

# GUIDE TO THE ANCIENT MONUMENTS OF THE ISLAND OF CAPRI



AZIENDA AUTONOMA DI CURA, SOGGIORNO E TURISMO OF THE ISLAND OF CAPRI



*Villa Jovis.*



*Villa di Damecuta.*



*Grotta di Matermania.*



*Scala fenicia.*

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AZIENDA AUTONOMA  
DI CURA, SOGGIORNO  
E TURISMO  
OF THE ISLAND OF CAPRI



*Capri from Punta Campanella*



*Lithic industry from Quisisana.  
"Ignazio Cerio" Museum.*



*Remains of a bear (Ursus spelaeus).  
"Ignazio Cerio" Museum.*



*Mammoth tooth (Mammuthus chosaricus).  
"Ignazio Cerio" Museum.*

## History

Although rather poorly documented by ancient authors, the history of Capri involves many characters of notable importance. The island was frequently despoiled and plundered, however, so far no systematic archaeological research has been carried out.

### The Palaeolithic

Evidence of human inhabitation of the island of Capri dates back to the Lower Palaeolithic (approximately 400,000 years ago). In fact, excavation of the area near the Hotel Quisisana in 1905 unearthed articles made in stone and the remains of continental fauna (including *elephas antiquus*) - proof that Capri was once joined to the mainland Sorrento peninsula.

### From the Neolithic to the arrival of the Greeks

Situated approximately 5 kilometres off Punta Campanella in a strategic position at the southern entrance to the Gulf of Naples, Capri broke away from the mainland to become an island approximately 10,000 years ago. Since then conditions have led to the development of a completely

independent island history.

The history of Capri between the 4<sup>th</sup> millennium BC and the 8<sup>th</sup> century BC - from the Neolithic until the founding of the Greek colony of Cumae (halfway through the 8<sup>th</sup> century BC) - shows that the island was part of an extensive system of maritime communications.

In fact, excavation of Grotta delle Felci has revealed imported ceramics and much use of a volcanic glass (obsidian) not naturally found on Capri (Capri is not a volcanic island) - proof that a network of connections with the Pontine archipelago and the Eolie Islands existed as far back as the 4<sup>th</sup> millennium BC.

It is difficult to establish the living conditions of the indigenous inhabitants of the island prior to the founding of the Greek colony of Cumae as no archaeological findings indicating the role of the Italic community before and after the arrival of the Greeks have yet been discovered.

### The name "Capri"

The name of the island derives from the name of its oldest Italic inhabitants - known to the Greeks



*Detail of the Greek Wall.*



*Funeral inscription in Greek.  
Capri, Soprintendenza Archeologica.*



*Fragment of terracotta head (3<sup>rd</sup> - 1<sup>st</sup> century BC).  
"Ignazio Cerio" Museum.*

as *Kaprie* and *Kapréai* and to the Romans as *Capreae*. Linguistic analysis refutes the Greek origin of the place name and considers the name "Capri" to derive from the language of the ancient Italic populations who settled in the area of the Gulf of Naples. The name makes reference to the goats (*capre*) which formed a characteristic aspect of the island landscape while identifying an important feature of the economy of the non-Greek community - goat farming, one of the few possible means of sustenance in an area with no space for crop cultivation and frequent water shortages.

### **Pre-Roman Capri**

Part of a network of systematic maritime contacts since the Neolithic, the island of Capri was surely known to the commercial traffic (Greek, Aegean and Oriental) which preceded and accompanied the founding and confirmation of the Greek colony of Cumae. However, although archaeological documentation sheds much light on these pre-colonial traffic flows with regard to the island of Ischia, little or nothing is known about the island of Capri.

The island was certainly occupied in the 7<sup>th</sup> century BC by the Greeks of Cumae and used as a station from which to control the traffic of the Gulf of Naples. The island of Ischia and Punta Campanella were also occupied and the same period also saw the founding of settlements such as Partenope and Pozzuoli.

Becoming part of the colony of the Greeks of Cumae in the 7<sup>th</sup> century BC, Capri gradually saw Greek communities settle alongside the indigenous population, although the island continued to be known by its Italic name.

The historian Strabo mentions the existence of two ancient cities which eventually become one single conglomerate.

The role and the function of the Greek community of Capri was reflected in a story by Virgil according to which the island was inhabited by the Teleboans, a mythological population of Greek pirates. The use of pirate fleets to control maritime movements encouraged the hypothesis that the specific function of the Greeks on the island of Capri was to control maritime traffic in the Gulf on behalf of the city of Cumae.

