

Naples, Italy. This isn't the Disneyland version of Italy that you find in most of the tourist hotspots. It's gritty, chaotic, "real". If you've ever been to Hanoi, Vietnam, it's a very similar feel. Small, winding alleyways, constant honking of horns and scooters zipping around traffic. Alive.

Naples is a city often overlooked by tourists, or used as a launching point for Capri or Pompeii. Naples should be more than just a quick stop to eat some of the world's best pizza. It's one of the oldest continuously inhabited urban areas in the world, and there are endless things to keep one occupied. During my husband and my month-long stay in Naples, we barely made a dent in that list.

Below are some of our favorites from our time in Naples. Hopefully you'll come to love the city as much as we did!

Museums

- Chiesa di Sant'Aspreno ai Crociferi – Jago Museum
- Museo Archeologico Nazionale di Napoli (MANN)
- Palazzo Reale di Napoli
- Museo Cappella Sansevero
- Gallerie d'Italia
- Pio Monte della Misericordia
- Complesso Monumentale Donnaregina - Museo Diocesano Napoli
- Certosa di San Martino
- Castel Sant'Elmo
- Galleria Borbonica

Neighborhoods

- Centro Storico
- Quartieri Spagnoli
- Chiaia
- Vomero
- Rione Sanità

Day Trips

- Ischia & Procida
- Caserta

Artecard

- Naples 3 Day - €27
- Campania 3 Day - €41
- Campania 7 Day - €43
- Campania 365 Gold Pass - €50
- Campania 365 Lite - €26

Museums

Chiesa di Sant'Aspreno ai Crociferi – Jago Museum

Rione Sanità

Born in the late 80s, Jago is considered the modern-day Michelangelo, putting a modern twist on classical style sculptures. This was by far our favorite museum in Naples, and one that may be overlooked as it's slightly outside the center of Naples, in this historic Rione Sanità neighborhood. Inspired by, and dedicated to, the regeneration of the neighborhood, Jago chose the 17th-century Baroque Church of Sant'Aspreno ai Crociferi as his new workshop. Spending much of the pandemic creating the space, the museum officially opened in mid-2023 to the public.

Entrance to the [Jago Museum](#) also comes with access to San Severo fuori le mura (San Severo outside the walls), where Jago's famous Veiled Son, inspired by the Veiled Christ of Giuseppe Sammartino, resides.

San Severo fuori le mura is located close to two of Naples catacombs, [Catacombs of San Gennaro](#) and [Catacombs of San Gaudioso](#). While they aren't specifically called out in this article, or as large as the ones in Rome, they are worth a visit. A ticket (purchased within the past 12 months) from the Jago Museum will give you a discount at both of the Catacombs. A discount to the Catacombs is also available through the [Artecard](#).

Museo Archeologico Nazionale di Napoli (MANN)

Rione Sanità | [Artecard](#)

This is one of the most famous and visited museums in Italy, but for good reason. The Neoclassical building houses a large collection of Greek and Roman antiquities and is considered one of the world's most important collections of ancient art, and also houses the third most important Egyptian collection in the world.

While your time in Naples surely will include a trip to Pompeii, we recommend a visit to the [MANN](#) after so you have better context around artifacts and where they were prior to removal. Make sure you don't miss the "secret cabinet" containing exhibits of an erotic nature recovered from Pompeii and Herculaneum. Leave the kids behind for this one!

Tickets are valid for 48 hours after purchase, so you have time to deep dive if wanted.

Palazzo Reale di Napoli

San Ferdinando | [Artecard](#)

Located in the center of the city, in Piazza del Plebiscito, this [Palace](#) was built in 1600 to host King Philip III of Spain on an official visit to Naples...that never happened. It then became one of the House of Bourbon residences for nearly a century. After a fire in 1837, the Palace was restored and modernized.

The Palace combines Renaissance, Baroque and Neoclassical styles with 1200 rooms, over five floors. The grand entrance, with its marble double staircase, is the highlight of the Palace, and visitors also have access to the Royal Apartment, Theater, and the gardens overlooking the Gulf of Naples. The Royal Palace also contains the [National Library](#), and with its two million volumes, is one of the most important in Italy. The Library only recently reopened to the public without reservation, so ensure you double check times before you go.

