

ITALY DECODED

VOLUME I · THE GUIDE

# Hidden Italy

*10 Places Tourists Miss*

A FIELD GUIDE

Italy, away from the pol...ards.

BEGIN THE JOURNEY

## INTRODUCTION

# Italy you haven't been told about.



Most of Italy fits inside ten postcards: Rome, Florence, Venice, the Amalfi Coast, Capri, Cinque Terre, Lake Como. They are extraordinary. They are also exhausted — stripped of everything except the photograph.

The Italy in these pages is the other one. Villages built into cliffs, pastel harbours nobody photographs, alpine hamlets that still speak medieval German, an island ten minutes from Capri that the world forgot.

Each chapter gives you one place — what makes it itself, how to get there, where to sleep, what to eat, and the one thing the locals would tell you over coffee.

— *Italy Decoded*

# Ten hidden places

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◆ FEATURED TRAVEL ESSENTIAL

# Speak like a local. Anywhere from Puglia to the Dolomites.

Lingo Sidekick is the pocket Italian companion built for travelers — instant phrases, dialect-aware menus, and confidence at the caffè bar.



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01

■ LAZIO

THE DYING CITY

# Civita di Bagnoregio

## *The Dying City*

Perched on a crumbling tuff plateau and reached only by a slim footbridge, Civita feels suspended between earth and sky. A handful of residents live among medieval lanes that have been slowly slipping into the valley for centuries. Arrive at dawn — the village rises out of the mist like an apparition.

### HOW TO GO

Bus from Bagnoregio, then a 10-minute walk across the footbridge.

### WHERE TO EAT

Alma Civita — cellar restaurant cut into the volcanic rock.

### WHERE TO STAY

Corte della Maestà — a tiny restored palazzo inside the village.

### INSIDER TIP

Stay overnight. When the day-trippers leave at sunset, the village is yours.

02



■ BASILICATA

AMONG THE STONE SPIRES

# Castelmezzano

## *Among the Stone Spires*

Hidden inside the jagged peaks of the Dolomiti Lucane, Castelmezzano is a cluster of pale stone houses pinned between vertical cliffs. The light here is theatrical, the silence absolute. From the village you can ride the Volo dell'Angelo — a steel cable that carries you over the valley to its twin, Pietrapertosa.

### HOW TO GO

Drive from Potenza (1h) — the approach itself is part of the experience.

