



MAGNA *news* GRAECIA



Official bulletin of Magna Graecia International Fellowship

n. 3 - January 1998

FROM THE CHAIRMAN

Dear Friends of Magna Graecia,

The much-debated choice of the area "in the shadow of Vesuvius" - one of the most famous tourist regions in the world - for the '98 Tour-meeting necessitates some explanation. It is an area that offers everything a tourist could wish for, but it is burdened by commonplaces, and generally package tours whip through the sites very rapidly. Rushing through places, without "seeing" them, the tourist has an incomplete impression which is detrimental to the fascination such places should have, especially since most people have dreamed about them since schooldays!

To avoid this, we have chosen an itinerary with a few special places to visit which, despite your staying in the area longer than the standard tours, will give you only some idea of the vastness and the variety of this area's cultural heritage. We hope that this "taste" of the region will make you want to come back again when you realise how much there is to discover and to learn about.

Unlike the grandiose monuments of Egypt or Imperial Rome, the archaeological sites preserved by the eruption of Mount Vesuvius in 79 A.D. are the only ones that reveal everyday life in ancient times.

These sites have a further significance: rediscovered by the Bourbon Charles III in the eighteenth century, they were a vital part of the "Grand Tour" that had such a huge impact on art and architecture in eighteenth-century Europe, giving birth to Neo-classicism. Immense projects were undertaken in this period to make the Bourbon desire to transform Naples into a great modern capital become reality.

The King went from one official opening to another, and every new building aroused general admiration. Each official opening was accompanied by celebrations for the populace, with military parades, street decorations and fireworks. These events were immortalised by the court painters, such as Pitloo, founder of the *Scuola Napoletana* of landscape painters, even though he was Dutch!

There is no doubt that the avant-garde spirit - a sign that Southern Italy was very keen to be part of Europe - and the cosmopolitan atmosphere - due to the many prestigious foreign artists called to collaborate - fostered remarkable progress in every field. Naples became the only European capital in Italy that, according to Shelley, could vie with Paris. For Dumas père, Naples had something more than Paris.

However the European dimension of the capital Naples lay in its longstanding cultural institutes which, in the past just as today, have always aroused interest throughout the whole continent. So much so that Alphonse de Lamartine said, "I will not leave this city".

We have therefore decided to include in the Tour a visit to the most eloquent traces of this "golden century" of the Bourbon monarchy: the Royal Palaces at Naples and Caserta, the "silk-city" of San Leucio and the aqueduct designed by Vanvitelli.

The end-product is an invitation to take part in a tour that, because of the remarkable fusion of archaeology and monuments with the environment, takes place in an often agonisingly beautiful "cultural landscape": a message about Civilisation!

Arrivederci in May!

TOUR MEETING 1998

IMPERIAL VILLAS AND ROYAL PALACES IN THE SHADOW OF VESUVIUS

This year's tour focuses on two of the most brilliant periods in Southern Italy's history: the era of the Roman Empire and the Bourbon monarchy in Naples.

IMPERIAL VILLAS

After the period of conquest that led to the Pax Romana, the Emperors, from Julius Caesar to Romulus Augustulus, and their Court used to spend the summer in the magnificent *Imperial Villas*, the remains of which can be seen all round the Bay of Naples. One of the oldest, on a cliff overlooking Baia, is believed to be part of the luxurious villa that Julius Caesar had built for his own use, according to Seneca, because of the breathtaking view. Further excavation will no doubt reveal other marvels. Other VIPs of the Roman Empire, such as Tiberius, Nero, Cicero and Pompey, lived in similar villas and with their courts created the *dolce vita* of the time along the "golden coasts of the Bay of Lust" as Cicero described them. The beaches - especially the beach at Baia - was "known to be fatal to female virtues" as Propertius wrote on learning that his beloved Cynthia had gone there.

At the present time excavations on the opposite side of the Bay of Naples are bringing to light another magnificent villa like Caesar's: the famous Villa of the Papyri at Herculaneum which belonged to Julius Caesar's father-in-law. The villa is 300 metres long, 150 meters wide and 15 meters high, a construction unparalleled in antiquity. Paul Getty's reconstruction at Malibu will no longer be valid as a copy, and it will require huge funding to build a new copy.

Because of the limits we have had to impose, we will take you to only a few of these archaeological sites, but we have given precedence to those not yet open, or only recently opened, to the general public.

ROYAL PALACES

After the long period under Spanish vice-roys, when nevertheless Naples was the cultural capital of the Spanish Empire, the Bourbons made Naples a kingdom in its own right again and gave Naples a splendid artistic heritage that made the capital famous throughout Europe. We have chosen to visit the *Royal Palaces* built by King Charles III in the eighteenth century at Naples and Caserta. You will be able to have some idea of their magnificence, even though the Savoy monarchy stripped them of many of their furnishings and works of art to furnish the Quirinale, the palace in Rome of the monarch of the new united Italy, and other public buildings.

Incredibly, many of the residences built by the Bourbon Charles III were for his great passion, hunting. But the Royal Palace at Caserta was the jewel in the crown. Designed by Vanvitelli, the Dutch architect loaned by the Pope, with competent suggestions from the King himself, it was defined at the time by the envious monarchs of Austria and Great Britain "the biggest palace (1,200 rooms) in the smallest kingdom". In fact Vanvitelli built a magnificent palace which he justly claimed differed from the model of Versailles. Later, to emulate her sister Marie-Antoinette, Queen of France, Queen Maria Carolina, wife of King Ferdinand IV, added an English garden in the grounds with rare plants.