The [San Carlo Theater](#) was once part of the palace, with a private entrance that led to the royal box, but is now the Opera House of Naples. It is possible to visit the theater, without attending a show, by booking a tour through the box office. These tours fill up quickly, and don't operate on performance days.

While in the Piazza del Plebiscito, also stop by the Basilica Reale Pontificia San Francesco da Paola, a Pantheon-style church filled with sculptures and paintings..

Museo Cappella Sansevero

Centro Storico

Another popular tourist destination in Naples, this Baroque chapel is a piece of art in itself. Though the main draw are the stunning, realistic sculptures, with the Veiled Christ being the most well-known. The crypt also houses "Anatomical Machines", glass cases with skeletons of a man and woman with their artery and vein systems exposed, and have become a bit of a legend themselves .

[Museo Cappella Sansevero](#) is extremely popular and has a max capacity that is reached most days. [Reservations](#) can be made in advance, and do sell out quickly. If you can't grab a ticket beforehand, they do have a one in, one out admission policy, so it's best to arrive well before opening to queue.

The chapel is small, but is art-dense, so we recommend renting the audio guide (~45min) so you don't miss anything. No photos are permitted in the chapel, but they provide hi-res photos online that you can download for personal use.

Gallerie d'Italia

Quartieri Spagnoli | [Artecard](#)

In the former headquarters of the Banco di Napoli, exhibits in the new HQ of the [Gallerie d'Italia](#) span from ancient to modern. The highlight is the Martyrdom of Saint Ursula, Caravaggio's final painting (1610). Keep an eye on the schedule for events and temporary exhibits hosted in the ground floor space. The gallery also is home to [Luminist](#), a fine-dining restaurant, and [Anthill](#), a cocktail and tapas bar, by award-winning Giuseppe Iannotti.

Pio Monte della Misericordia

Centro Storico | [Artecard](#)

This 17th-century, octagonal [chapel](#) contains another Caravaggio, *Le sette opere di Misericordia* (The Seven Acts of Mercy, 1606). It is considered by many to be the most important painting in Naples and inspired contemporary artworks that are also on display in the chapel. Above the chapel is a historic apartment now used as a gallery containing artwork and furniture by the greatest masters of the 17th-century Neapolitan school as well as a newer, contemporary art section.

Complesso Monumentale Donnaregina - Museo Diocesano Napoli

Centro Storico | [Artecard](#)

This [complex](#) houses the 14th-century church of Donnaregina Vecchia and the 17th-century church of Donnaregina Nuova and is known for their more than 300 religious works of art—which are not my favorite style of art. So why do I recommend this museum?? Simply for the beauty of the buildings.

The newer Donnaregina Nuova is opulent, decorated with marble and frescos. Visitors have access to the museum area upstairs, and can get a birds-eye view of the chapel from above.

The medieval Donnaregina Vecchia is accessed through a small cloister behind the Donnaregina Nuova. Upstairs, in the choir area of this smaller church, is a beautiful gilded wooden ceiling and significant 14th-century frescoes—the largest one preserved in the city of Naples.

Certosa di San Martino

Vomero | [Artecard](#)

Formerly a monastery, [Certosa di San Martino](#) is now a museum perched on top of the Vomero hill and one of the most visible landmarks in the city. The complex contains a beautiful chapel, a cemetery (with skull and bone-adorned railings!), cloisters and the museum area. There are also nice gardens to stroll through while admiring the views.

It's a grueling climb up the hill to the museum, so we recommend taking the funicular or Metro, however, the walk DOWN the hill is quite enjoyable as you look out over the Gulf of Naples and the city sprawling beneath you.

Castel Sant'Elmo

Vomero | [Artecard](#)

A [medieval fortress](#) adjacent to Certosa di San Martino on Vomero hill. While we didn't find the fortress itself particularly interesting, it was worth it just for the views!