### WHERE TO STAY

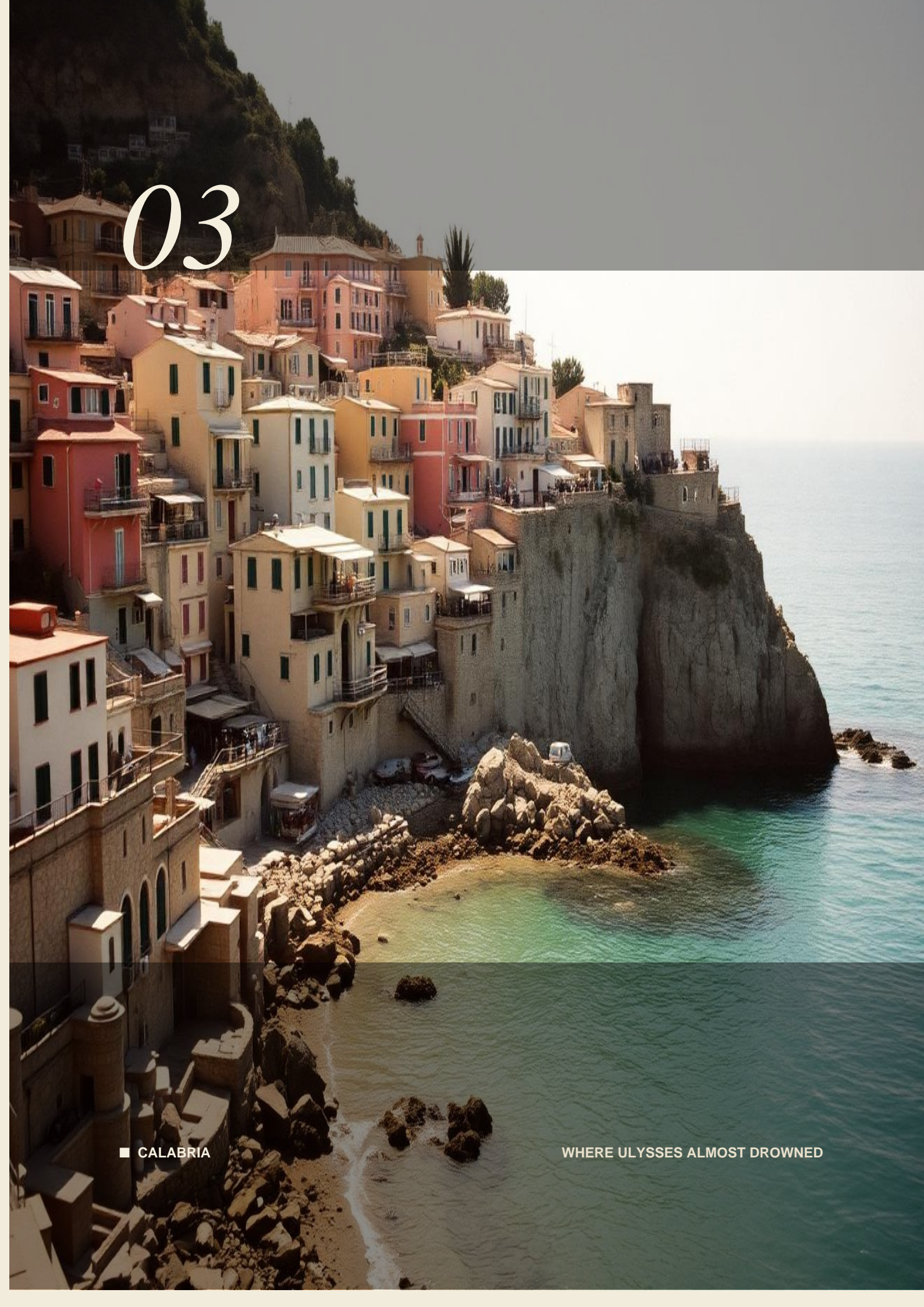
Hotel Dolomiti — simple, quiet, with rooms that face the rock walls.

### WHERE TO EAT

Al Becco della Civetta — slow-cooked Lucano lamb and house-made pasta.

### INSIDER TIP

Walk the Sette Pietre path between the two villages at golden hour.



03

■ CALABRIA

WHERE ULYSSES ALMOST DROWNED

# Scilla

## *Where Ulysses Almost Drowned*

On the Calabrian tip of Italy, Scilla's old fishermen quarter — Chianalea — has houses that step directly into the sea. Mythology placed a sea monster here; today there are only swordfish boats, narrow lanes, and a castle catching the last of the sun. The water turns silver at dusk.

### HOW TO GO

Train to Scilla station, then 5-minute walk down to Chianalea.

### WHERE TO STAY

Le Piccole Grotte — rooms carved into the cliff above the harbour.

### WHERE TO EAT

Bleu de Toi — swordfish carpaccio with citrus, on a terrace over the water.

### INSIDER TIP

Swim from the rocks at Marina Grande just before sunset.

04



■ FRIULI-VENEZIA GIULIA

AN ALPINE SECRET

# Sauris

## *An Alpine Secret*

Tucked deep in the Carnic Alps near the Austrian border, Sauris is two hamlets of dark wooden houses gathered around a turquoise glacial lake. The locals still speak an archaic Germanic dialect. Smoke from prosciutto-curing chimneys drifts through the pines.

### HOW TO GO

From Udine (2h drive) via the dramatic Val Lumiei road.

### WHERE TO EAT

Alla Pace — speck, smoked trout, and dark mountain bread.

### WHERE TO STAY

Albergo Diffuso Sauris — restored shepherds' cabins scattered through the village.

### INSIDER TIP

Visit Wolf, the family-run prosciutto smokehouse — try the 24-month aged.

05



■ UMBRIA

THE FLOATING VILLAGE

# Castelluccio di Norcia

## *The Floating Village*

Sitting alone on a hill above the vast Piano Grande plateau, Castelluccio is famous for one thing: the fioritura. From late June to early July, the entire plain explodes into wild colour — poppies, cornflowers, narcissus, lentil blossoms — and the village seems to float on a sea of paint.

