

Client: Grand Hotel Excelsior Vittoria

Source: You & Your Wedding Online

Date: 04/09/2014



honeymoon reviews

The heart of Sorrento

Katie Phipps discovers exquisite food and explores breathtaking scenery in the romantic paradise of Italy



Ciao, Sorrento!

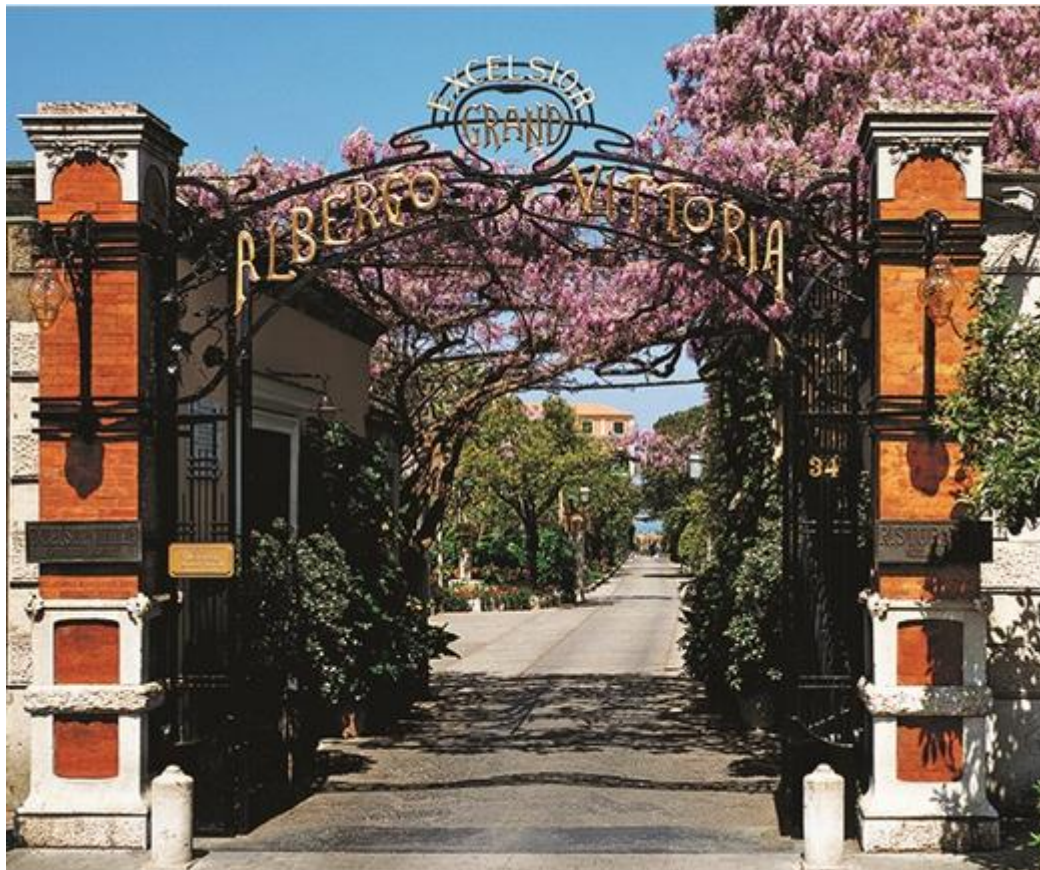
Sorrento is one of those places you just know you'll want to visit again and again. On a recent trip, I immediately fell in love with its rustic Italian charm and oh-so fabulous views, not to mention the most incredible food. And with a journey time of just two hours from Gatwick, it's the perfect honeymoon or mini-moon destination.

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On arrival, we drove south from Naples along the coastline until we reached our home for the next few days: [The Grand Hotel Excelsior Vittoria](#).



Welcome to paradise

The moment we pull up to the grand entrance, we know we are in for an exclusive experience. Situated in the heart of Sorrento, The Grand Hotel Excelsior Vittoria is in its own corner of paradise – set in the cliffside of the Amalfi Coast and surrounded by a 5-acre garden full of lemon trees. On our arrival, we are welcomed with freshly squeezed orange juice made from the fruits in the orange grove and shown to our rooms.

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Room with a view

The interiors are spectacular with opulent high ceilings, sweeping staircases and a mix of antique and eclectic furniture. The rooms have a unique character and charm, which feels instantly luxurious and welcoming. When I arrive in my room, the view from the balcony is the first thing I see, with panoramic vistas across the coastline, the harbour below and terraced cliffs around me – Instagram heaven! I have even glided past the petit fours waiting for me by my dressing area! I marvel at my king-sized bed, and resisting the temptation to jump up and down, head to the L'Orangerie restaurant by the pool for a late lunch.