Galleria Borbonica

Quartieri Spagnoli | [Artecard](#)

Once you are tired of traditional museums and art, or if you are looking for a reprieve from the weather, [Galleria Borbonica](#) is the place to go. It's an ancient underground passage built using the city's ancient aqueducts. It was constructed for military purposes in the 1800s to connect the Royal Palace to military barracks; however, two years after work began the fall of the Bourbon dynasty caused construction to come to a halt. Post-Bourbon dynasty, the tunnels were used as a military hospital, a bomb shelter during World War II, and then became a warehouse for impounded vehicles and dumping grounds from the 1940s until the 1960s. Today, the tunnels are filled with debris, artifacts and vintage cars from its prior use.

There are four different tours available through the tunnels. Only the "standard route" is available for discounts with the [ArteCard](#)

Neighborhoods

Naples has an unfairly bad reputation of being a dangerous city. Many visitor's first, and possibly only, impression of the city is the area surrounding the main train station. Once you venture out of this part of town, you'll find that Naples has many unique and beautiful areas to explore.

Below are our favorite neighborhoods in Naples and a few of the places we loved in each one. All of these neighborhoods are easily accessible by the Metro, but Naples is a compact city and it's easy to walk between each.

Centro Storico

A quick 15 minute walk from the central train station, this is where the majority first-time visitors to Naples will stay. It's the heart of the city made up of narrow roadways that were laid over 3,000 years ago. This is where the majority of your sightseeing will take place and, we didn't forget, some of the city's best pizza!

Things to See/Do

[Chiesa di San Domenico Maggiore](#)

[Duomo di Napoli](#)

[Chiesa del Gesù Nuovo](#)

[Complesso Monumentale di Santa Chiara](#)

Eats

[L'Antica Pizzeria da Michele](#) - considered the birthplace of pizza.

[Gino e Toto Sorbillo](#) - also considered the birthplace of pizza

[Pizzeria I Decumani](#) - large selection of Neapolitan pizza

[Franco Gallifuoco Pizzeria](#) - just outside Napoli Centrale, a modern take on Neapolitan pizza

[Januarius](#) - nicer restaurant with great charcuterie and wine list

[La Locanda Gesù Vecchio Civico 4](#) - Michelin-guide restaurant

[Decumano 31 il cuoppo ed altro](#) - the best Cuoppo Napoletano (cones filled with fried foods) we had in Naples

[Cala la Pasta](#) - fast casual pasta restaurant

[Lubrano Gaetano](#) - butcher shop offering charcuterie boards and wine by the galss

[Scaturchio](#) - wide variety of Neapolitan pastries

[Sfogliatelle Attanasio](#) - pastry shop known for their Sfogliatelle

Drinks

[Il Birraiuolo](#) - craft beer bar

[OAK Napoli Wine and Craft Beer](#) - craft beer bar

[Blind Pig - Hideout and Drinkery](#) - craft beers, wines and cocktails. Great for aperitivo.

[Archeobar - Negroneria Napoletana](#) - neighborhood cocktail bar offering dozens of negroni variations

[Libreria Berisio](#) - book shop/cocktail bar

[Carafa della Spina](#) - beer bar specializing in German beers

Quartieri Spagnoli

Said to be Naples' most authentic neighborhood. For many years it was an area to avoid, but has become one of the more visited neighborhoods in the city. The best way to explore is with no plan, just wandering up and down the narrow streets.

Things to See/Do

[Galleria Umberto I](#) - beautiful public shopping gallery

[Pignasecca Market](#) - outdoor food and goods market

[Maradona Mural](#) - tribute to Naples most famous footballer

[Toledo Metro Station](#) - one of the many "art stations" in Naples. It's said to be the most beautiful metro station in Europe

Eats

[Pizzeria Da Attilio](#) - known for its star-shaped, ricotta-stuffed pizzas

[Gran Caffè Gambrinus](#) - elegant, 19th-century coffee house known for their pastries. Expect to pay more to sit at a table.

Drinks

[Apoteca Winebar](#) - alleyway wine bar with good aperitivo

[Na Beer](#) - craft beer bar

Chiaia

An upscale district along the waterfront, Chiaia has some of the city's trendiest shops, bars, and restaurants.