### HOW TO GO

Drive from Norcia (40 min) on a single switchback road.

### WHERE TO EAT

Locanda de' Senari — lentil soup made with the village's tiny famed legumes.

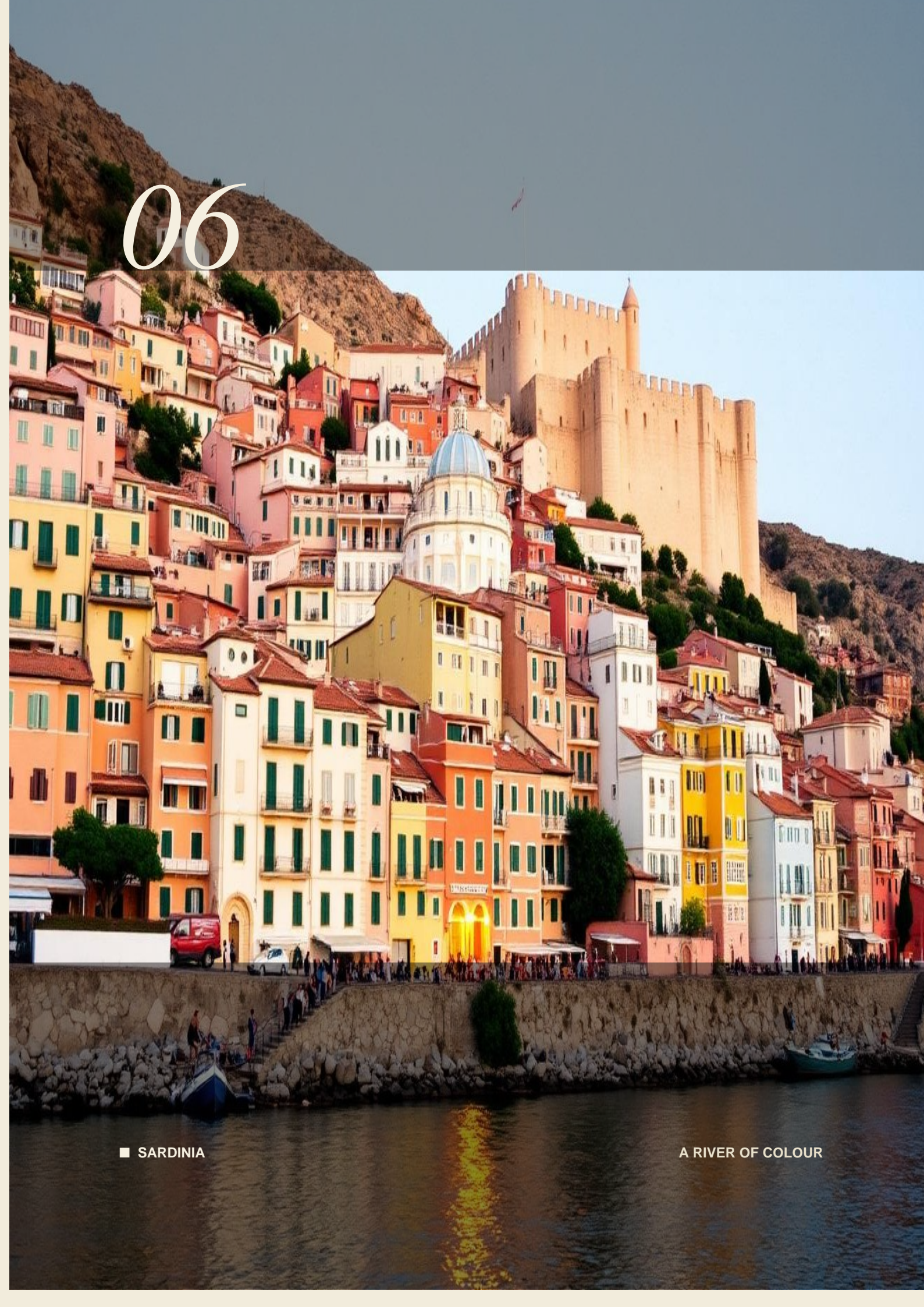
### WHERE TO STAY

Agriturismo Sibilla — farmhouse rooms with views over the bloom.

