An aerial, high-angle photograph of the superyacht 'Imagine' sailing on the sea. The yacht is white with a large, curved deck area featuring a circular lounge with a striped sofa and several tables. The name 'Imagine' is visible on the side of the hull. The water is dark blue with white foam from the yacht's wake.

Imagine is the ideal superyacht on which to explore the dramatic Amalfi Coast and the volcanic Aeolian Islands

• A vertiginous view

Follow in the footsteps of countless writers and composers, European royalty and the Hollywood elite by succumbing to the allure of the steep-sided Amalfi Coast with a charter aboard the recently launched 214'1/65.5m motoryacht *Imagine* followed by a few days exploring Sicily and the neighboring Aeolian Islands.

BY MIRIAM CAIN. PHOTOGRAPHY BY MARC PARIS

Italy is known for its cuisine, its achingly beautiful scenery and Italians' appreciation for the finer things in life, known as 'la dolce vita'. Travelers have long been attracted to the country's glorious cultural and artistic heritage, and nowhere more so than along the Amalfi Coast, whose mainland and islands have quaint hidden churches, winding trails and beautiful secluded beaches only accessible by boat. Depending on where you cruise, you can enjoy world-famous restaurants, celebrity-studded beaches and designer boutiques all on the same day.

Further south, the seven Aeolian Islands have all the right credentials for an upmarket chill-out zone, while just below them at Italy's southernmost point, the rugged island of Sicily itself blends volcanoes, castles and beaches with striking cliffs.

The Amalfi Coast

Trickling down the west coast of Italy, the Amalfi Coast has seen the birth of empires and cradled the growth of civilizations. Its rich culture and history is matched only by its beauty and tranquility; it is too steep to support much in the way of modern development and therefore remains relatively unspoilt.

Today it is famed for its vertiginous landscapes, gourmet food and picturesque shoreline, best discovered onboard the 65.5m new charter yacht *Imagine*. From the ancient ruins of Pompeii to the clear

blue waters of Capri, every inch of the Amalfi Coast is infused with the Italians' great passion for fine living and fabulous cuisine.

Step aboard *Imagine* in the bustling Bay of Naples and cruise across the bay to the volcanic island of Ischia. Floating in the Tyrrhenian Sea, just south-west of Naples, the island has been a Mediterranean holiday destination for aristocrats since Roman times. Known as 'the island of wellbeing', Ischia is famous for its thermal springs and therapeutic spas.

The neighboring dazzling island of Capri became famous in 1826 with the discovery of the iridescent Blue Grotto cave. Today the island is a victim of its own charms as visitors arrive in flocks throughout the peak summer months. Thankfully, aboard *Imagine* you can escape to secluded anchorages to the west of the island and return to the main town as the crowds depart late afternoon. It is then that the discreet glamor of Capri emerges.

Back on the mainland, step ashore to the highlights presented by the towns of Ravello, Sorrento, and Amalfi, the village of Positano and the ancient city of Pompeii. With innumerable Renaissance palaces, baroque masterpieces and Roman remains perched along a beautiful coast of rugged cliffs and sandy coves, a cruise along the sun-drenched shores of the Amalfi Coast will take you on a stimulating journey of Old World charm and five-star luxury.



The yacht

Imagine is the first launch in the Limited Editions Amels 212 range and the largest of the Limited Editions line to be built by the renowned Dutch shipyard. Designed by Tim Heywood, with an interior by Andrew Winch, she features a centrally located glass elevator that provides access to unique areas including the 'wet feet' bar on her sun deck, or the large beach club area on the extended swim platform where guests can experience the vast range of beach toys and watersports equipment.

The outdoor spaces offer a variety of alfresco dining and relaxing opportunities. The sun deck area has ample area for sun loungers, a large swimming pool with Jacuzzi, jet stream, mini-beach area, and the wet feet bar. For the active guests there is also a sky gym with adjoining steam room on the sun deck.

