bill was going to be a lot, the rent wasn't huge so I thought why not? Worst case scenario, I consoled myself, I would end up with a beautiful apartment.

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loved. Come for spaghetti vongole and to sit and watch the people and boats go by. For seafront views like those at the Excelsior – where the rooftop L'Ottavo Cielo Bar is the perfect spot for enjoying a Negroni at sunset – you can also stay at the Grand Hotel Santa Lucia, or further along at the Grand Hotel Vesuvio. Each has different characteristics of design, but

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Above: Thomas Dane at his Naples gallery



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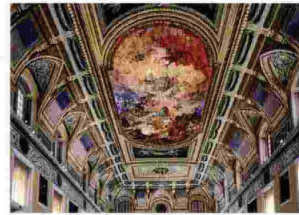
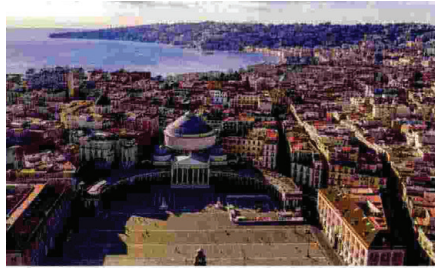
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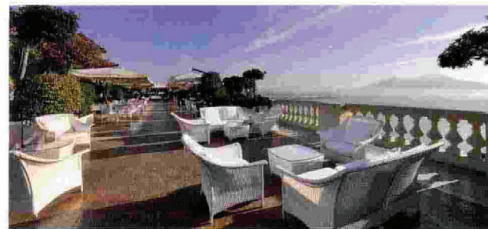
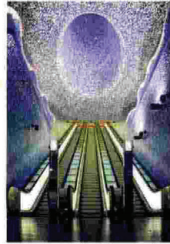
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Clockwise from above: the Piazza del Plebiscito and the Bay of Naples. The hall of the Sundial at the Museo Archeologico Nazionale. The Museo e Real Bosco di Capodimonte. The roof bar at the Excelsior. Robert Wilson's art at Toledo subway station. Bottom: ties from E Marinella



Pompeii and Herculaneum. A 10-minute walk away is the spectacular Palazzo Sanfelice, which is a must for its early 1700s double ramp stairwell.

But Naples also has a wonderful history and culture of contemporary art. Galleria Lia Rumma and Studio Trisorio opened here in the early '70s, pioneering the contemporary art scene with shows by artists such as Joseph Beuys and Cindy Sherman. Alfonso Artiaco has since brought artists like Gilbert & George and Carl Andre. Galleria Fonti is a younger gallery representing, among others, Piero Golia and Eric Wesley. The Fondazione Morra Greco recently reopened in the 16th-century Palazzo Caracciolo, where they discovered beautiful 18th-century frescoes that will make hanging artwork most interesting. If Turin is about slow food, Naples is about slow art – the city really makes you breathe and feel things.

I see Andrea Villani, director of the Madre contemporary art museum, as a magician, making extraordinary shows such as the recent Robert Mapplethorpe retrospective happen on a wing and a prayer. The mayor, Luigi de Magistris, commissions artists to help transform the city's subway – the Toledo station,

with its mosaic passageways by William Kentridge and a light panel seascape by Robert Wilson enveloping the escalators, is a perfect example.

And then of course, the food. Naples is all about pizza, pasta and seafood. Order the margherita pizza at Gino e Toto Sorbillo, along with a glass of the local Greco di Tufo white wine. At Rosiello, the fish is just-off-the-boat fresh, served with vegetables from the garden; a short walk away, try the buzzing Trattoria Ciccio where they do the most delicious carpaccio of fish and prawns, or choose your own fresh fish to be grilled simply with olive oil and served with some scarola (a bitter lettuce) on the side.

The owner of L'Europeo Di Mattozzi, Alfonso Mattozzi, is unbelievably welcoming, making

you feel like part of the family and the city. Here it's the soups such as squid with lentils and the seabass baked under paper-thin potatoes that are amazing. And for dessert, order the "gelatini frutti" – ice creams shaped according to their flavours, like strawberries or chestnuts.