As from the 5<sup>th</sup> century BC, the



*Bronze coin with the head of Augustus from Villa di Gasto (22-30 AD). Capri, Soprintendenza Archeologica.*



*Altar dedicated to Cerere belonging to Hotel Palatium. Capri, Soprintendenza Archeologica.*



*Portrait of Livia the mother of Tiberius. "Ignazio Cerio" Museum.*

Greeks of Cumae left the island and Capri came under the jurisdiction of the Greek city of Neapolis - the future Naples.

### Augustus and Capri

Part of the territory of Neapolis, Capri was a political dependent of the city until the arrival of Octavian - the future Emperor Augustus.

Strabo recounts that in the years following the battle of Actium (31 BC), Octavian was so enchanted with Capri that he gave the Neapolitans the island of Ischia in exchange for his favourite island, making this latter his private property and beginning large-scale building work.

However, although the island of Capri remained the Emperor's favourite destination until his death in 14 AD, it never became his home.

History records the close relationship between Augustus and the island, its inhabitants and its traditions. In fact, Suetonius tells of the Emperor's habit of participating in parties organized by the island's youth and promoting an institution - the *ephebia* - of clearly Greek origin. Suetonius also confirms Augustus' interest in decorating

the villas of Capri with the bones of prehistoric animals and articles from ancient times - items probably found on Capri, given the importance of the island during prehistoric times, during the considerable building activity of the Emperor himself.

As the private property of the imperial family, the island's social and economic fabric underwent considerable change. In fact, ancient inscriptions show the presence of both emancipated slaves and statesmen following the Emperor.

However these social and economic changes were not accompanied by any transformation of the cultural profile. In fact, many inscriptions show that the Greek language continued to be used up until the 4<sup>th</sup> century AD.

### Tiberius on Capri

Unlike Augustus, Tiberius made the island of Capri his stable home for the whole decade between 27 AD and 37 AD - the year of his death at Misenum.

The story of Tiberius' cruelty and turpitude on Capri - a story which has had much success in stimulating the imagination of tourists ever since from the 19<sup>th</sup> century - was



*Lantern disc with ship from Villa di Gasto (1<sup>st</sup> century AD). Capri, Soprintendenza Archeologica.*



*Fragment of lantern disc with erotic scene from Villa di Gasto (1<sup>st</sup> century AD). Capri, Soprintendenza Archeologica.*



*Bronze theatre tile from Villa di Gasto (1<sup>st</sup> BC – 1<sup>st</sup> AD). Capri, Soprintendenza Archeologica.*



*Detail of sarcophagus of Crispina. Capri, ex-hotel Grotte Bleue.*

considerably influenced by his opponents (particularly the Senatorial aristocracy) who showed their disapproval of his choice to retire to Capri by inventing episodes of cruelty and licentiousness and exaggerating and altering news from Capri to provide a real and proper “noir”. Tiberius’ choice to retire to the island obviously coincided with a new policy according to which he was granted absolute power, cooperation with the Senate was terminated and Capri was raised to the position of capital of the empire. The historian Tacitus - one of Tiberius’ many opponents - considered the Emperor’s retirement to Capri as an opportunity to pursue vices cunningly hidden in Rome. In clear disagreement with the Roman political scene, Tiberius focused his attention on the island of Greek philosophers and Babylonian astrologers (one of the most famous astrologers of ancient times, Thrasyllus of Alexandria, lived on the island at the time), continuing the building policy begun by Augustus (Tacitus attributes the construction of twelve important villas to Tiberius) and establishing nymphaea in various grottos on the island (maliciously

considered by Suetonius as places for the outlet of Tiberian lust).

### **Capri after Tiberius**

With the death of Tiberius (37 AD), the ancient historians lost interest in Capri, even though the island continued to be home to imposing aristocratic villas for the whole of the 1<sup>st</sup> century AD. As from the beginning of the 2<sup>nd</sup> century AD, news of the island became rare with the only event of major importance being the exile to Capri of the wife and sister (Crispina and Lucilla, respectively) of Emperor Commodus in 182 AD.

The 3<sup>rd</sup> century AD was a dark period for Capri, characterized by a considerable fall in the standard of living of the island community and notable social and cultural transformation (especially the slow spread of Christianity).

Despite having fallen to ruin following centuries of neglect and plundering, the island’s monuments began to become an important tourist attraction in the 18<sup>th</sup> century.

In fact, Capri’s success as a tourist resort began with the acknowledgment and enhancement of its ancient monuments.



*Grotta delle Felci.*



*Sandstone pebble with anthropomorphic figure (Neolithic). "Ignazio Cerio" Museum.*



*Neolithic ceramic vase.  
"Ignazio Cerio" Museum.*

## Grotta delle Felci (Grotto of Ferns)

Situated on the south east coast of the island, Grotta delle Felci provides important archaeological evidence of prehistoric activity on Capri and in Southern Italy in general.