Specifications

Length | 214'1/65.5m

Beam | 38'11/11.88m

Draft | 12'7/3.85m

Builder | Amels

Interior Designer | Andrew Winch Design

Year | 2011

Staterooms | Seven

Guests | 14 (12 when cruising)

Crew | 15

Cruising speed | 14 knots

Charter grounds | Summer, western and eastern Mediterranean

Rate | From €465,000 per week low season and €530,000 per week high season

Accommodation | Guest accommodation includes a master suite on the main deck, two VIP staterooms on the upper deck, and four guest cabins on the lower deck, comprising two doubles and two twins which can be configured as twin or double suites.

Contact | Fraser Yachts, +377 93 100 490, charter@fraseryachts.com, www.fraseryachts.com.

Credit: Gino Cianc



The sheer ruggedness of the Amalfi Coast means it has avoided over-development



Castello Aragonese, Ischia

Itinerary: Naples to Amalfi

Day 1: Naples to Ischia (16 nautical miles)

Watch the beguiling landscape of Naples and the surrounding area, scattered with relics of bygone empires, fade into the distance as you cruise across the Bay of Naples to the island of Ischia. The island was first stumbled upon by the Greeks in around 770BC and it is believed that volcanic eruptions forced them, and later Roman settlers, to flee. However, despite its volatile temperament, visitors are still attracted to the therapeutic benefits of the island's thermal waters and volcanic mud, ironically the by-products of the lethal eruptions.

Today, one of the best places to sample the experience in the lap of luxury is at La Terme della Regina Isabella, the spa linked to the L'Albergo della Regina Isabella hotel. The spa bases many of its treatments around the mud gathered from the island's caves, which is rich in therapeutic minerals. *Contact spa manager Costanza Popolano, +39 081 994 322.*

To go a step further and experience the thermal springs in their natural, unrefined environment, head to the south of the island. Located near to the fishing town of Sant'Angelo, Ischia's famous beach Maronti puffs out little gusts of steam at the Cavuscura spa, where you can lie in pools of thermal water carved out of rock.

Aside from its spa appeal, Ischia has many other attractions. One of its most impressive landmarks is the Castello Aragonese. This historical monument occupies what was originally a piece of rock floating apart from the main island. Built by Gerone of Siracusa, the fortress was joined to Ischia by a stone

bridge and fortified against invaders in the 15th century by Alfonso of Aragon.

The stunning gardens of La Mortella are another famous landmark. Designed for the late English composer Sir William Walton, the gardens abound with all manner of tropical and Mediterranean plants that thrive in fertile, volcanic soil. Time your visit right and you may catch one of the many musical concerts that La Mortella hosts in its garden amphitheatre. *Contact Alessandro Mattera, +39 081 986 220.*

Recommended restaurants

It is perhaps not surprising, given its Italian roots, that Ischia has fantastic cuisine, the best of which

are the local seafood dishes and the island's famous rabbit delicacies. The bustling port is always alive with dozens of restaurants, bars and shops ensuring a steady buzz of activity. To dine with the best view and atmosphere, go to the Neptunus restaurant overlooking the stunning village of Sant'Angelo. *Contact restaurant proprietor Jacob Giuseppe, +39 081 999 702.*

For evening entertainment, try La Tavernetta Del Pirata, also in Sant'Angelo. This bustling waterfront bar on the village square gives a real flavor of the island and is a great place to people-watch.

Day 2: Ischia to Capri (18 nautical miles)

Cruise south-east to join the 'It' crowd on Capri, the original Italian island retreat. A favored holiday spot since Roman times, the island was the former home of Emperor Tiberius. Its reputation as one of the world's first tourist destinations is thanks to the famous Blue Grotto cave, but today the island is sadly overrun with day-trippers during the peak summer season. Fortunately, aboard *Imagine* you can escape the crowds of day visitors by discovering the small islands off the west coast during the day when it is busy and then make your return to the main village of Capri during the late afternoon as the hordes return to the mainland. The island is also home to many local shops of the Italian fashion houses, including Dolce & Gabbana and Roberto Cavalli. La Parisienne is the best place for Capri pants – you can purchase a made-to-measure pair and have them to wear the next day.