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In good company

Many famous celebrities and royals have stayed at the Vittoria, such as Louis II of Bavaria (1858), the Prince of Wales (1874, 1910) King Rama V of Thailand and Queen Victoria of Sweden. Each suite has its own history and luxury décor, and some feature amazing private terraces.

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Time to explore

Later that afternoon we meet a friend who shows us the ropes and the must-see places in the little Italian town of Sorrento. The typically Italian streets are full of family-owned businesses selling artisanal products and produce grown across the region. With lemons being my favourite fruit, I was in heaven, with a huge array of drinks, jams and sweets all made from the lemons grown nearby. If you are more of a fashion fanatic, hop on a boat to the island of Capri, which is famed for its designer brands and culinary delights.

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Food for thought

Dinner in the Terrazza Bosquet Michelin-star restaurant is an unforgettable experience. Every course is exquisite, exciting and mouth-wateringly delicious. The staff and waitresses can't do enough for us and cater for my vegetarian self with an array of exciting new flavours. At sunset, we grab a cocktail at the bar and watch the sun going down over the sea and the hazy outline of mount Vesuvius. The other two restaurants on-site are equally exclusive. After a perfect night's sleep we are treated to breakfast in the Vittoria dining room. With a pianist serenading us, we fill our plates with every type of food imaginable and indulge in even more delicious flavours.

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In the kitchen

The next morning we have the chance to show off our culinary skills and make our own Neapolitan-style pizzas with the chefs at the L'Orangerie restaurant. With our chef hats and aprons on, we are taught how to make the perfect artisan pizza base and choose typical Italian toppings. After making quite a lot of mess and learning (after several attempts) how to use the stone baked oven, we sit by the pool to admire and devour our cooking.

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Head in the clouds

Later in the afternoon, I can't wait to start our adventurous trip to Naples, where we are set to climb Mount Vesuvius. My first thoughts are, 'Can you climb a volcano, and how safe is it?'. Thankfully I am soon informed that Mount Vesuvius hasn't erupted since 1944. We are driven up a very steep and windy path as we climb higher and higher from sea level. As we get about halfway up the climb you can see the lava flow from the 1944 eruption of Vesuvius. We then switch transport to a very small car, which can make it up the rest of the way to the lunar-like summit. For those who are more active, you can walk all the way up. When we reach the top we are completely dazzled by the panoramic views of Naples, its sweeping bay and Pompeii. You can walk around the summit and see plumes of steam issuing from the crater. Our steep walk back down is just as spectacular; furiously taking photographs, we tried to capture the beauty of the scene.

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And ... relax!

After our volcano walk, I can't wait to rest my weary feet and spend the morning relaxing at Vittoria's spa. Tucked away in a secluded part of the garden, the spa offers a range of treatments that will take you to pamper heaven. I opt for the Petit Luxe Collection treatment, which had been launched to celebrate their 180-year anniversary. I feel blissfully relaxed after an exfoliation and foot massage, and a neck, shoulder and face massage. The spa also has a double suite for couples with a jacuzzi and there is a private garden so you can slowly bring yourself back to reality.

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Say 'I do'

As well as being a super romantic location for your honeymoon, you can also get married at the Vittoria. With a backdrop of shimmering seas and the garden of orange and lemon trees, just imagine your wedding photos! The super luxe décor and magical Italian atmosphere are sure to wow your guests.

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Local flavour

Our final trip and experience of Italian culture is a visit to [Gentile](#), a family-owned pasta factory based in Gragnano, Naples. We are treated to several pasta dishes cooked by Maria Zampino, mother to Alberto and Pasquale, part owner of the business. The dishes are refreshingly simple, but cooked to perfection with the classic 'al dente' texture. We are shown around the small factory and introduced to the processes that go into making this famous pasta. I loved seeing the strands of spaghetti drying. As well as being sold to the Italian public and top restaurants, Gentile pasta can also be found in a selective range of delis across London – you really must try it!

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Go there!

Grand Hotel Excelsior Vittoria, Piazza Tasso, 34 – 80067, Sorrento, Italy
Seven nights at the Grand Hotel Excelsior Vittoria costs from **£1287** pp based on two adults sharing a Classic Garden View room on a B&B basis, including return flights from London Gatwick to Naples and transfers booked through **Classic Collection** (0800 294 9324; classic-collection.co.uk). **For further information on The Grand Hotel Excelsior Vittoria, visit www.exvitt.it or call the hotel on +39 081 877 7871.**