The first studies of the area by Ignazio Cerio at the end of the 9<sup>th</sup> century caused considerable stir in the scientific community of the time.

In fact, fragmented observation of the excavations showed that the surface layer contained both modern pottery and Roman and Bronze Age ceramics - a clear sign of uninterrupted inhabitation of the site.

Below surface level, other strata provided material from the Bronze Age (1700–1000 BC), while further down Neolithic (4000–3500 BC) findings were uncovered.

Approximately six metres below these last layers, sandy and volcanic strata provided a fauna of cervids and ground molluscs, while clefts in the north west part of the cavern were filled with rich Neolithic tombs.

The obvious ritual function of Grotta delle Felci was further emphasized by the finding of stone amulets decorated with magical and religious depictions as well as highly

refined ceramics.

Grotto of Ferns retained its sacred role for the whole of the prehistoric age as findings also included a large, precious flint dagger from the Aeneolithic age (3500–2300 BC) and richly decorated Bronze Age vases.

*CAPRI. Take Via Roma from Piazza Umberto I (the Piazzetta) and then follow Via Marina Piccola for approximately 300 metres.*

*Turn right into Via Grotta delle Felci. The last stretch of the road becomes a foot-path and the grotto is at the end.*

*Wear clothing suitable for walking and avoid bad weather as there may be a danger of falling rocks.*



*Stretch of the Greek Wall*



*Scala fenicia.*

## Muro greco (Greek Wall)

Stretches of the Greek Wall are incorporated into the back walls of the houses which open onto Via Longano. The large, irregular blocks of stone were originally used to defend the 'saddle' of Capri between the hills of S. Michele and Castiglione - an area completely lacking in natural protection. Today the only part of the wall which still exists is the stretch running along the hill of S. Michele, although documentation proves that it

once ran under the square and along the ridge of the hill of Castiglione. The original date of construction is uncertain and the wall can only be vaguely defined as Pre-Roman due to a lack of precise archaeological data and frequent rebuilding operations.

*CAPRI. It is possible to see stretches of the wall incorporated in the walls of buildings from the right hand side of the upper terrace of the funicular.*

## Scala fenicia (Phoenician stairway)

Until 1874 the only means of communication between Capri and Anacapri was the Phoenician stairway - a steep stairway cut out of the rock leading along the rocky ridge from Marina Grande near Palazzo a Mare to the rock of Capodimonte on Anacapri near Villa San Michele where it terminated at the Medieval city gates with a change in altitude of approximately 200 m. The date of the stairway is uncertain.

The strange name, Scala Fenicia, is in no way based on a real Phoenician presence on the island (of which no evidence has ever been found) and is probably due to the tendency of 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century scholars - especially in the Neapolitan area - to assume that the Phoenicians were present in the Mediterranean prior to the Greeks

and thus to attribute all pre-Greek phenomena (such as place names or archaeological findings such as this stairway) to this Oriental people. The stairway was restored in 1998.

*MARINA GRANDE. Take Via Provinciale Marina Grande from Piazza Vittoria (the harbour). After the sports ground, climb to the right along Via Fenicia (uphill itinerary).*

*ANACAPRI. Take Viale Axel Munthe from Piazza Vittoria (the monument square) as far as the ancient gate (downhill itinerary).*

*CAPRI. Take Via Acquaviva from Piazza Umberto I and then climb Via Provinciale Marina Grande for 50 metres. Take Via Marucella to the right and climb to the left along Via Fenicia (uphill itinerary).*



*Palazzo a Mare area.*



*Altar dedicated to Ceres.  
Capri, Soprintendenza Archeologica.*

## Palazzo a Mare

One of the most important Roman villas on Capri lies in the area known as Palazzo a Mare. Covering a vast area from Punta Bevaro to Bagni di Tiberio beach, the villa complex follows the typical Roman seaside villa plan which sees several buildings scattered over the area in panoramic positions and surrounded by nature. Built by Emperor Augustus and later modified by Tiberius, in the 18<sup>th</sup> century the villa was plundered and looted by the Austrian Hadrawa who took flooring, capitals and marble slabs. Villa di Palazzo a Mare underwent further damage during the French occupation at the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century when the central build-

ing was transformed into an arms station and fort. Building activity has transformed the aspect of the original constructions so much that nothing remains of the ancient imperial abode but small stretches of walls and terracing, a few reservoirs and occasional ruins of the residential quarters.

Furthermore a lack of detailed study of these few remaining elements means no single overview of the complex is available, however superficial analysis seems to show that the foundations and water supply were constructed according to a single plan and cannot be attributed to different stages.

