



Get ready for an unforgettable experience in a hilltop town that is still like Italy used to be before tourism arrived. GIOI (pronounced /dy) 4 hours drive south of Rome, is a place where one can relax, eat the unhurried and healthy Mediterranean style, drink the local wines while enjoying mingling with the friendly and welcoming local people.

One week travel program from Rome, to Gioi **September 22 to 29, 2019**

This preliminary plan is subject to revision according to the responses received from the participants. A firmer and detailed plan is expected to be finalized by January 2019 after the responses are in. Accommodations, including continental breakfast, will be in small charming hotels and in private houses throughout the town of Gioi. All lunches and dinners in Gioi will be served in restaurants or at private homes. These multi course meals are freshly prepared with locally grown organic traditional foods. Served in the Slow Food custom, they include wine and other beverages.

Sunday, Sep 22—Depart from Rome in a private small bus for a 4 hour journey to Gioi. One hour after leaving Rome, we stop for a quick snack and visit the Abbey of Monte Cassino founded by St. Benedict in the 5th Century. St. Benedict is the founder of western monasticism. The Abbey, since rebuilt, was virtually destroyed by bombing during WWII. Arrive in Gioi early evening, check into your accommodations and have a traditional southern Italian all inclusive, multi course dinner.

Monday, Sep 23—After breakfast, tour of the narrow streets of Gioi. Meet some of the locals. Enjoy the views from the *Catello*, the highest point in town, 2300 ft above sea level. At about 1pm, a slow 5 course *Pranzo* will be served. In the afternoon, visit the 15th Century Franciscan monastery and the rest of the town; have a drink, coffee or gelato at the local bars. Mingle with the locals in the main piazza before settling down for a light dinner.

Tuesday, Sep 24 —Excursion to the Greek archeological sight of Paestum and to the Vannulo mozzarella factory. Paestum has the best preserved temple of ancient Greece. Before the Romans, southern Italy was known as the Magna Grecia (The great Greece). The Paestum valley is also the birth place of mozzarella. Lunch will be in Paestum next to the Greek temples and a snack at the Vannullo establishment. Return to Gioi for drinks, dinner and to socialize with the locals.

Wednesday, Sep 25—Today we stay in Gioi with choices from these activities: Cooking lessons, painting lessons or hiking. For those interested in more cooking and painting lessons,

additional days can be scheduled in place of the excursions to the surrounding areas.

Thursday, Sep 26—Cilento Coast excursion with stops in *Pioppi* to visit the Convention Center where Dr. Ancel Keys promoted the Mediterranean diet. Continue on to the sea resorts of *San Marco* and *Santa Maria*. Drive up to *Castellabate* for lunch and enjoy the views from this hill top town overlooking the Mediterranean sea. Return to Gioi for drinks, dinner and to socialize with the locals.

Friday, Sep 27—Drive to the top of the Monte Sacro to visit the shrine to the *Madonna del Monte* and enjoy the views from the nearly 6000 foot elevation. This mountain top was a place of worship from ancient times before it was converted to Christianity. We will have lunch at the top if the restaurants are still open this late in the season. Otherwise, lunch will be at *Novi Velia*, the town below. As part of this excursion we can go to the popular town of *Vallo della Lucania* for shopping and pizza making lessons at *Pizza da Zero*.

Saturday, Sept 28—Visit the ghost town of *San Severino* and the sea resorts of *Palinuro* and *Camerota*. *San Severino* is an abandoned hill top village founded about a thousand years ago. *Palinuro* and *Camerota* are two beautiful seaside resorts on the Cilento south coast. From *Palinuro* we will take a boat ride and enter the blue grotto which is similar to the popular one in the island of Capri. Lunch will be in *Palinuro* or *Camerota*.

Sunday, Sep 29—Return back to Rome to fly home.

GIOI

Located in the heart of an area called *Cilento*, Gioi (pronounced **Joy**) is a forgotten jewel, loved by poets, deprived of tourists and labeled ‘**the land to be discovered**’ by main stream Italy. The Romans preferring the coastal area, did not go to the inner land. But, during the chaotic and lawless dark ages, over one thousand years ago, the coastal population took refuge and felt safe on the inner land hilltops like Gioi’s. They surrounded themselves with fortified walls and created this charming settlement that today is a peaceful and relaxing oasis. The town is a bit hard to reach through twisted mountain roads. It feels remote, but it is not that far: 4 hours drive from Rome, two hours from Naples and a bit less from the Amalfi coast. From Gioi on a clear day, one can see the island of Capri, 60 miles away as the crow flies.

Before coming to Gioi in September 2016, Rick and Nancee Swenssen had traveled throughout Italy, had stayed at the best hotels and dined at pricy restaurants; but after visiting Gioi, Nancee wrote: “**We will always cherish our time there with you and your friends. We are forever grateful for experiencing “the real” Italy**” Indeed, the Swensson’s discovered in Gioi the true hospitable Italy as it once was, with the best cuisine and no annoying tourists.



Sacro Monte



Sacro Monte as seen from Gioi

Once the site of a pagan temple to the Greek goddess Hera, it is now a shrine to Our Lady of the Sacro Monte and visited annually by a multitude of pilgrims



Church of Our Lady of the Sacro Monte

from every town in the Cilento ever since the 1300s. The mountain top, 5600 foot high, was also a refuge by Byzantine monks in the 10th century.

Palinuro and Camerota



The two scenic sea side resorts of *Palinuro* and *Camerota*, along the Cilento south coast are overrun with summer tourism, but not in late September when the weather is still pleasant.

Mediterranean Diet



Convention center in the town of *Pioppi* along the Cilento North Coast where Dr. Ancel Keys and his wife Margaret conceived and promoted the health benefits of the Mediterranean Diet.



San Severino



Ghost towns in the western United States, like Calico in the Mojave Desert in California, are usually abandoned mining settlements. *San Severino* in the *Cilento*, is different. Nothing was ever mined at the top of the hill where the village was founded during the dark ages more than one thousand years ago. Like Gioi and other medieval hilltop towns in the *Cilento*, its inaccessibility was chosen as a defensive measure against invasions. In the 20th century, during more peaceful times and without roads, reachable only by hiking trails, its inaccessibility became a hindrance and the residents of San Severino gradually moved to other locations down the hill. The last resident of the hilltop-town was an elderly woman who left (or perhaps died) in 1966.



Paestum



Paestum and *Velia* were two thriving Greek coastal settlements in the *Cilento* area, less than one hour drive from Gioi. The populations of *Velia*, further to the south, abandoned their homes vulnerable to attacks from the sea during the dark ages and settled in more secure hilltop locations in the interior, like *Gioi* and *Novi Velia* that literally means new *Velia*.

Paestum was also abandoned for various reasons, and like *Velia*'s, the residents relocated to the higher elevations away from the sea. Eventually both *Paestum* and *Velia* were occupied by the Romans and both archeological sites include Greek and Roman remains.

In 1943, *Paestum* was the landing site of a WWII American invasion.

In addition to the Greek and Roman outdoor ruins, *Paestum* has a must see museum housing artifacts of Greek and native *Cilento* origins.



Average price for the week, all inclusive **\$2500** per person.
Exact individual price will be determined at signing up.

For more information on the itinerary, please call or text :

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