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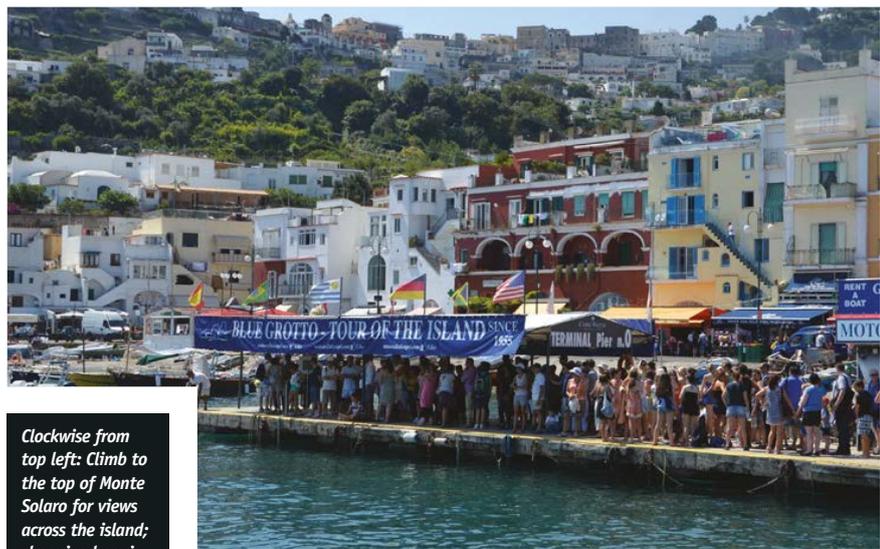
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Issue 183
February
2020 £4.99

Issue 183 February 2020 DISCOVER CAPRI • OFF-GRID IN ABRUZZO • PHOTOGRAPHING VENICE • FOUR TAKES ON CHOCOLATE • JAMES BOND DRINK TALKS

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DISCOVER ITALIA!



Clockwise from top left: Climb to the top of Monte Solaro for views across the island; shopping here is rarely cheap but always fun; view of the Marina Grande as you arrive; fishing boats in the Marina Grande; the turquoise sea; Eco Capri is a celebration of the work of artist Letizia Cerio; the view from Anacapri; the garden at the Villa San Michele; boat tours to the Blue Grotto





48 HOURS ON...

Capri

Laura Thayer delves into the artistic side of Capri to discover why this photogenic island is more than just a pretty face

Arriving on a nearly packed ferry, surrounded by cameras and phones snapping away to capture the view, it's impossible to underestimate the popular appeal of this tiny island off the coast of the Sorrentine peninsula, not far from Naples. This is one of the most popular travel destinations in Italy and I never expect my experience here to be a solitary one.

Yet it's precisely this enduring appeal that fascinates me, as it's not just today's travellers that have been drawn here: Capri has attracted visitors for as long as history can recall. While the island's popularity may seem a modern invention, the call of Capri has deep roots. In 29 BC, for example, Octavian, soon to be the Roman emperor Augustus, arrived on Capri and was so taken by its natural beauty that he gave the island of Ischia to Naples in exchange for it.

Approaching the island's port of Marina Grande, I step outside onto the front deck of the ferry and gaze up at the sheer cliffs. It's an imposing and captivating sight. There's just something about this place that has always been impossible to resist.

From the Marina Grande port, a funicular train leads up to Capri town. At the top, I go with the flow of people spilling out onto a terrace and stop to look up at the Torre dell'Orologio. Locals consider this bell tower with its majolica-tiled clock to be the symbol of Capri. ➤

Images by Laura Thayer



DISCOVER ITALIA!