According to Maiuri, the modest



*Ruins of Palazzo a Mare buildings.*



*Peplophóros.  
Capri, Soprintendenza Archeologica.*



*Capital of pillar.  
Capri, Soprintendenza Archeologica.*



*Opus reticulatum with brick layers.*

residential quarters lay in the area of the fortress. Although the fortress was later transformed into a private villa, various elements of the original villa such as reservoirs, a marble-covered *impluvium* (trough for catching rainwater) and remains of mosaic flooring can still be recognized. Furthermore, many of the marble fragments belonging to the Bismarck collection were almost certainly part of the decoration of the villa.

Detached sleeping quarters and areas for the enjoyment of natural beauty were constructed in a large natural area alongside the residential quarters, while a large *xystus* garden - in which the emperor was able to take his daily walk - surrounded by several small buildings was planted

in the area where the old football ground now stands. A ramp with marble steps at the centre led to a large seaside nymphaeum and exedra. This area also includes several ponds, probably used for fish farming, as well as other structures such as a landing stage and an underground plant supplying the fish ponds. The area of the new football pitch was probably a natural area.

*MARINA GRANDE. Take Via Provinciale Marina Grande from Piazza Vittoria as far as the sports ground and then take Via Palazzo a Mare until Bagni di Tiberio. The ruins of Roman walls can be seen all along the road.*



*The sea side area.*



Air view of the villa (photo by I - BUGA).



Part of the entertainments area.

## Villa di Damecuta

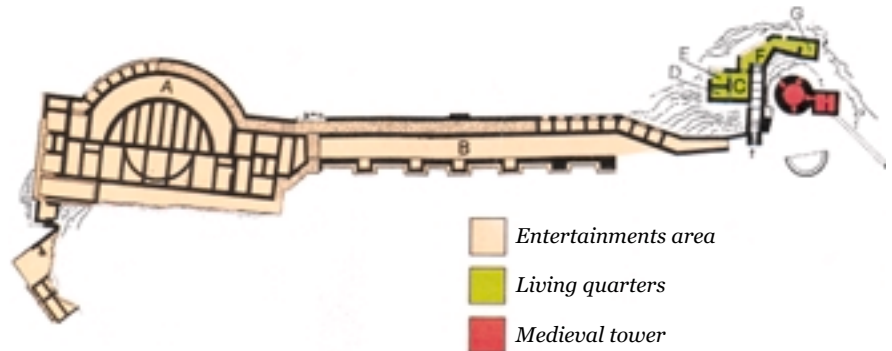
The imperial Villa di Damecuta lies on the western side of the island.

In fact, although situated at different heights, the three Roman villas of Capri - Villa di Damecuta, Villa Jovis and Villa di Palazzo a Mare - occupy the whole of the island's coastline and provide a complete view of the Gulf of Naples from Punta Campanella to Ischia.

Famous for the discovery of ancient buildings and marble fragments, Villa di Damecuta became a military training ground at the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and a fort was built there during the battles between the English and the French for the possession of the island.

However, many of the ancient remains which came to the surface were tampered with or reused by local labourers who did not hesitate to destroy or sell many ancient columns and marble slabs. It is difficult to calculate the original extension of Villa di Damecuta as only a few buildings remain scattered along the edge of the rocky ridge, characterized by imposing arched foundations. Several areas of the largest complex remain, organized in a semicircular fashion. Although the function of these buildings is rather uncertain, they could include a viewpoint (A), which opens onto the long loggia of the *ambulatio* (promenade).

Floored in *cocciopesto*, the *ambulatio*





*Ephebic torso.  
Capri, Soprintendenza Archeologica.*

(B) was open on the sea side while several brick columns covered in plaster perhaps served to sustain a pergola.

On the land side, the loggia was delimited by a wall with several niches for benches. Opposite the viewpoint, near the Medieval tower (in red), the living quarters could be accessed by following a steep stairway (C D E). Traces of plaster still remain on the walls and the ruins of mosaic flooring can still be seen in the small *cubiculum* (bedroom) (G) in which a nude Ephebic torso was found. The villa followed the typical Roman *villae maritimae* plan as it was situated in a dominant position with the sea as the main ele-

ment of the landscape and included characteristic natural areas in carefully selected panoramic positions.

The etymology of the name Damecuta is uncertain.

*ANACAPRI. Take the Anacapri-Grotta Azzurra bus service from Viale De Tommaso (cemetery). Alight at Damecuta bus-stop and follow Via Amedeo Maiuri. ANACAPRI. Take Via Boffe from Piazza Diaz (church of S. Sofia) and then follow Via La Vigna. Turn left into Traversa La Vigna and take Via La Fabbrica downhill (do not take the side streets). Turn left into Traversa Damecuta. After a few metres turn right into Via Amedeo Maiuri. Opening hours: from 9 am to 2 pm.*



*Living room with traces of plaster (C).*



*Loggia of the ambulatorio (B).*



Air view of the villa (photo by I - BUGA).