### INSIDER TIP

Come on a weekday morning. Weekends in peak bloom are crowded.

06



■ SARDINIA

A RIVER OF COLOUR

# Bosa

## *A River of Colour*

Most travellers race past Sardinia's west coast to reach the famous beaches. They miss Bosa — pastel houses in pink, ochre and saffron stacked along the Temo river beneath the Malaspina castle. It's the only navigable river in Sardinia. Old fishermen still mend nets at the water's edge.

### HOW TO GO

From Alghero airport (1h drive south along the coast road).

### WHERE TO EAT

Sa Pischedda — handmade malloreddus pasta with local Malvasia wine.

### WHERE TO STAY

Corte Fiorita — a riverside albergo diffuso of restored townhouses.

### INSIDER TIP

Drive the coastal road to Alghero — possibly Italy's most beautiful coast drive.

07

■ PUGLIA

SALENTO, SLOWLY



# Specchia

*Salento, Slowly*

While Ostuni and Lecce overflow, Specchia stays quiet. Whitewashed lanes wind past low arches and bougainvillea. It's been listed among Italy's most beautiful villages, yet you can still walk the entire historic centre at midday and meet only a sleeping cat.

## HOW TO GO

From Lecce (1h drive), or fly to Brindisi.

## WHERE TO STAY

Palazzo Risolo — a 16th-century palazzo with a hidden interior courtyard.