Things to See/Do

[Lungomare di Chiaia](#) - 2.5km park along the bay

[Museo Pignatelli](#) - museum with 19th-century furniture and art

[Palazzo delle Arti Napoli](#) - contemporary art museum

[Palazzo Mannajuolo](#) - one of the city's finest examples of Italian art nouveau architecture

Eats

[Prosciutteria Napoli TDV](#) - meats, cheeses and wine

[George](#) - fine dining, two-star Michelin restaurant

[Veritas](#) - fine dining, one-star Michelin restaurant

[Pescheria Mattiucci](#) - seafood restaurant

Drinks

[Twins - Cocktail Wine Coffee](#) - cocktail and wine bar

[L'Antiquario](#) - two time World's 50 Best Bars winner

[Misture Cocktail Bar](#) - cocktail bar

[Soul Kafe](#) - great aperitivo

Vomero

A calm, upper class neighborhood on top of a hill overlooking the city. A quick escape from the bustling intensity of the city below. Come as dusk to watch the sun set over the Gulf of Naples

Things to See/Do

[Mercato di Antignano](#) - food and clothes market

[Villa Floridiana Park](#) - large park overlooking the Gulf of Naples

Eats

[Fermo Pizza](#) - pizza by the slice

[Vomero Fried Food](#) - known for their fried dishes

[Archivio Storico - Cocktail Bar & Wonderfood](#) - upscale restaurant with wine and cocktails

Drinks

[Loop - Officina della Birra](#) - brewpub

[Hoppy Ending](#) - craft beer bar

[Ventimetriquadri - Specialty Coffee](#) - espresso bar

[Nineteen 19 Cocktail Bar](#) - cocktail bar

Rione Sanità

Just outside the city center this neighborhood is going through a renaissance, but without forgetting its past. It was even named to *Time Out's* "The 51 Coolest Neighbourhoods in the World" in 2022.

Things to See/Do

[Orto Botanico di Napoli](#) - botanical gardens

[Palazzo dello Spagnolo](#) & [Palazzo Sanfelice](#) - old palaces known for the architecture. Can only view from the outside.

[Catacombs of Saint Gennaro](#) and [Saint Gaudioso](#) - underground paleo-Christian burial sites

Eats

[Pizzeria Concettina ai Tre Santi](#) - Michelin Guide Neapolitan pizza

[Siamo Frittendo per te](#) - Cuoppo Napoletano

Drinks

[Antica Cantina Sepe](#) - neighborhood bar, mostly spilling onto the sidewalks, where locals come to fill their plastic jugs with red wine from big tanks

[The Florist Bar](#) - coffee shop, cafe and cocktail bar by the botanical gardens

Day Trips

Everyone knows about Pompei and the island of Capri, and while they are still on the don't-miss list (though, I could argue that Capri is over touristed, expensive and crowded. I highly recommend a [private boat tour](#) if you do go.), here are some alternatives if you are looking at beating the crowds or getting a more authentic experience.

Ischia & Procida

Both of these islands in the Gulf of Naples are easily accessible from Naples, and each other, by ferries that run multiple times per day. Once on the islands, they are easily navigable by the local bus system or taxis. While each island could be visited as their own day trip, or even better, spend a night or two on each island to get to know them more in depth.

Ischia

The larger of the two islands, actually larger than Capri, Ischia is a popular destination for its natural thermal spas. These are not your typical spas that you may have visited in other parts of the world; they're like amusement parks for adults. We visited [Giardini Poseidon](#) on the west side of Ischia, but there are over 30 different thermal spas across the island. Poseidon is the largest, with over 20 pools ranging from freezing to hot, a wellness center, kids area, indoor pools, access to a private beach and varying restaurants and bars (don't miss the tucked away Grotta del vino!). You could easily spend all day here.

There are many boat companies that offer private or shared tours around the islands. We chose [Alcione](#), a family-run business, and had an unforgettable 8 hours on board swimming, dancing, eating (so much eating!!) and drinking. La bella vita!