Atrium (A).



Detail of hall (B).

## Villa Jovis

Villa Jovis - considered the main residence of Emperor Tiberius on Capri - dominates the rocky spur of Monte Tiberio. The Northern and Eastern sides - built on a sheer rock wall which descends vertically into the sea - look out over the Gulf of Naples and Punta Campanella, while the southern and western sides flank the slope which overlooks Capri and Marina Grande.

Halfway between the fortress and a villa of *otium*, Villa Jovis was built according to a compact square plan although several detached buildings add a certain detail to the layout of the villa.

Covering a surface area of approximately 7,000 m<sup>2</sup>, the villa was constructed on layers of terraces which level out the natural line of the rock, especially on the steeper western side of the slope.

The buildings were gathered around a central complex which included four large reservoirs (in blue) with a capacity of 8,000 m<sup>3</sup> - such was the enormous amount of water necessary to fulfil the requirements of an imperial palace on an island often lacking in this

essential element. The position of the buildings with respect to these huge reservoirs also depended on the rational exploitation of the water supply - a result which could not be achieved following the plan typically used in the construction of Roman seaside villas. Thus the *atrium* (A) with four marble columns lies on the southern side alongside the baths. Modest on the ground floor (C and D), the baths become more grandiose on the upper floor where the typical division into *apodyterium* (changing room), *tepidarium* (room heated to medium temperature) (E), *calidarium* (heated room) (F) and *praefurnium* (room with heater) (G) can still be seen, despite the fact that the decorations and even the *suspensurae* which served to support the floor and allow the passage of hot air have been destroyed.

On the western side, three floors of the building were dedicated to servants' quarters (in violet), characterized by a series of small rooms coming off a communicating corridor.