WHAT TO SEE AND DO

GIARDINI DI AUGUSTO 1

Via Matteotti 2, 80076 Capri

☎ +39 081 837 0686

These lovely gardens were created in the late 1800s by German industrialist Friedrich Alfred Krupp, who also built the impressive zig-zagging pathway nearby that leads down to the sea. The terraced gardens are planted with typical Capri and Mediterranean plants and offer a fine view over the nearby Certosa di San Giacomo and to the Faraglioni rocks. €1

CERTOSA DI SAN GIACOMO 2

Via Certosa 1, 80073 Capri

www.polomusealecampania

.beniculturali.it

Built in the late 14th century, this grand Carthusian monastery is one of the island's most peaceful spots. The complex includes an impressive large cloister and a smaller cloister, a church with historic frescoes, and a museum dedicated to the works of German artist Karl Wilhelm Diefenbach, who lived on Capri for 12 years. €6

CENTRO CAPRENSE IGNAZIO CERIO 3

Piazzetta Cerio 5, 80076 Capri

www.centrocaprense.org

Overlooking the Piazzetta in a 14th-century palazzo, this cultural centre is dedicated to Capri's history. Inside you'll find a library and museum with an extensive collection that tells the story of the island's natural history, including paleontological and archaeological finds. Make the effort to climb to the rooftop terrace for its views of the Piazzetta. €3

CHIESA MONUMENTALE DI SAN MICHELE 4

Piazza San Nicola, 80071 Anacapri

www.chiesa-san-michele.com

Behind the white baroque façade of this small church lies an incredibly detailed, hand-painted majolica tiled floor depicting Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. Admire all the creatures of the garden while walking around the church floor perimeter and then climb the spiral staircase to the upper level for a full view. €2

VILLA SAN MICHELE 5

Viale Axel Munthe 34, 80071 Anacapri

www.villasanmichele.eu

Surrounded by an expansive garden, this villa was the home of noted Swedish writer and doctor Axel Munthe. Visit the house museum and stroll through the gardens dotted with sculptures to the overlook with a statue of a sphinx and outstanding view over Capri and the Gulf of Naples. The estate was willed to the Swiss government and actively promotes the interchange of writers, researchers, and artists between Switzerland and Italy. €8



View over the Piazzetta, the centre of life in Capri town



The waterfront at the Marina Grande



More shopping opportunities

DON'T MISS

CAPRI FROM THE SEA

One of the best vantage points for experiencing Capri's natural beauty is from the sea. Whether you enjoy a private boat excursion, join a group boat tour, or even rent a boat and explore on your own, do find time to get out on the water. Laser Capri offers a group tour around the island that can be combined with a visit to the Grotta Azzurra. From €15 per person. Laser Capri ☎ +39 081 837 5208 www.lasercapri.com

Just beyond is the heart of town, the tiny yet very busy little piazza referred to as *La Piazzetta*. Here you'll find pieces of all aspects of Capri life in one flamboyant jumble.

Climbing a small flight of steps from the Piazzetta, I crane my neck to look up at the bright white façade of the Chiesa di Santo Stefano. Built in the late 17th century, the baroque interior is flooded with light that seems only appropriate for Capri.

The Palazzo Cerio offers a unique glimpse into Capri's history and artistic tradition

Before leaving the church, I stop to see the marble details in the altar area that came from Roman-era villas on the island.

Overlooking the Piazzetta, the Palazzo Cerio dates back to the 14th century and offers a unique glimpse into Capri's history and artistic traditions. Inside is the Centro Caprense Ignazio Cerio, a real Capri treasure, where I like to peer into the display cases holding

archeological, paleontological and natural finds from the island. At the top of the museum is a terrace offering a bird's eye view over the Piazzetta below.

Letizia Cerio was one of Capri's most celebrated artists. Images of her Capri swirl through my mind as I wander down Via Vittorio Emanuele, a street lined with boutiques, each more elegant than the last. This is where local

traditions, such as the making of handmade sandals, stand alongside the biggest names in international fashion. Yet on this occasion I am heading in a different direction for a moment of calm and reflection at the Certosa di San Giacomo.

QUIET MOMENTS IN CAPRI

Built in the 14th century as a Carthusian monastery, the church's cloisters and long corridors have



The Museo Diefenbach at the Certosa



Salvatore Federico in his gallery



The Faraglioni from Giardini di Agosto



La Certosa di San Giacomo, a chance for quiet and reflection

long been silent. In the grand cloister, time seems to stand still. Before leaving, I spend a moment taking in the tumultuous scenes of the German painter Karl Wilhelm Diefenbach (1851-1913).

Arriving on Capri in 1901, Diefenbach stayed here, painting scenes often inspired by Capri's beauty, until his death in 1913. These grand, stark white rooms are the perfect setting to admire the large scale of the often dark paintings of Diefenbach before

stepping back out into the bright and airy bougainvillea-hued streets of Capri.

