



SLICE OF THE CITY NAPLES

Naples is like Rio de Janeiro. It's like Caracas. You get the best and the worst. There's no in-between." I am sitting in **50 Kalo**, a new pizzeria in the heart of the well-heeled Chiaia neighbourhood, with Maurizio Cortese, the effusive local consultant who helped open the restaurant. It's Thursday night and there is a queue of young Neapolitans outside. It's not bad for somewhere that only opened in February, especially considering the fierce competition it faces. After all, this is a city that protects its most famous export via an association that certifies the genuine article. Look out for Associazione Vera Pizza Napoletana signs outside pizzerias – 50 Kalo is one of them.

Born and bred in Naples, Maurizio is explaining the city's insalubrious reputation. "It makes me sad," he says. "Because Naples has a bad name." It's true that, for years, Naples suffered from a combination of petty street crime, unsightly graffiti, ceaseless traffic, and mounting litter, which was controlled – and often neglected – by the city's organised crime gang, the Camorra. But things are changing. Indeed, easyJet added Naples to its Luton route map this week, with three flights operating every week to the Campanian capital.

On a free tour of **Toledo station** (anm.it), I learn about an ambitious project to transform the city's transport hubs from sombre, undesigned spaces into thriving art platforms. Run by ANM, the body that presides over Naples's metro system, the tour explains the story behind the eye-catching murals and installations, with changing themes each month. As I make my way down the escalator, I'm greeted by a full-wall mosaic by William Kentridge, then a sparkling, LED-lit blue hole by Robert Wilson and, finally, a photographic montage by Oliviero Toscani that depicts a sea of diverse faces from Naples and beyond. But there's one more surprise: Francesco Clemente's mural of multicoloured marble and yellow ceramic marks the final flourish of what's been labelled one of the world's most beautiful stations.

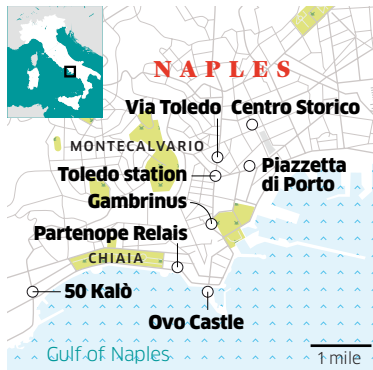
Toledo is among 17 stops to get the art treatment – a testament to the determination of Naples to develop its transport system and ease the choking pressure on the streets above. Above ground, the litter is noticeably absent too, after the new mayor, Luigi de Magistris, delivered on his pledge to take control of the city's rubbish. has also pedestrianised part of the city's seafront close to the **Castel dell'Ovo**, where bike lanes have been introduced to encourage cycling. Though initially controversial among car-loving Neapolitans, it has been hailed as a success. There may still be peeling paint and graffiti on the aging palazzi of the old town, but as Maurizio says, Naples is anything but mediocre.



**NOISY NEIGHBOUR**  
Vesuvius looms over the city and the bay (main); 50 Kalo pizzeria (below right); Toledo station (below left) EPA; AFP/GETTY IMAGES

# Italy's pizza capital ups the temptation

Previously tarnished by associations with litter and crime, this seductive seaside city is cleaning up its act, says **Laura Holt**



**UNPACK**

**Partenope Relais** (00 39 081 764 69 18; partenoperelais.it) is, according to the manager, "the only contemporary hotel on the seafront". Indeed, this cinema-themed property, which opened last year, mimics the fresh, modern approach of its location, overlooking the recently pedestrianised waterfront. Joggers, dog-walkers and skaters pound the pavement outside, beyond which the island of Capri crowns the horizon. Double rooms from €130 (£103), including breakfast.

**THINK LOCAL**

The city's recent embrace of cycling encouraged three local Lycra enthusiasts to launch **Bike Tour Napoli** (00 39 335 152 5480; biketournapoli.com; half-day tours from €18/£14pp). As well as offering city-centre cycles, the company runs trips that assail the slopes of Posillipo. The former fishing village-turned-wealthy-residential enclave affords panoramic views of Naples. As you move around the coast, you'll spy the islands of the Bay of Naples and the brooding, black hulk of Mount Vesuvius rising in the distance.

**EAT**

Fresh ingredients from the surrounding Campania region make **50 Kalo** (00 39 081 192 04 667; 50kalo.it), on the Piazza Sannazaro, the hot new ticket, where huge margherita and marinara pizzas – both of which were conceived in Naples and are traditionally the only two flavours – cost from just €5 (£3.90).

To try another local speciality, book a table at **Baccalaria** (00 39 081 012 00 49; baccalaria.it), which opened on the Piazzetta del Porto in May. The restaurant specialises in baccala (salt cod), which features in every dish. Try it prepared, ceviche-style, in a caprese salad (€10/£7.90) or cooked with fusilli (€9/£7.10).

**DRINK**

The **Gran Caffè Gambrinus**, on the corner of Via Chiaia (00 39 081 41 75 82; grancaffegambrinus.com), has welcomed the likes of Oscar Wilde during its 150-year history. Today, it's a great place to people-watch on the Piazza Triesto e Trento, but to take in the city's new literary scene, visit **Intramoenia** on the Piazza Bellini (00 39 081 451652; intramoenia.it). The small bookshop and café is where young, left-wing locals congregate.

**SPEND**

The smartest shopping in town is on the **Via Chiaia**, while nearby **Via Toledo** provides a more commercial counterpoint, with all the usual high-street brands. But for an insight into age-old Neapolitan craftsmanship, visit **Via San Gregorio Armeno**, in the Centro Storico (old town), where hole-in-the-wall ateliers sell intricate wooden nativity figures all year round.

**DON'T MISS**

As well as the underground art project, the city also has miles of subterranean ruins. Meet at the corner of **Piazza San Gaetano** for a candle-lit tour of the old Greek city, known as **Neapolis** or "New Town", which moves through narrow stone passages that are not for the faint hearted (00 39 081 29 69 44; napolisotterranea.org; 90-minute tours from €10/£7.90pp).

**TRAVEL ESSENTIALS**

a three-night city break with return flights and accommodation at the Hotel Paradiso from £299pp. easyJet (0843 104 5000; easyjet.com) flies to Naples from Gatwick, Stansted and Luton.

**GETTING THERE**  
Laura Holt travelled to Naples with Citalia (0843 770 4443; citalia.com), which offers

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