The kitchen is also situated on this

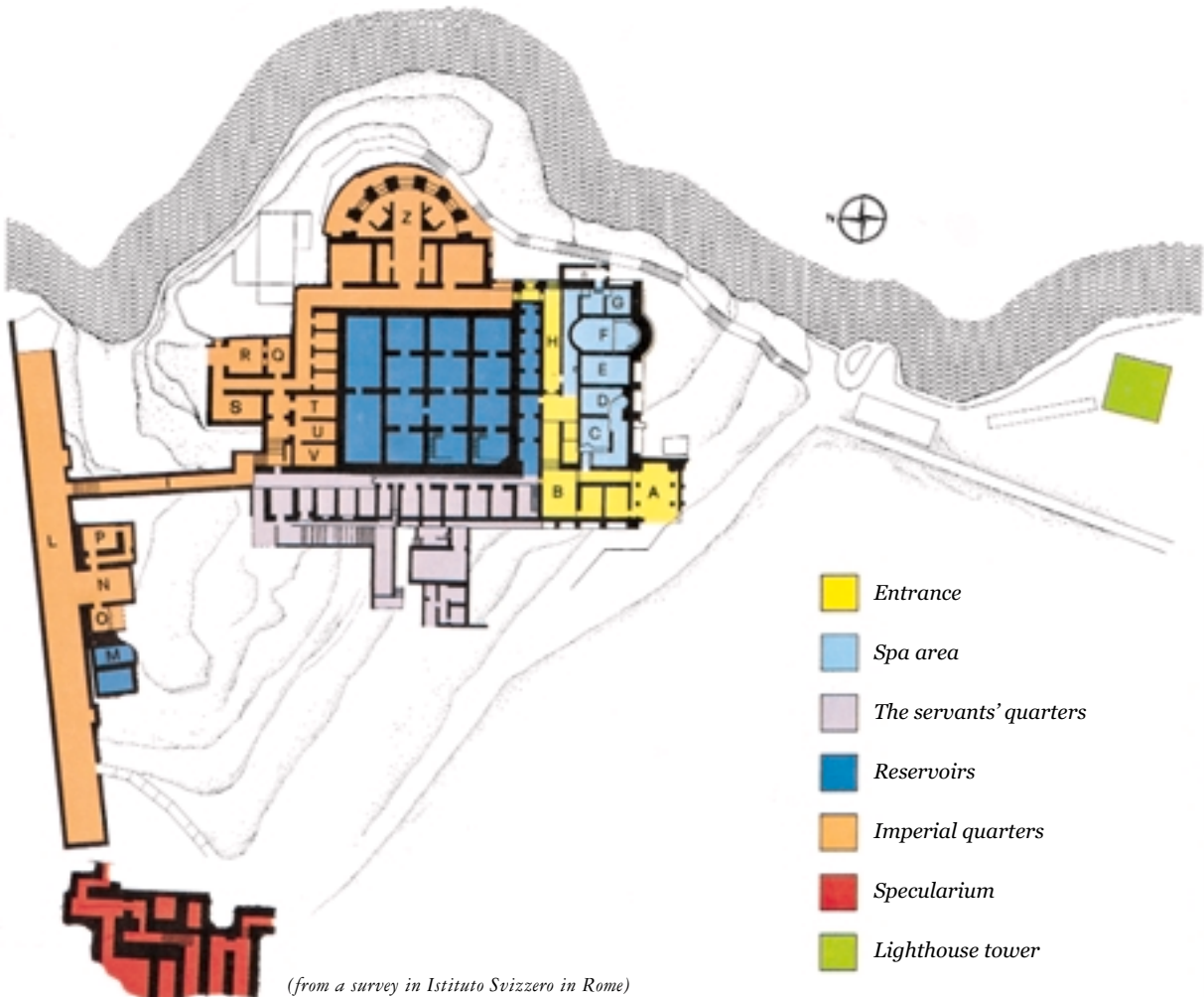


*The servants' quarters.*

side of the villa, detached from the main body of the building. The northern wing almost certainly housed the Emperor's private apartments and small fragments of marble flooring (Q, R, S, T, U, V) can still be seen. There was probably also a second floor built

around the covering of the reservoir and decorated with a colonnade (*peristilium*).

An *ambulatio* (promenade) (L), with niches for benches and several rooms (N O P) once decorated with precious marble flooring, winds along the edge of the hill



(from a survey in Istituto Svizzero in Rome)



*Spa quarters (F-E).*



*Niches in the apse-ended hall (Z).*



*Lighthouse tower.*

providing a panoramic view.

The flooring of the *triclinium* (N) was dismantled by the Bourbons and reconstructed in the church of Santo Stefano.

The function of the apse-ended hall (Z) on the eastern side of the villa is rather uncertain although it is fairly sure there was once an upper floor which overlooked the sea.

At planimetric level, the series of dividing walls seems to suggest a desire to create viewpoints from wide windows overlooking the external footpath. The three niches lined with marble flooring in this footpath were probably designed to hold various statues. In fact, two marble parapets decorated with bas-reliefs depicting natural elements and a bas-relief known as *La Cavalcata* (the ride) were found in this area - the only remains of the luxurious decoration which once characterized the villa.

The villa was built of limestone cement alternated with rows of tiles for practical and functional reasons - limestone was abundantly available following the levelling of the rocky terraces while the technique was perfect for the construction of thick walls able to

support the weight of the upper levels.

Not all scholars of the history of Capri agree that the ruins on Monte Tiberio are the remains of the residence of Tiberius.

However, rare documentation left by Latin writers describes *villa Jovis* as being situated on an inaccessible rock with a sheer drop to the sea - a small fortress with a tower to receive and send light signals - and in fact, Villa Jovis fully meets this description having a sheer drop to the sea on two sides of a large, solid construction more similar to a fortress rather than a villa and buildings organized a central complex with a tower (green) which was almost certainly used as a lookout and signalling post.

*CAPRI. Take Via Longano and Via Sopramonte from Piazza Umberto I, then climb left along Via Tiberio and Viale Amedeo Maiuri.*

*Opening hours: 9 am to one hour before sunset.*



*Grotta Azzurra (photo by Jab Photo).*



*Poseidon from Grotta Azzurra.  
Capri, Soprintendenza Archeologica.*

## Villa di Gradola - Grotta Azzurra (Blue Grotto)

Villa of Gradola lies immediately above Grotta Azzurra. Following the typical plan of Roman *villae maritimae*, the buildings are strung out across the villa's terraces in a panoramic position along the slope. Excavated in the 19<sup>th</sup> century by American Colonel MacKowen - who found capitals, fragments of statues, columns, flooring and marble picture frames walled into Casa Rossa on Anacapri - the villa was frequently reconstructed in ancient times. Several reservoirs can still be found among the thick vegetation, while, six small buildings still exist on the upper terrace - one of which still shows traces of yellow plaster on a red pedestal and white mosaic flooring. Villa di Gradola was joined to Grotta Azzurra via a stairway cut out of the rock (restored in modern times). Apart from this stairway, the only means of accessing Grotta Azzurra was - and still is - by boat. The narrow opening - whose surface was probably smoothed in Roman times to facilitate passing - separates the entrance from the large cavern famous for the effects caused by light.