Procida

Under two square miles, this tiny island has mostly flown under the tourist radar, but in 2022 was named Italy's Capital of Culture. It may be best recognizable from *The Talented Mr. Ripley*. Filled with pastel-colored fishing villages, black sand beaches and amazing sunsets, it's the place to vacation like a local.

Caserta

Less than an hour by train from Naples, Caserta is best known for the Reggia di Caserta (Royal Palace) and best pizza...in the world!

The [Royal Palace](#) was constructed in the 18th century as the main home for the House of Bourbon-Two Sicilies. It is the largest former royal residence in the world at 1,490,000 sq ft and over 1,200 rooms. Which, to most people's surprise, is much bigger than Versailles! The palace also sits on a 3.3km park containing beautiful English gardens, a lake, complex fountains and waterfalls. You can choose to walk, hire a horse and buggy, or, as we did, rent an ebike to cruise through the park. Allow at least an hour each (more if you want to explore in-depth) for both the palace and the gardens. If you visit on the weekend, be sure to check out the Court Theater.

While both were closed during our visit (Poor planning on our part...we didn't know about these until after!), Caserta is home to two of the Top Pizza in the World winners. 2023's [I Masanielli](#) (tied with [10 Diego Vitagliano Pizzeria](#) in the suburbs of Naples) and 2018's [Pepe in Grani](#).

Artecard

The [Artecard](#) is a tourist pass that gives you access to more than 80 cultural sites across Naples and the Campania region. If you plan on visiting multiple sites during your time in Naples, this card can save you tremendous amounts of money. In all of our travels a tourist card like this has never made sense financially, or would force us to rush and see everything within a couple of days. The Artecard seemed too good to be true, but it's not!

There are [various versions](#) of the cards that you can purchase, each one and their benefits are listed below. If you are 18-25 years of age, there may also be a discounted version available. But let's take a quick look at how beneficial purchasing this card can be.

Most visitors plan on visiting, at least, Pompeii. A train ticket from Napoli Centrale to Pompeii is €3.30 each way and entry into Pompeii €22. At €28.60 it wouldn't make sense to purchase the Campania 3-Day pass. However, if you added on the Museo Archeologico Nazionale di Napoli (MANN), also €22, you've more than covered the cost of the pass.

I mentioned earlier in this article that Naples was a pretty walkable city, so having public transportation included wasn't a huge benefit in selecting our Artecard. And if you do take public transportation, with each ticket only costing a few Euros (and maxing out at €4.50/day) it's not a huge cost savings.

Since we were in Naples for a month, it made sense for us to purchase the Campania 365 Gold Pass. It gave us free access to 27 different sites, with reduced entry to dozens more. If you are someone who enjoys history and culture, a 365 Gold Pass may make sense for even a week in Naples. Or, the 365 Lite Pass is new this year and looks to even be a more economical option if you are short on time and just want to visit the big hitters (34 to select from). It's worth mapping out what you want to see and then comparing the costs to each of the passes available.

Naples 3 Day - €27

- Valid for 3 consecutive days after activation
- Enter 3 different sites of your choice in Naples
- Enter any additional sites at 50% off
- Unlimited travel by public transportations with Unicocampania

Campania 3 Day - €41

- Valid for 3 consecutive days after activation
- Enter 2 different sites of your choice in Naples and Campania
- Enter any additional sites at 50% off
- Unlimited travel by public transportations with Unicocampania
- Digital purchase only

Campania 7 Day - €43

- Valid for 7 consecutive days after activation
- Enter 5 different sites of your choice in Naples and Campania
- Enter any additional sites at 50% off

Campania 365 Gold Pass - €50

- Valid for 365 consecutive days after activation
- Visit for free, any site on the list, 2x a year
- Enter any additional site at a savings of up to 50% off

Campania 365 Lite - €26

- Valid for 365 consecutive days after activation
- Enter each site included in the pass 1x for free

**information accurate at time of publication, please double check prices and rules/regulations before purchasing. Also check individual sites and museums for updated pricing vs what may be reflected on Artec card's website.*