Anchor off Capri and avoid the crowds

Credit: Gino Cianc

Explore the island's iridescent Blue Grotto with its world-famous blue water and enchanting silvery light. The spectacular cave is illuminated with cobalt blue at certain times of the day when the sunlight passes through an underwater cavity and creates a reflection. Go for a swim during the late afternoon when the tourist boats have gone and you can have it all to yourself.

The village of Anacapri sits majestically above Capri on Monte Cappello, some 500 metres above sea level. Take the funicular up to the village to visit the paradisiacal gardens of Villa San Michele. Alternatively, take the chairlift up to the top of Monte Solaro to experience a staggering sunset over the island and the Gulf of Naples. On a clear day you can also see Mount Vesuvius.

Recommended restaurants

Take an aperitif in the early evening on the Piazzetta, Anacapri, before dinner at Quisi at the Grand Hotel Quisisana, an A-list favourite since the 1930s.

Contact restaurant manager *Luca D'Angelo*, +39 081 837 0788. Alternatively, La Capannina is a highly recommended restaurant for superb local pasta dishes and is located just off the Piazzetta di Capri. Contact restaurant manager *Antonio Deangelis*, +39 081 837 0732.

The Hotel Ristorante Quattro Passi, located between the town of Nerano and Marina del Cantone, serves exceptional dishes rooted in local tradition and reinterpreted by chef Tonino Mellino. Contact Restaurant Proprietors *Tonino and Rita Mellino* +39 081 808 2800.

Day 3: Capri to Ravello (9 nautical miles)

Cruise back across the bay to the mainland and the picturesque hilltop town of Ravello, which sits like a terrace over the sea. There are no beaches here but the gardens make up for their absence, and have inspired many masterpieces, most famously D.H. Lawrence's novel *Lady Chatterley's Lover*.

Visit the gardens of the medieval Villa Cimbrone building, which are said to be Italy's most romantic and feature the well-named Terrace of Infinity. Stroll down the wisteria-clad Avenue of the Immensity, to the Belvedere of Infinity – a sheer drop of 4,000 meters beneath busts of emperors. Another inspiring garden can be found at the 13th-century Villa Rufolo. During the summer the gardens here are a stage for a festival in honor of Wagner who recreated its grounds as Klingsor's magic gardens of seduction in his opera *Parsifal*.

Recommended restaurants

Cumpa Cosimo is one of the only restaurants that doesn't have fish on the menu – a rarity in these parts. This bustling trattoria is not far from the Duomo in Ravello. Contact restaurant manager *Netta Bottone*, +39 089 857 156. For a slightly more refined affair in a converted 12th-century palazzo, the two Michelin-starred restaurant Rossellini's at the Palazzo Sasso Hotel serves a menu of relatively simple dishes reinvented with new ingredients. Contact restaurant manager *Donato Marzolla*, +39 089 818 181.

Day 4: Ravello to Pompeii

Venture inland from Ravello to the ancient city of Pompeii, where you can discover a real-life history thrill: a city that was only rediscovered 1,600 years after being buried under volcanic ash from the eruption of Vesuvius in AD79. Much of our knowledge of the Roman Empire and their way of life comes from Pompeii. As you wander in and out of people's houses and sit in the amphitheatre you will be transported back to the remarkable