Inside the grotto, a sloping slipway led to a small landing stage next to which there was a quadrangular room with *cocciopesto* flooring which was probably used as a resting place. A shaft in the rock - considered to be a secret passage between Grotta Azzurra and Villa di Damecuta - was probably designed to catch water. Use of the grotto in Roman times as a luxuriously decorated nymphaeum was recently confirmed with the discovery of various statues depicting Tritons and the god Poseidon. Cut off at knee height, the statues were originally positioned at water level along the walls in such a way as to give the impression that were emerging out of the sea.

*MARINA GRANDE. Take the boat service from the port.*

*ANACAPRI. Take the Anacapri-Grotta Azzurra bus service from Viale De Tommaso.*

*Opening hours: from 9 am to one hour before sunset. The grotto cannot be visited when the sea is rough.*



*Grotta di Matermania: the large room.*



*Grotta di Matermania: the small room.*

## Grottoes and nymphaea

As stated by Strabo, the large-scale building policy implemented by Augustus throughout the island was continued by Tiberius, to whom tradition attributes both the construction of villas and the use of hollow rocks and caves. However, according to Suetonius' malicious version of the history of Capri,

Tiberius merely used these latter to organize orgies with young people. Despite the disparaging intentions of the biographer, many grottoes on the island were certainly used during Roman times and it is quite possible that many of the natural marvels of Capri were used as lusty nymphaea.

### Grotta di Matermania

Situated halfway along the coast line, Grotta di Matermania was artificially reshaped during Roman times as proved by the fact that the walls date back to that age. Inside, the grotto is divided into two rooms and was originally lined with a barrel vault ceiling.

Unfortunately the ceiling has collapsed. The larger room ends in an apse formed by two podia - a semi-circular platform supporting a second oval platform - both showing traces of painted decorations.

A short stairway rises out of the centre of the two podia. Traces of plaster and the remains of the vaulted ceiling can still be seen in the smaller room. The grotto was decorated with marble statues and glass paste mosaics of which only

very few traces remain. In no way can the obscure name Matermania link the grotto to the worship of *Magna Mater* Cybele or the god Mithra, despite many attempts founded on arbitrary and incorrect interpretations. In fact this grotto was merely a nymphaeum like many other grottoes on Capri.

*CAPRI. Starting from Piazza Umberto I, take Via Longano, Via Sopramonte, Via Matermania and Via Arco Naturale. Turn right down the steps of Via Grotta di Matermania till the grotto.*

*To get back to the centre of Capri, continue down the steps and then take Via Pizzolungo, Via Tragara, Via Camerelle and Via Vittorio Emanuele III as far as Piazza Umberto I.*

*The itinerary can also be reversed.*



*Castiglione hill with the grotto in the centre.*



*Grotta del Castiglione: detail of the ancient building.*



*Grotta dell'Arsenale.*

## Grotta del Castiglione

Grotta del Castiglione opens onto the steep southern wall of the hill of the same name. It was probably already used in the Neolithic as a comfortable and spacious refuge from which to control the sea and the coastline. In Roman times it became the nymphaeum of the nearby villa and, in fact, many ruins, including a reservoir, dating back to that time can still be found. In the medieval times, Grotta del Castiglione became a refuge for the inhabitants of the island during pirate incursions. Many defence and look out mechanisms

were constructed although these probably destroyed any previous buildings. Grotta del Castiglione eventually became the property of Giorgio Cerio who knocked down the medieval structures, restored the Roman reservoirs and constructed a house. Excavations of the area brought to light vases used in Roman times for cultivation of the flowers which decorated the nymphaeum.

*A visit to Grotto of Castiglione is not to be advised due to the terrible conditions of the footpath leading to the grotto.*

## Grotta dell'Arsenale

Situated between Marina Piccola and Punta Tragara, Grotta dell'Arsenale opens onto the sea and can be accessed via a water level slipway. Inside, several naturally formed rooms - whose grid and lattice decoration and *cocciopesto* floor are still partially visible - are organized around the wide central cavity. On the left hand wall of the main room there are six niches while of the six niches of the opposite wall only three plus a fourth in a poor state of conservation remain. Originally considered to have been used for as a workshop for repairing ships (*arsenale*) belonging to the Roman fleet, the remains of

the marble flooring and the coloured tiles - ruined during ancient excavations - seem to indicated that Grotta dell'Arsenale was more probably used as a nymphaeum. The grotto was successively used as a burial area as indicated by the finding of a marble sarcophagus and as an arsenal in the Medieval times.

*CAPRI. Starting from Piazza Umberto I take Via Vittorio Emanuele III, Via Federico Serena, Viale Giacomo Matteotti and Via Krupp. Approximately 150 metres after the last bend of Via Krupp take the footpath to the left down to the grotto. The path is frequently blocked by falling rocks.*



Flooring from Tragara. Cappella del Rosario of the church of Santo Stefano.



The Crispina sarcophagus. Capri, ex-hotel Grotte Bleue.