Next I follow the signs leading to the Giardini di Augusto, the Gardens of Augustus. While the gardens never actually belonged to the Roman emperor, it's hard to imagine that he wouldn't have enjoyed them, or the picture-perfect views of the Faraglioni they afford. The Faraglioni are the formation of three rocks jutting out of the sea, with a hole through the central rock

where boats cruise through. I watch them come and go as I dodge in and out of the way of photos. (Of course, though it may be quiet here, you won't be the only one with the idea of stopping for photos.)

I peer over the edge of the terrace down to the zig-zag Via Krupp, a scenic walkway (now closed) that leads down to the tempting turquoise sea below. But I've set my sights high and am off to the island's other town.

ARTISTIC ANACAPRI

To delve a little deeper into Capri's historic and artistic side, I'm heading to the higher part on the island's western side to the town called Anacapri. I set off first for Villa San Michele, once the home of the Swiss doctor and writer Axel Munthe (1857-1949).

His home has been transformed into a museum where I read more about his life and work before stepping out into the gardens. A pergola-covered pathway leads to a tiny lookout point with a spectacular view over Marina Grande below ➤

DON'T MISS

LA GROTTA AZZURRA
The Blue Grotto is one of Capri's most popular sights. The experience of being whisked inside on a small rowing boat and seeing the electric blue water is an exhilarating one. Be prepared for a long wait and a high ticket price. The entrance is small and access is dependent on the weather and sea conditions. Motoscafisti di Capri ☎ +39 081 837 5646 www.motoscafisti-capri.com €14 entrance, boat transfer from €15 per person.



Shade in the garden at Villa San Michele

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WHERE TO STAY

HOTEL LUNA 5

Viale Giacomo Matteotti 3, 80073 Capri
www.lunahotel.com

In the centre of Capri, near the Giardini di Augusto and the Certosa di San Giacomo. Splurge for a Deluxe room to enjoy views of the Faraglioni from your own terrace.

HOTEL CANASTA 7

Via Campo di Teste 6, 80076 Capri
www.hotelcanastacapri.it

This 15-room boutique hotel has recently been remodelled and features a blend of classic décor and crisp design. To enjoy a sea view, go for one of the Superior rooms.

CASA MARIANTONIA 8

Via Giuseppe Orlandi 180, 80071 Anacapri
www.casamariantonia.com

Just a short stroll from Anacapri's main sights, this lovely hotel offers comfortably furnished rooms set among a lemon grove.

IL GIARDINO DELL' ARTE 9

Traversa la Vigna 32b, 80071 Anacapri
www.giardinocapri.com

This charming B&B has a decidedly artistic atmosphere throughout its five bright and beautifully decorated rooms. Each has a terrace and views over the Gulf of Naples.

J.K. PLACE CAPRI 10

Via Marina Grande 225, 80076 Capri
www.jkcapri.com

Exquisite taste and fine views come together at this luxury property overlooking the Marina Grande. Considered to be one of Capri's finest addresses.

with the Sorrentine peninsula just beyond and Mount Vesuvius looming across the Gulf of Naples.

Just a few steps away from Villa San Michele, Salvatore Federico has a gallery (Via Capodimonte 58, Anacapri) of his paintings and drawings. Born on Capri, he started painting when he was only seven years old. Even after a lifetime spent capturing the island from all

angles and in all seasons, he is still continually searching for the next moment of inspiration.

My next stop is to see one of the island's artistic gems. While the Chiesa di San Michele Arcangelo is not a large church, inside is a majolica-tiled floor completely covered with an ornate scene of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. Created in 1761 by Leonardo