The furnishings (silk, tapestries, paintings, statues, furniture, porcelain and silver), produced in factories founded by the Bourbons or commissioned from the best artists and craftsmen, can give us some idea of the splendour and refinement of the Bourbon court.

STOP PRESS

The undeniable importance of the sites we have chosen to visit was underlined authoritatively during the Unesco Conference held in Naples in December '97 when it was decided to include among the World Heritage Sites Pompeii, Oplontis, Herculaneum, and Caserta with the following motivations:

For the archaeological area at the foot of Vesuvius: *"The impressive remains of the town of Pompeii, of Herculaneum and of the surrounding villages which were swallowed up in the eruption of Vesuvius in 79 A.D. provide a unique and rich testimony of society and everyday life in a precise moment of the past: there is no equivalent anywhere in the world."*

For the Royal Palace at Caserta (including the grounds, Vanvitelli's aqueduct and San Leucio): *"Although built on the pattern of other royal estates in the eighteenth century, the monumental complex is exceptional because of the wide scale of its conception, in that it includes not only an imposing Palace with its grounds, but also a great deal of the surrounding countryside and a new and ambitious town designed in accordance with the town-planning precepts of the time."*

For the historic city centre of Naples, there is a commemorative plaque in Piazza del Gesù which reads: *"Naples is one of Europe's most ancient cities. It still clearly preserves the traces of precious past traditions, of the incomparable vitality of a myriad artists and artisans and of its full 2,500 years of history. Among its alleyways and streets, in its squares and in its buildings, there emerged a unique culture based on universal values, heralding mutual tolerance, solidarity and peace among peoples. Since 1995 its historical city centre has been listed among the Unesco World Heritage Sites and thus now belongs to all humanity."*

CELEBRATION OF "FELLOWSHIP DAY"



a) If the date we have proposed to the Naples Rotary Clubs to celebrate Fellowship Day (May 21st) is accepted, you will have the chance to spend a relaxing day cruising along the magnificent coasts of the Bay of Naples. It is a very interesting trip, in that you can view **from the sea**, the beautiful gentle arc of coastlene, an area sailors yearned for in ancient times, the mythical place where Ulysses and Aeneas lande

If the weather is bad, there are two half-day excursions possible in the morning, organised by the local tour-agency:

- b) Royal Palace of Capodimonte (Farnese Collection).
- c) National Archaeological Museum (new collections).



MAGNA GRAECIA

International Fellowship



TOUR - MEETING 1998

"IMPERIAL VILLAS AND ROYAL PALACES IN THE SHADOW OF VESUVIUS"

SUNDAY 17th MAY

- 18.30 Welcome cocktail party in Hotel Sakura with the Organising Committee who will illustrate the tour and distribute documentation.
- 20.00 Dinner in the Hotel.

MONDAY 18th MAY

- 09.00 Departure for Pompeii. Meeting with the Director of Excavations. Tour of archaeological remains in Pompeii closed to the general public. (Itinerary: the Suburban Baths at Porta Marina, the Forum, the Consular Way, the Necropolis at Porto Ercolaneo, the villa of the Julius-Claudius family known as Villa dei Misteri).
- 12.30 Buffet lunch with local specialities in a Roman peristyle in the excavations.
- 14.30 Tour of the new Museum of Imperial Suburban Farms at Boscoreale with the Museum's Curator.
Tasting of Vesuvius wines.
- 16.00 Tour of the Villa belonging to Nero and Poppea at Oplontis (Torre Annunziata) with its Curator.
- 20.00 Dinner in Hotel with Pompeii-Oplonti-Vesuvio Est Rotary Club.

TUESDAY 19th MAY

- 09.00 Departure for Naples. Tour of the Old Town, starting in Piazza del Gesù.
- 13.30 Lunch with Napoli and Napoli Castel dell'Ovo Rotary Clubs.
- 15.00 Tour of Royal Palace.
- 17.00 Shopping.
- 20.00 Dinner in Hotel.

WEDNESDAY 20th MAY

- 09.00 Departure for Herculaneum. Tour of the recent excavations (Suburban Baths) and the Underground Theatre (closed to the general public) with the Director of the Excavations.
- 13.00 Lunch in characteristic restaurant on the slopes of Vesuvius.
- 15.30 Ascent of Mount Vesuvius and tour of the Observatory.
- 20.00 Dinner with Ottaviano Rotary Club.

THURSDAY 21st MAY

- Relaxing free day with lunch in Hotel.
- 17.00 Visit to coral work-shop.
- 20.00 Dinner in Hotel.

FRIDAY 22nd MAY

- 09.00 Departure for Caserta. Tour of Royal Palace and grounds, including the English Garden.
- 13.30 Lunch with Caserta-Terra del Lavoro Rotary Club.
- 16.00 Tour of "Il Tari", jewellery centre.
- 20.00 Dinner "with mandolins" in Hotel with Torre del Greco - Comuni Vesuviani Rotary Club.

SATURDAY 23rd MAY

- 09.00 Departure for tour of the Roman Villas at Stabiae (Castellammare di Stabia) with the Director of the Excavations.
- 13.00 Lunch by the sea with Castellammare di Stabia Rotary Club.
- 16.00 Return to Hotel. Afternoon free.
- 20.00 Gala Dinner with Organising Committee and the Friends of Magna Graecia from the various host clubs. Piano Bar.

SUNDAY 24th MAY

- Breakfast in Hotel.