

Sailing the Amalfi Coast

By Peggy Newland

I'm living La Dolce Vita on my way to Positano in the back of a motoscafi as waves from the Tyrrhenian Sea soak my hair and face and I've never been happier. Pastel colored villas, or casa a schiera, dot the terraced landscape like multicolored jewels, and coved beaches beckon. After we curve past the rocks of Scoglio dell'Isca, the "fishing village" appears—showing off a seaside lined with striped umbrellas, outdoor cafes, and brightly colored barca. Miniscule roadways and walking paths rise up cliffs, and everything seems to be covered in bougainvillea.

I'm on a weeklong sail on the Star Flyer, part of the Star Clipper fleet, and "she's" an elegant, four-masted barquentine beauty. With teak decks, two pools, grouped cushioned chairs, an Edwardian library, nautically themed dining room, and a romantic piano lounge, you can sail in style past the cliff towns of Italy. Rooms are outfitted in shades of blue and gold,

and the private bathroom is comfortably cozy. Our port-hole gives us a seaside window view, with beds facing the tide.

My friend, Jenny, and I pop out of the motoscafi, and head straight onto the pathways of this “artist-mecca” village full of shops, cafes, and beautiful gardens surrounding layered villas. As we hike higher and higher, the turquoise waters of the Mediterranean shine below, with beaches full of swimmers floating in the sea. We find a café and enjoy local pinot grigios before heading down to swim.

Back in time for happy hour on the open-air Tropical deck, Jenny and I watch the crew as they hoist the sails for sunset. Then we head over to our favorite perch—the bowsprit. With hammock-style netting forward of the bow, we are cocooned above the sea. One guest climbs the rigging to the Crow's Nest for 360-degree views of the Amalfi Coast, but Jenny and I stay put, relaxing in our nautical webbed lounge before dinner.

"I feel like a celebrity," Jenny says, as we finish our prosecco.

That night is White Night, one of the many themes for this week, and we'll all wear various shades of white for deck-side dancing after dinner.

Dinner is always festive as the dining room bell rings and the appetizers are shared. My choices are usually the fresh fish dishes from the a la carte three-to-four course menu. Italian wines are plentiful as is the laughter of new-found friends in the open seating main room. A couple celebrates fifty years of marriage one night while another gets engaged, and birthdays abound, table-to-table, all accompanied by waiters with guitars, and the whole room singing and clapping of hands. White Night is Jenny's 60th birthday, and we gorge on lobster tails, Chateaubriand steaks, shrimp cocktails, and of course, Jenny gets the singing waiters and a huge molten lava chocolate cake.

"We love to celebrate here," our waiter smiles.

That night, with sails lit in spotlight, and stars heavy in the sky, we dance to classic 80's tunes, Frank Sinatra, jazz and blues. Moonlight shines on our white outfits.

"I can't think of a better place to have a birthday," Jenny says.

We've already sailed down to Sicily, to the island of Lipari, with its black stone beaches and tiny, twisting alleyways through classic stacked appartamenti, and Messina, a cathedral town situated near the toe of Italy's boot. And now we are heading to Capri, the jewel of crested rocks and hidden beaches of the "rich and famous."

"Like us," Jenny jokes.

We are anchored off the coast of Sorrento, a cliffside town with swanky beach clubs lining the harbor, and a central piazza with its twisting lanes and streetside cafes. We decide to tour this town after Capri. Jenny and I jump onto the Star Flyer's orange "tender" that looks

like a submarine mixed with a Boston Duck boat to the harbor where we find a hydrofoil that will taxi us to Capri.

Cruising the Bay of Naples, with the rise of Monte Solaro and the ports of Marina Grande and Marina Piccola in the distance, Capri is a scene from a movie, with its azure skies matching azure water. Once docked, we head straight for the funicular, so that we can hike the lush countryside and walking paths of Anacapri, almost 500 feet above sea level. We bypass the Hermes, Gucci and Dior shops, and instead stroll flower-bedecked pathways along the perimeter of the island. We hike part of the Pizzolungo coastal path for views of the Farglioni rocks, deep ravines, rocky ledges and monolithic sea stacks full of careening sea birds. Lemon essence erba ce-

tra permeates the air. After discovering Via Tragara—a nook of grape vines, roses, and lemon groves—we take the funicular back down to the beaches and nosh on pasta al limone.

The hydrofoil returns us to Sorrento, and we take our time walking the winding alleyways, peeking into the Cathedral of the Saints and the cliffside St. Francis Church. Touring food and spice stalls near Piazza Sant' Antonino, we plan menus back home, utilizing lemon rock salts, dried porcini, fennel seed, oregano.

"I could just live here," Jenny says.

After another celebratory dinner of linguine Amalfi, fresh herbed salads, local wines, and flaming baked Alaska, we head to the deck for starlight, sea breezes and some amaretto on the rocks.

The last day is spent swimming on the deserted

if you go

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