The tradition of ceramics on the island isn't just for the history books



La Chiesa di San Michele Arcangelo

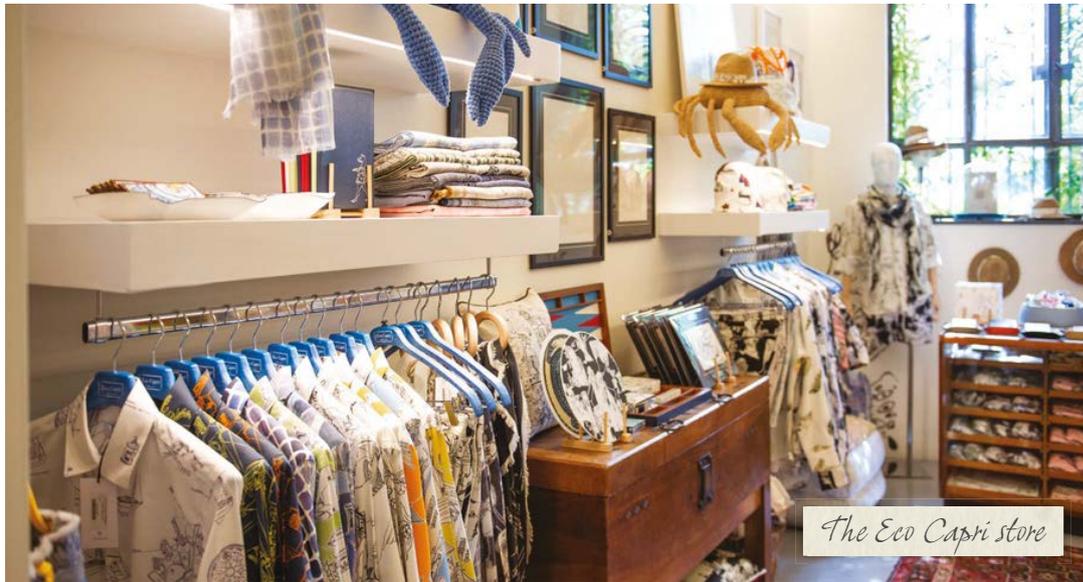
Chiaiese, a master ceramic artist from Naples, it's fascinating to walk around the viewing platform along the edges (you can't walk on the tiles!) and get lost in the scene jam-packed with creatures – including some intriguing 18th-century interpretations of exotic animals.

The tradition of ceramics on the island isn't just for the history books. I stop in Ceramiche Tavassi (Via Giuseppe Orlandi 129, Anacapri), where Gennaro Tavassi is at work painting at his studio in the back of the shop. I stop to admire the scene he's painting of a garden pergola and to chat about his designs and the Capri that inspires them. Inscribed above his

DON'T MISS

MONTE SOLARO

At 598 metres, the peak of Monte Solaro is Capri's highest point and the view from the top cannot be beaten. From here you can see all over the island and even enjoy a fine view of the Sorrentine peninsula and the Gulf of Naples. Capri Seggiovia runs a chairlift connecting Anacapri with the summit for €11, round trip. Seggiovia Monte Solaro, Via Caposcuoro, 10, Anacapri ☎ +39 081 837 1438 www.capriseggiovia.it



The Eco Capri store



Capri Shopping

Located in what was once the stable area for the Palazzo Cerio is one of Capri's most unique stores. Inside Eco Capri, the history and artistic style of the island come together to celebrate the work of Letizia Cerio, one of Capri's most captivating artists. Her creative designs, many of them inspired by things she saw on the island, are the basis for Eco Capri's custom line of clothing, accessories, and home décor – all of it imagined and brought to life by her grandson, Federico Alvarez de Toledo. Her original artwork on display in the store offers a special glimpse of the source of inspiration behind the beautifully crafted pieces.



While you can catch the sweet scent of the Carthusia perfume stores in many places around Capri, I always make time to visit their factory. Local legend has it that the first perfume to be created here was inspired by the nearby Certosa di San Giacomo, when a special bouquet of flowers given to the visiting Queen Giovanna d'Angiò in the 14th century created a sweetly infused scent. Today the production of perfumes, soaps, and home scents all takes place on Capri, with the island's many distinctive native plants inspiring the line of fragrances.



Carthusia perfume stores



DISCOVER ITALIA!

WHERE TO EAT

RISTORANTE MICHEL'ANGELO 11

Via Sella Orta 10, 80073 Capri

www.caprimichelangelo.com

Located near the Piazzetta, this is the spot to enjoy classic Capri dishes in a friendly setting. Capri local Gianluca D'Esposito and his Australian-born wife Holly Star are behind the magic here, from pasta made fresh daily to the excellent wine list. You'll want to visit more than once to try the pasta specialties, the wood fire oven cooked pizza, the Mozzarella Bar, and so much more. Or enjoy a cooking class with Gianluca and Holly to learn how to recreate iconic Capri recipes at home!