Capital and Roman column. Small cloister of the monastery of San Giacomo.

Tragara landing stage with the ruins of opus spicatum in the foreground.

## Detailed studies

For a description of classical antiquity in Capri from 1500 to 1900:

F. Giordano, *De Capreis insulis*, Napoli 1570.

G. M. Secondo, *Relazione storica dell'antichità, rovine e residui di Capri*, Napoli 1750.

N. Hadrawa, *Ragguagli di varii scavi e scoperte fatte nell'Isola di Capri*, Napoli 1793.

D. Romanelli, *Isola di Capri*, Trani 1816.

R. Mangoni, *Ricerche topografiche ed archeologiche sull'Isola di Capri*, Napoli 1834.

F. Alvino, B. Quaranta, *Le antiche ruine di Capri*, Napoli 1835.

G. Feola, *Rapporto sullo stato attuale dei Ruderi Augusto-Tiberiani di Capri*, Napoli 1894.

N. Douglas, *Capri. Materials for a description of the Island*, Florence 1930.

A. Maiuri, *Capri. Its history and its monuments*, Rome 1958.

C. de Seta (edit by), *Capri*, Torino 1983.

For a summary of the history:

J. Beloch, *Campania. Storia e topografia della Napoli antica e dei suoi dintorni*, Napoli 1989.

H. Kesel, *Capri. Biografia di un'isola*, Napoli 1997.

A. Andrén, *Capri from the stone age to the tourist age*, Göteborg 1980.

For a complete scientific overview and update of historical and archaeological problems regarding ancient Capri and a collection of all ancient documentation:

E. Federico, E. Miranda (edit by), *Capri antica. Dalla preistoria alla fine dell'età romana*, Napoli 1998.



## Museums and libraries

The **Museum of the Centro Caprense Ignazio Cerio**, located in Piazzetta Cerio, 5, Capri (tel. +39 0818376681) brings together the 20,000 natural and archaeological findings mainly from Capri collected by Ignazio Cerio (1841-1921).

The most important exhibits include the collections of fossils from Vanassina and Lo Capo and the palaeontological and prehistoric collections from the Quisisana and Grotta delle Felci. The museum also provides a well-stocked herbarium (500 species) and a fine collection of marine fauna (10,000 exhibits).

**Villa San Michele**, a dream house designed and built by Swedish doctor Axel Munthe, houses the richest collection of ancient findings and art on the island of Capri. Villa San Michele is the only 19<sup>th</sup> century residence still preserved in its original state on the island. Located in Via Capodimonte 34, Anacapri (tel. +39 0818371401), the villa is open every day of the year, including Sundays and bank holidays. Free entrance for children under 10 years of age.

Opening hours: May to September - from 9 am to 6 pm. October and April - from 9.30 am to 5 pm. From November to February - 10.30 am to 3.30 pm. March - from 9.30 am to 4.30 pm.

Situated in Piazzetta Cerio, 8a, Capri (tel. +39 0818376681), the **Library of the Centro Caprense Ignazio Cerio** houses all kinds of materials regarding the island of Capri - manuscripts, books, pamphlets, maps, photographs, newspapers and musical scores. Opening hours: Tuesday, Thursday and Friday - from 4.30 to 8 pm. Wednesday and Saturday - from 9.30 am to 1 pm. Closed on Sundays, Mondays and Bank Holidays.

Located in the Carthusian monastery of San Giacomo (tel. +39 0818386241), the **Public Library Luigi Bladier** has a special section dedicated to the history of Capri including works in Italian, English, French and German.

Opening hours: Tuesday and Thursday - from 9 am to 1 pm. Monday and Wednesday - from 9 am to 1 pm and from 4 pm to 7 pm.

The **Centro Archivistico e Documentale** of Capri brings together and catalogues many documents regarding the history of the island. It is situated in Via Le Botteghe, 30, Capri (tel. +39 0818386310).

Opening hours: Monday, Wednesday and Friday - from 5 pm to 7 pm.

*Opening hours may vary*



*Fragment of the side facade with polychrome mosaic decoration (2<sup>nd</sup> century AD). "Ignazio Cerio" Museum.*



*Fragment of bas-relief with landscape scene. Villa San Michele.*



*Church of San Costanzo with Roman ruins visible inside.*

PUNTA CARENA

MONTE  
SOLARO

Villa di Damecuta

Villa di Gradola  
Grotta Azzurra

ANACAPRI

Grotta  
delle Felci

Scala  
Fenicia

MARINA PICCOLA

Grotta del  
Castiglione

CAPRI

Palazzo a Mare

Grotta dell'Arsenale

MARINA GRANDE

Grotta di  
Maternaria

Villa Jovis

FARAGLIONI