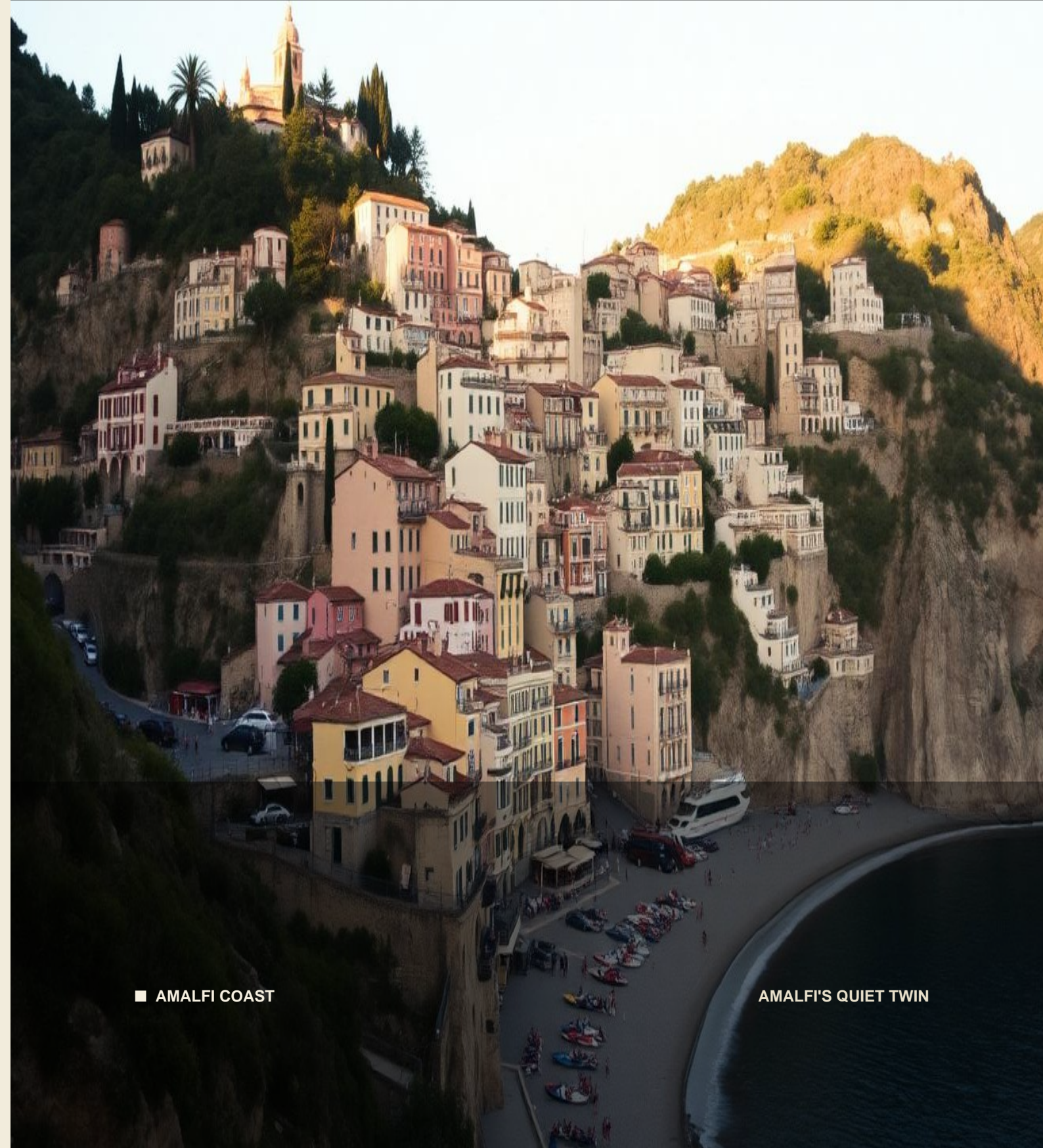
## WHERE TO EAT

Le Stanzie — a slow-food masseria 15 min away, lunch on the terrace.

## INSIDER TIP

Use Specchia as a base for the Adriatic and Ionian coasts — both 20 min away.

08



■ AMALFI COAST

AMALFI'S QUIET TWIN

# Atrani

## *Amalfi's Quiet Twin*

A 10-minute walk from chaotic Amalfi, tucked into a steep ravine, lies Atrani — the smallest commune in southern Italy. A single piazza opens onto a small beach. There are no tour buses. There is no parking. There is, instead, the Amalfi Coast as it once was.

### HOW TO GO

Walk from Amalfi (10 min) along the cliff path.

### WHERE TO STAY

Palazzo Ferraioli — a quiet boutique hotel on the piazza.

### WHERE TO EAT

Le Arcate — pasta with seafood under stone arches by the sea.

### INSIDER TIP

Order coffee at A'Paranza in the piazza — sit there an entire morning.

A vertical photograph of a narrow, sunlit street in a white-washed town. The street is flanked by tall, white buildings with terracotta roofs. In the background, a church tower with a small dome is visible. The scene is bathed in warm, golden light, suggesting late afternoon or early morning. The overall atmosphere is peaceful and historic.

09

■ PUGLIA

THE WHITE CIRCLE

# Locorotondo

## *The White Circle*

Built on a perfect circle, Locorotondo is a labyrinth of bone-white limewashed houses with sloped cummerse roofs you won't find anywhere else in Italy. Just down the hill, the trulli of Alberobello draw the crowds — but here, the streets stay yours.

### HOW TO GO

Train from Bari (1h 20 min) on the Sud-Est line.

### WHERE TO STAY

Sotto le Cummerse — restored townhouses scattered through the historic centre.

### WHERE TO EAT

Quanto Basta — natural wines and modern Pugliese cooking.

### INSIDER TIP

At sunset, walk the Villa Comunale ring — the entire Itria valley opens out.



# 10

■ BAY OF NAPLES

ITALY'S FORGOTTEN ISLAND

# Procida

## *Italy's Forgotten Island*

Capri's celebrity drowns out its quiet neighbour. Procida is barely four square kilometres of pastel fishing harbours, lemon groves, and silent lanes. It became Italy's Capital of Culture in 2022 — and somehow still nobody comes. The marina at Corricella is one of the most photographed places in Italy that almost nobody visits.

### HOW TO GO

Ferry from Naples (40 min) or Pozzuoli (25 min).

### WHERE TO STAY

La Casa sul Mare — a small hotel above the Marina Corricella.

### WHERE TO EAT

Da Mariano — spaghetti with sea urchins, eaten with the boats at your feet.

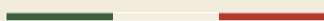
### INSIDER TIP

Skip Capri entirely. Spend two nights here instead.

AFTERWORD

Travel slowly.

*Stay a second night.*



These ten places aren't a checklist. They're an argument — that the most beautiful Italy is rarely the one on the map's first page. Pick one. Spend three days. Walk it at dusk. Eat where the locals eat. Then come back and tell us what we missed.