€ €

PESCHERIA LE BOTTEGHE 12

Via le Botteghe 19, 80076 Capri

www.pescherialebotteghe.it

This busy fish shop in the morning transforms into a dining spot for lunch and dinner with a casual bar-style setting. Of course, the freshest fish is guaranteed! A great spot near the Piazzetta to enjoy oysters or try their *crudo di pesce* (raw seafood) selection.

€ €

VILLA MARGHERITA 13

Via Campo di Teste 4, 80073 Capri

www.ristorantevillamargheritacapri.com

Set in a quiet area in Capri with an outdoor dining area below the olive trees, this restaurant is an excellent choice for lunch or dinner. Start with the grilled octopus served over an orange infused salad and follow with the house speciality of *fettucine* with red shrimp and lemon.

€ €

LA ZAGARA 14

Via Giuseppe Orlandi 180, 80071 Anacapri

www.casamariantonia.com

Dine among a lemon grove at this peaceful spot at the Casa Mariantonia. With the fresh scent of lemon in the air, this is a dreamy setting for enjoying classic Mediterranean flavours from the menu that is well balanced with seafood and meat options. The La Zagara wine bar is a good choice for local wine and charcuterie.

€ €

CAPRI ROOFTOP 15

Viale Giacomo Matteotti 7, 80073 Capri

www.caprirooftop.com

With the same fine views of the Faraglioni as the adjacent Giardini di Augusto, this rooftop bar is great for drinks during the day and is especially fine as the sun sets and the Capri nightlife begins. You can't go wrong with the menu of classic cocktails, or try their signature *luna caprese* drink made with limoncello, vodka, citrus and soda.

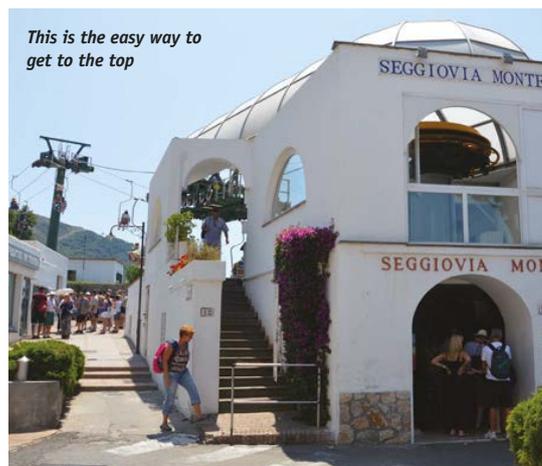
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Gennaro Tavassi creating ceramics in his workshop



Riding the Monte Solaro chairlift



This is the easy way to get to the top

workspace is a saying that in part reads: "When you buy something from an artist, you're not buying just one thing. You are buying a piece of a heart, a piece of a soul – a small piece of some else's life." When I look around Ceramiche Tavassi, I see ceramics inspired by a deep love of Capri.

Before leaving Capri, I have to visit the island's most panoramic spot. The Seggiovia Monte Solaro

through the clear turquoise sea sparkling in the sun as sea gulls float gently in the breeze.

THE VIEW FROM THE TOP

The beauty is quite intoxicating. Yet, as I look down over the island below, what strikes me most about Capri are the stories. These stories are a blend of the people who live here, the people who visit here and carry a piece of it with them, and

The sun bakes the pine trees and the sounds of Capri fall away behind

runs a chairlift to the top of Monte Solaro, the highest point on Capri. As the chairlift begins to climb up the mountain, I'm distracted at first by villas and gardens just below. Before long, the incline becomes steep and increasingly rugged.

The sun bakes the pine trees and the sounds of Capri fall away behind. Hopping off at the top, I hurry straight to the edge and catch my breath as I lean over and look down the sheer cliff to the sea far below. Boats cut their way

the people who arrive and can never quite leave again.

This, for me, is heart of Capri. Take time to listen to discover the island's history, experience the quiet yet inspiring natural beauty that's there just around the corner from bustling piazzas, and meet the people keeping the artistic tradition of Capri alive.

Then, just maybe, you'll see the Capri that captured my heart on my first visit 12 years ago and that keeps calling me back. ■

► **KEY TO RESTAURANT PRICES** (full meal per person, not including wine)
 € Up to €25
 € € € €26-€50
 € € € € More than €50