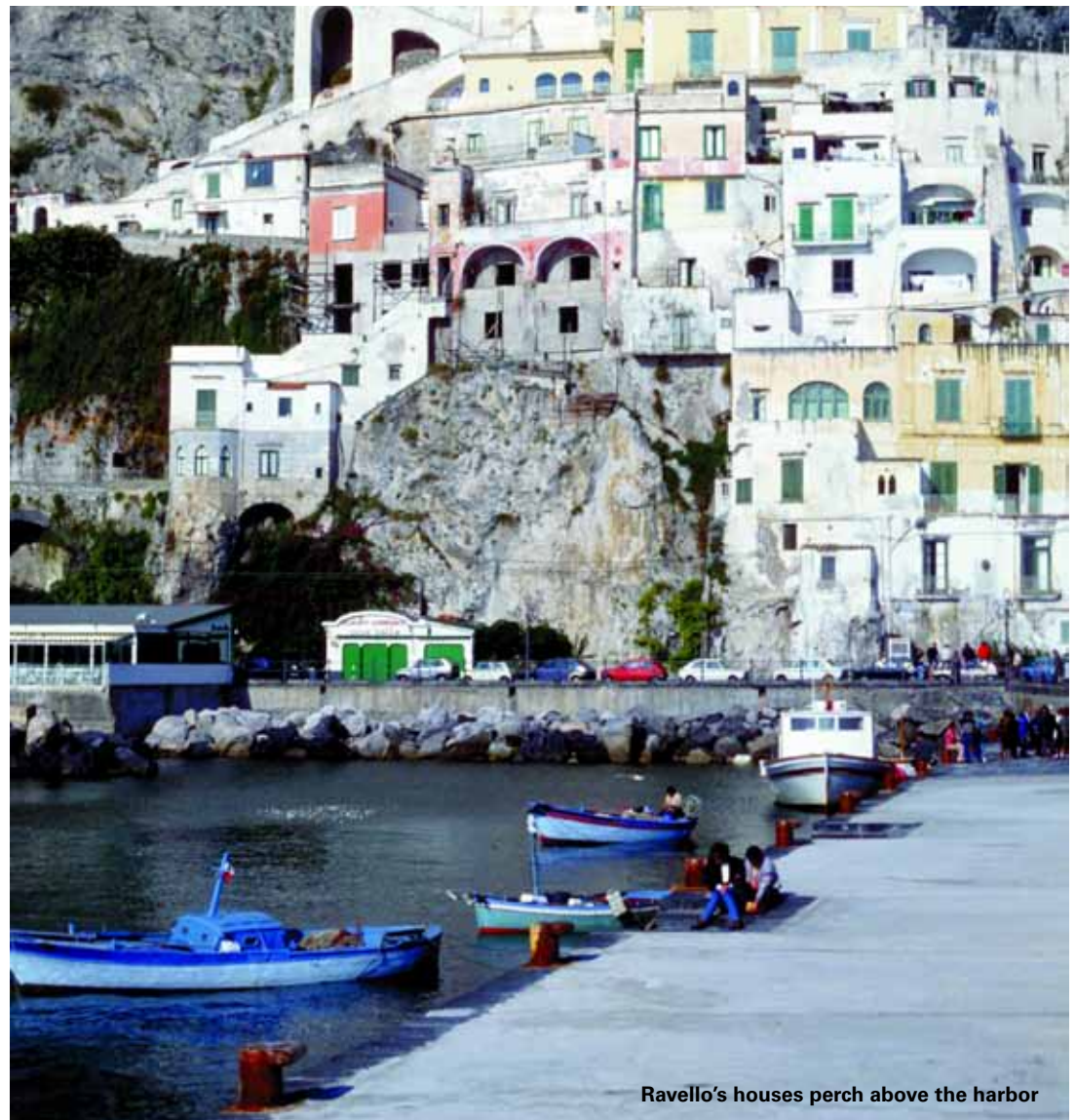
civilization. Contact tour guide *Gaetano Manfredi*, +39 338 725 5620.

Day 5: Ravello to Sorrento (11 nautical miles)

Dramatically perched on cliffs, the town of Sorrento was fortunately far enough from Vesuvius to survive the volcanic eruption that buried Pompeii. Well-to-do northern Europeans of the 19th century making their 'Grand Tour' came here from Naples to escape the hustle and bustle, attracted by the calm atmosphere of the town. Step ashore as they did and climb to the cliff-top terraced walkways of the Museo Correale di Terranova for more spectacular views over the Bay of Naples.

