

Quiet island is like a slice of movie magic

Stacey Barnfield visits a tranquil retreat in the Bay of Naples, which has been a mecca for film makers for years

Here's one for the movie buffs among you. Which Italian beauty has starred in dozens of cinema blockbusters in a film career spanning more than 70 years? The answer? The quaint Mediterranean island of Procida, in the Bay of Naples.

For it's here that Jude Law and Matt Damon filmed many of the scenes that won them rave reviews for their roles in *The Talented Mr Ripley* in 1999.

And it's also the place that one of Italy's most celebrated films – *Il Postino* – was shot in 1994.

It's easy to see why movie location experts flock to this lovely little island when searching for rustic Italian scenery and tumbledown architecture because, with its historic pastel-coloured houses and narrow cobbled streets, it's got the lot.

Often overlooked by the tourist hordes who head for the Gucci-lined streets of nearby Capri, or the thermal spa resorts on neighbouring Ischia, Procida has a charm all of its own, with a wonderful mix of working harbours, antique villages and family-friendly beaches.

Our favourite beach was Spiaggia del Pozzovechio, one of the locations in *Il Postino*.

With its shallow expanse of beautiful blue water and soft sand it was perfect for our four-year-old son to play. We spent an idyllic morning there watching small boats slowly cruise into the bay and drop anchor as the sun rose over the island and focused its gaze on the beach.

A visit there is a good option for anyone on a budget. Unlike many of Italy's beaches, where paying for a sunbed, chair and umbrella are the norm, you have the option of relaxing on the sand for free.

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We also spent a day at Ciraccio beach where you can enjoy views of the protected nature reserve of Vivara, which is connected to Procida by bridge.

Our base in Procida was the sumptuous La Suite Hotel and Spa. Its contemporary design could comfortably grace the pages of a high-class interiors magazine, with stylish oversized lanterns and Buddha statue heads adding a magical feel to the tranquil private gardens, especially at night. The pool, too, is something else, with its sleek black floor, surrounded by smart loungers and parasols.

The aim of this 15-room boutique hotel is serious relaxation. You can switch off with a good book or magazine on one of the giant day beds or hanging basket chairs dotted around the grounds or your own private patio, in one of the more expensive rooms.

The hotel also has an adjoining spa offering beauty treatments and relaxation therapies, which you can



Marina Corricella, Procida.

use at an extra cost.

Our standard room was stylishly-furnished with a generous spa-style shower. Although we felt storage was a bit limited for a family with a suitcase full of youngster-clutter. But its location couldn't have been better. Each room is just a few seconds walk from the hotel's pool, bar and restaurant.

Worth a mention is the hotel's evening shuttle service to the island's main tourist spots of Marina Corricella, Marina Chiaiolella and Marina Grande.

Procida is just a half-hour hydrofoil crossing from Naples. Arriving at the harbour Marina Grande you'll have the lovely view of fishermen's houses being reflected by the blue water. A wonderful welcome to a truly charming destination.



Things to see and do

- Watch the sun set and admire the panorama from the island's historical centre, Terra Murata – worth the steep trek uphill to see the abbey church of San Michele and stunning views of the Bay of Naples.
- Wander through the pretty and ancient streets leading to

Marina Corricella, where harbour-front bars and seafood restaurants are on offer to watch the world go by. ■ Ristorante La Pergola is worth a visit (Via Vincenzo Rinaldi 37). It offers top-quality Italian specialities including hand-made fresh ravioli to die for on its menu of dishes con-

taining locally-sourced ingredients. ■ Relax with a good read... you've come to Procida to escape the mainland masses and throngs heading for Capri and Ischia. Pozzovechio and Ciraccio beaches are two of the best on the island and worth visiting.



Pozzovechio beach.

Travel Facts

Stacey stayed in Procida courtesy of La Suite Hotel & Spa: Via Flavio Gioia, Isola di Procida, Italy. Telephone: +39 081 8101564 or visit www.lasuiteresort.com for prices and reservations.

Snav runs regular ferry crossings to Procida from Naples. The journey takes less than an hour and seating is comfortable with refreshments on board. Prices are around 15 euros per adult (suitcases extra). Visit www.snnav.it for timetables. Easyjet fly to Naples from several UK airports.