The Teatro di San Carlo is the world's oldest opera house, and probably the best place in Italy to enjoy a traditional Italian opera in wintertime – which is also because it's the best time to see the Neapolitans dressed in their finest. I tell people to head afterwards to Gran Caffè Gambirinus for wonderful old-fashioned pastries and coffee, or a slice of chocolate and almond torta caprese, a classic of the Campania region.

If you want to go off the beaten track, I'd suggest one of British documentary maker Sophia Seymour's walking tours, inspired by the Naples of author Elena Ferrante. For a longer day out, you can visit Villa Oplontis, one of the most beautiful of the ancient Roman villas, where the frescoes are remarkable. Or you could grab a ferry to Procida and dine on pasta with sea urchins at the seafood restaurant La Gorgonia. They filmed scenes from *The Talented Mr Ripley* on this island, probably because it has the feeling of still looking as it did in the 1950s.

This is a city with beautiful mementoes. I'd recommend taking one of the beautifully decorated boxes of "forest" chocolate from [Gay-Odin](#), painted with historical views of the Bay of Naples. Or a tie, either from M Cilento & Fratello – which opened in 1780 and is still in the family – or from E Marinella. Or a perfectly fitted shirt from Camiceria Piccolo;



HOTELS
Eurostars Hotel Excelsior, eurostarshotels.co.uk, from €112. Grand Hotel Santa Lucia, santalucia.it, from €125. Grand Hotel Vesuvio, vesuvio.it, from €124.

RESTAURANTS & BARS
Prices are for three courses and a half bottle of wine where applicable. Da Dora, ristorantedora.it, €35. Gino e Toto Sorbillo, sorbillo.it, from €16.70; no reservations. Gran Caffè Gambirinus, grancaffegambirinus.com, coffee from €1. La Bersagliera, labersagliera.it, from €27.50. L'Europeo Di Mattozzi, +39081-5521323, from €90. La Gorgonia, Procida, visitprocida.com, from €45. Ristorante Enoteca Cap'Alice, capalice.com, from €37. Ristorante Rosiello, ristoranterosiello.it, from €26. Trattoria Ciccio, trattoriadacciccio.it, from €70.

SITES, GALLERIES & MUSEUMS
Alfonso Artiaco, alfonsorartiaco.com. Fondazione Morra Greco, fondazione morragreco.com. Galleria Fonti, galleriafonti.it. Galleria Lia Rumma, liarumma.it. Madre, madrenapoli.it. Museo Archeologico Nazionale, museoarcheologiconapoli.it. Museo Cappella Sansevero, museosansevero.it. Museo e Real Bosco di Capodimonte, museocapodimonte.beniculturali.it. Palazzo Sanfelice, +39333-619-3780. Sophia Seymour's walking tours, lookingforflora.com. Studio Trisorio, studiotorisario.com. Teatro di San Carlo, teatrosancarlo.it. Thomas Dane Gallery, thomasdanegallery.com. Villa Oplontis, Torre Annunziata, pompeisites.org.

SHOPS
Camiceria Piccolo, camiceriapiccolo.com. E Marinella, emarinella.com. Gay-Odin, antica cioccolateria_gay-odin.it. M Cilento & Fratello, cilenoto1780.it. Rubinacci, marianorubinacci.net. Sartoria Pirozzi, sartoriapirozzi.com.

HOW TO GET THERE
British Airways (ba.com) flies twice daily from London Gatwick from £25 each way.

you can choose from hundreds of fabrics and they do monogramming, though you need a few days. Of course, Naples is the home of men's tailoring. Mariano Rubinacci is the most famous, but I'd also say to go to Sartoria Pirozzi for the way they fashion a relaxed silhouette, sculpting around the shape of the shoulder and tailoring well in at the sides.

People are proud to be Neapolitan, because they know their city is extraordinary. It is sometimes defined by its difficult times – the post-unification period in the 1800s, when everything was directed north to Rome, then the bombing during the war and the devastating earthquake in 1980. But to me Naples is filled with hope and possibility. The sheer beauty of the bay, the richness of its architecture, and the vitality of the people – it's unique for these things. ✦ AS TOLD TO FIONA MCCARTHY