Recommended restaurants

Make reservations at Excelsior Vittoria's 'Bosuet' terrace and bar. The guestbook boasts the likes of Richard Strauss, the Prince of Wales who returned as Edward VII, and Sophia Loren, among many other famous names. Contact Restaurant Manager *Giacomo Maresca*, +39 081 877 7111.



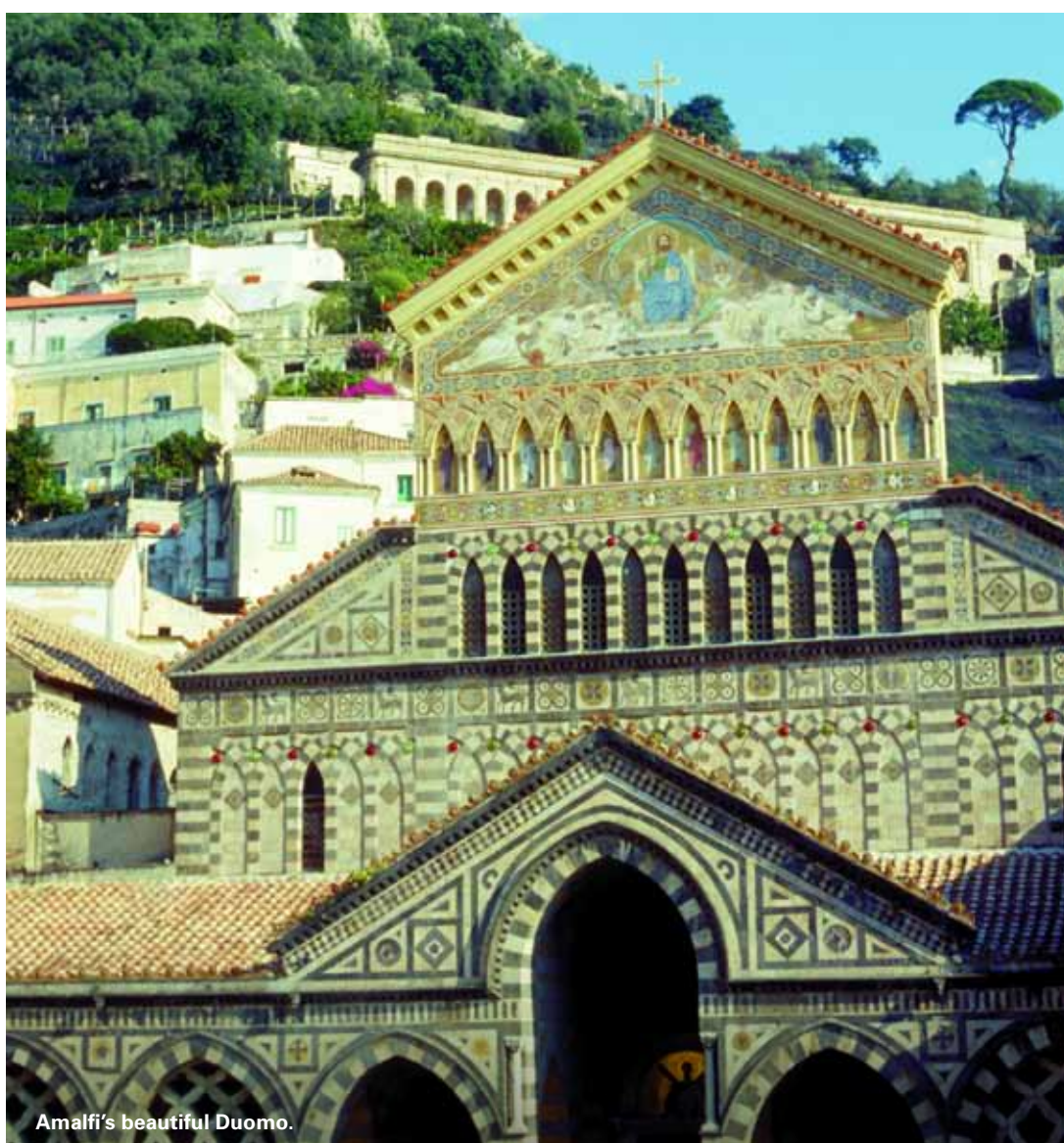
Ravello's houses perch above the harbor

Credit: Paola Ghirelli



Positano embodies "la dolce vita".

