



PEARLS OF THE MEDITERRANEAN

THIS MYSTERIOUS ARCHIPELAGO OFF THE COAST OF ITALY FEELS LIKE ITS OWN UNIVERSE, SEPARATE FROM THE MAINLAND. THE PONTINE ISLANDS FASCINATE VISITORS WITH THEIR ALLURING BEAUTY, BOTH ABOVE AND BELOW THE SEA'S SURFACE.

Known for clear, fluorescent-seeming waters, strikingly beautiful natural scenery, idyllic vertical towns, and incredible seafood, these islands have been dubbed the “Pearls of the Mediterranean.” A voyage to the Pontine Islands is a journey to a lesser-known way of life that moves at its own pace—each harbor home to idyllic Italian island culture and natural splendor.

Sailors setting out to explore the Pontine begin their voyage in the Gulf of Naples and sail about 60 nautical miles westward, departing from one of several available ports—including Procida, Sorrento, Castellammare di Stabia, and Naples itself—and passing the islands of Capri and Ischia on the way. As stunning as the Amalfi Coast, Capri and other famed seaside villages may be, the opportunity to sail these lesser-explored islands and coves is not to be missed. This sailor's paradise is located further out into the Tyrrhenian Sea than other islands in the region; leaving safe-harbor may feel like sailing into the open ocean. Yet, in time, you see the cliffs of Ponza from afar. It is a long journey, but one that comes with many rewards.

Le Isole Ponziane, as they are known in Italian, are a cluster of six islands including Ponza—the largest in the archipelago—Palmarola, Gavi, Zannone, Ventotene, and Santo Stefano. Ponza and Ventotene are the only two inhabited islands in the group, with

just one small restaurant on Palmarola. Both Ponza and Ventotene have medium-sized towns that are home to islanders and vacationing Italians, mostly from Naples or Rome, who spend their summers enjoying the delightful blue waters and bountiful landscapes along the islands' shorelines. International tourism is not so prevalent on these islands, compared to nearby Capri or Ischia. These islands, whose culture and traditions have their roots in the days of the Roman Empire, served as a retreat for wealthy citizens in ancient times, and sometimes as an escape for prominent exiles. Today, the summer residents are escaping from a very different Rome, aiming to relax and enjoy a pace of life unlike that found in the busy cities.

The Pontine Islands offer not only great conditions for sailing, but also numerous accessible harbors; picturesque seaside villages have local charm and laid-back attitude in abundance. It is a destination that will make you want to stay awhile once you have