Credit: Paola Ghirotti



Amalfi's beautiful Duomo.

Credit: Paola Ghirotti

Day 6: Sorrento to Positano (17 nautical miles)

Cruise across the Gulf of Salerno to the charming town of Positano, where the town's pastel houses hug steep rock and spill almost vertically over the terraced mountain. The colors and seascapes have inspired many famous artists throughout the centuries including Pablo Picasso. The town rivaled Capri for jet-set glamour at the peak of the 'dolce vita' era and today it is still popular, although it doesn't have the day-tripper tourists thanks to the mayor's ruling to minimize noise pollution. Enjoy an afternoon of watersports anchored at one of the off-lying islets, known as Li Galli, where, according to Homer, the Sirens lived, or cruise to the Grotta delle Matera and the pretty cove Marina di Crapolla, where there are Roman villa ruins on the beach.

Take the tender ashore to Marina Grande, in the heart of Positano, where the fishermen haul their boats up on to the beach. Positano is blessed with four beaches, and although the sand is grey, the views are idyllic and the water clear. Take the steep steps up to the local designer showrooms and elegant boutiques before having an aperitif on the terrace of Le Sirenuse from where you can admire *Imagine* in the harbor below.

Recommended restaurants

The Taverna del Capitano is one of the best restaurants on the coast and serves fresh seafood dishes. *Contact restaurant manager Mariella Caputo, +39 081 808 1028.*

Just outside of Positano, on Amalfi Drive, the Hotel Santa Caterina is the perfect place to take the tender ashore to dine at the sea-level Al Mare, or inside at The Santa Caterina. Pizza and focaccia cooked in open ovens are treats not to be missed, while the wine list has wonderful vintages from every region of Italy. *Contact Francesco Giuseppe, +39 089 871 012.*

Day 7: Positano to Amalfi (10 nautical miles)

The traditional fishing town of Amalfi is no larger in size than neighboring Positano and Ravello but the whole coastline was named after it because of its past glories as a maritime state. The small and picturesque town was once a maritime republic rivaling great cities such as Pisa, Genoa and Venice but was destroyed by an earthquake in 1143. Amalfi then became a pretty fishing village until it was rediscovered as a tourist destination by travelers in the 19th century.

At its center is the Piazza Duomo cathedral, which overlooks the stunning coastline below. Most of the cathedral's prize pieces are displayed in the Cappella del Crocefisso. Amalfi's central square, Piazza Flavio Gioia, commemorates the inventor of the compass as Amalfi's mariners were the first in Europe to use the properties of magnetism for navigation and provide material for the first nautical charts of the Middle Ages. Explore the ancient town before retiring for an overnight crossing towards the Aeolian Islands (approximately 100 nautical miles).

The Aeolian Islands

Created by volcanoes, two of which are still active, the Aeolian Island archipelago has been inhabited since the fifth millennium BC. The islands have the air of a place where time has stood still combined with a glittering nightlife that attracts the Italian jet set.

Itinerary

Day 1: Stromboli to Panarea (30 nautical miles)

Awake in the morning anchored far off the active volcanic island of Stromboli. The volcano has been in a state of near-continuous eruption for 2,000 years and it is impossible to anchor close to the island as the volcanic core shelves deeply. Characterized by its black volcanic sand, the island has many bays that are ideal for experiencing the watersports equipment aboard *Imagine*. Stromboli is best observed at sunset from the



Cruise the Aeolian Islands on *Imagine*

decks of the yacht, so in the early evenings set sail for the most fashionable of the Aeolian islands, Panarea.

Recommended restaurants

Join the Milanese yachting crowd with an aperitif at Da Pina resort's Ristorante Calajunco, just above the harbor before moving on to the restaurant on the waterfront at the Hotel Raya. The restaurant serves Panarea's best and most expensive cuisine. At night, Raya's terraces fill up and become a nightclub to all the A-list on the island. *Contact General Manager Anna Cali, +39 090 983 013.*

Day 2: Panarea to Vulcano to Lipari (20 nautical miles)

After a peaceful night's anchorage, cruise to Panarea's offshore islands and anchor off the impressive Basiluzzo. Cruise to the black sand beaches on the northern tip of Vulcano for a long lunch of pasta and fresh fish at the Trattoria Maniaci Pino. Spend the afternoon exploring the sulphur baths or take a leisurely, two-hour walk from the port to the top of the volcanic cone for the best volcanic viewing in the Aeolians. From the top you can peer down into the core of the volcano and across to the other islands in the Aeolian chain. Cruise to the



Hotel Raya's terrace bar is a nightclub for the A-list



Imagine's main salon

Amels and Imagine

Established in 1918 in Holland, Amels became a leading player in superyacht building in the early 1980s and has since launched 38 custom superyachts of the highest standards. Today's modern facilities, located on the North Sea, can accommodate six yachts in various production stages, with adjoining areas for on-site subcontractors. Amels shares the yard with the 135-year-old Royal Schelde Shipyard and fabricates larger hulls at their nearby Naval Shipyard.

Imagine is the first of its Limited Editions 212 models. The Limited Editions are built on the best platforms by experts applying the same standards, methods, technology and materials as Amels custom yachts. With Limited Editions, clients have extensive options for personalization to create a unique superyacht.

largest island in the chain, Lipari. Step ashore to discover some of Lipari's most notable buildings including an 11th-century cathedral, impressive castles and a 16th-century Spanish fort.

Recommended restaurants

For some of the freshest seafood in Italy and a stunning seafront setting, go to Trattoria Maniaci Pino, Vulcano. Try the speciality of spaghetti with nero di sepie (cuttlefish ink).

Day 3: Lipari to Taormina, Sicily (67 nautical miles)

Awaken for your final cruise through the Messina Straits and the fleets of swordfishing boats to Taormina, the Monte Carlo of Sicily.

Sicily

The largest island in the Mediterranean Sea, Sicily throws together ancient Greek, Roman, Norman, Arabic, German, French and Italian influences in its pastoral landscapes and coastal cities. A bastion of ancient glory, this is where Homer set much of his Odyssey, where Archimedes espoused his scientific genius and where some of the most significant Greek gods made their home. Step ashore and marvel at the finest surviving Doric temples and theaters in the entire ancient Greek world. Saunter along wide roads, opening onto vast

piazas, and discover one minute a crumbling Gothic church, the next minute an elegant boutique lined with the latest designer collections.

Be sure to discover the following...

- Towering 250 meters above the stunning coastline, Taormina is one of Sicily's most famous hilltop towns. It is one of the smartest and most exclusive small towns in Italy, so why not stroll past (and perhaps into) the boutiques and restaurants?

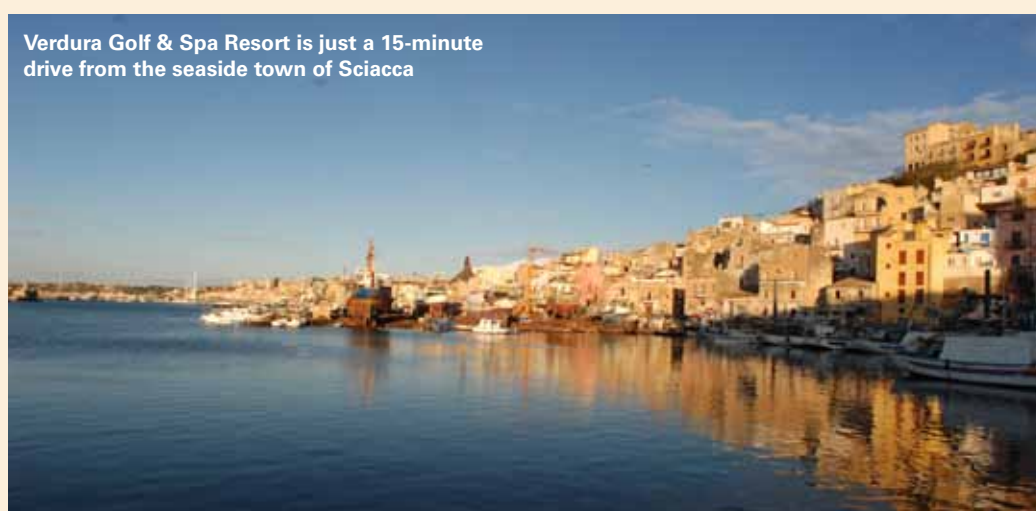


The temples of Sicily are archaeological wonders



Extreme comfort in Imagine's upper lounge

- Wander to Taormina's amphitheater. Greek in origin but restored by the Romans, it has a wonderful aura about it and spectacular elevated views over the surrounding countryside and seascape.
- Take a helicopter tour over the spectacular summit of Mount Etna. The infamous Etna last erupted in 2001 and still smolders with mystery.
- Journey to the south-west coast and the Valley Of Temples. The archaeological remains on display here are the rival of any in the world.
- Visit the ruins of Agrigento's three major Doric temples. The Temple of the Concord is the best preserved, possibly because it was converted into a church in the 6th century BC. The best time to view the temples is after sunset when they are illuminated.
- Palermo on the northern coast used to be one of the Mediterranean's main ports. An opulent city, Palermo was once under Saracen and Norman rule and became one of the most important cities in Europe. The city has many fine examples of Norman and Baroque architecture, including Palazzo Federico.
- A trip ashore to Palermo begs a visit to La Vucciri, the outdoor market that extends for kilometers across the ancient city centre. It is a hub of noise and activity and a fascinating snapshot into the locals' lives.
- An evening out in Palermo can be spent at the Teatro Massimo, a restored opera house (one of the largest in Europe), or in one of the many restaurants and bars where live jazz music rattles out onto the ancient streets late into the night.
- Set in the heart of Sicily, the mosaic floors in some of Morgantina's houses are the oldest to be found in the world.
- Way down the east coast, Syracuse boasts the Temple of Athena, one of the world's most beautifully preserved 5th-century BC Doric temples, surrounded by a baroque cathedral.
- The ancient Greek theater in Syracuse hosts a prestigious festival of classic tragedies and comedies performed in ancient Greek in May and June every year. The Greek theater in Taormina is worth a visit for its location alone, situated as it is on the mountain with spectacular views over the Mediterranean Sea and Mount Etna. ■



Staying ashore in Sicily

Aside from its dramatic cliff-top villages and ancient temples, Sicily is also famed for its superlative cuisine and endless stretches of beaches. The Verdura Golf & Spa Resort is a new Rocco Forte property on a mile of one such stretch of stunning beach on the island's south-western coast. Spread across 230 hectares, Verdura boasts panoramic terraces (each room has its own sea view and private terrace) and beautiful gardens and olive groves. The buildings, built using natural materials such as stone, sand, wood and cane, embrace the traditional architecture of Sicily in an attempt to blend in with the environment (many of the buildings are restorations of existing buildings). The interior décor is contemporary, decorated with locally sourced artisanal creations. There are two championship 18-hole golf courses, a huge spa (one of the largest in Europe), a vast swimming pool and four restaurants.

Recommended

Book a suite in one of the beach-facing Landscape Villas.

Verdura Golf & Spa Resort is offering a free upgrade to half board, a spa treatment for every three nights and unlimited golf. Families booking a stay will receive all of the above benefits, excluding spa treatments, and a 50% discount on a second interconnecting room. Contact General Manager Luciano Lusardi, llusardi@roccofortecollection.com, +39 092 599 800.