

WORLD HERITAGE LIST

Costiera Amalfitana (Italy)

No 830

Identification

<i>Nomination</i>	The Costiera Amalfitana
<i>Location</i>	Communes of Amalfi, Atrani, Cetara, Conca dei Marini, Corbara, Furore, Maiori, Minori, Praiano, Positano, Ravello, Scala, Sant'Egidio, Montalbino, Tramonti, and Vietri sul Mare, which form part of the Comunità Montana "Penisola Amalfitana": Salerno Province, Campanian Region
<i>State Party</i>	Italy
<i>Date</i>	19 July 1997

Justification by State Party

The Amalfi coast can rightly be defined as an area of outstanding cultural value, the astonishing work of both nature and man. In this area, nature is both unspoiled and harmoniously fused with the results of man's activity. The landscape is marked by rocky areas, wood, and *maquis*, but also by citrus groves and vineyards, grown wherever human beings could find a suitable spot.

The coastal areas have retained their distinctive features over the course of the centuries, and have played a major role in the history and culture of mankind. It is necessary only to mention the economic power attained by the Maritime Republic of Amalfi, and the refined architecture, born out of the fusion of oriental and western elements and known as the Arab-Norman style. Typical examples of this style are the numerous monumental cathedrals, full of priceless works of art, such as the *mitre* of Scala.

Other artistic and literary expressions of reactions to the area may be summed up in the phrase "the Grand Tour," a phenomenon that continued well into the present century. Another important feature is the manufacture of ceramics in Vietri, where the local style was fused with that of the famous ceramics of Faenza, creating a ceramic style which combines the cultures of both northern and southern Italy.

The landscape and topography of the area are virtually unique, and feature particular ecological and biological characteristics. Some of the most beautiful places in the world are to be found in the Costiera, where there are areas that are fundamental for the conservation of biodiversity and where endangered species of exceptional value thrive.

Criteria i, ii, iv, v, and vi

Category of property

In terms of the categories of cultural property set out in the 1972 World Heritage Convention, this is a *site*. It is also a *continuing cultural landscape* as defined in paragraph 39(ii) of the *Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of the World Heritage Convention* (1997).

History and Description

The wall of the church of Santa Maria in Positano has a bas-relief by an unknown artist depicting a fishing fox. This is the symbol of the Costiera Amalfitana and the unchanging relationship between sea and mountains, the two elements that shape this landscape.

The nominated area covers 11,231ha in fifteen communes in the Province of Salerno. Its natural boundary is the southern slope of the peninsula formed by the Lattari hills which, stretching from the Picentini hills to the Tyrrhenian Sea, separate the Gulf of Naples from the Gulf of Salerno.

Administratively, it is part of the Penisola Amalfitana, which corresponds almost exactly to the territory of the ancient Republic of Amalfi. It consists of four main stretches of coast (Amalfi, Atrani, Reginna Maior, Reginna Minor) with some minor ones (Positano, Praiano, Certaria, Hercle), with the mountain villages of Scala, Tramonti, and Ravello and hamlets of Conca and Furore behind and above them.

Palaeolithic and Mesolithic materials have been found in the La Porta cave at Positano, and the area was favoured by the Romans, judging from the villas of Positano, Minori, and Gallo Lungo. However, the area was not intensively settled until the early Middle Ages, when the Gothic War made it a place of refuge.

Amalfi was founded in the 4th century AD. A new Roman colony in nearby Lucania came under barbarian attack and the inhabitants moved to the fertile and well watered hilly area around modern Scala. In the first written reference to Amalfi (596) it was already a fortified town and the seat of a bishopric. It resisted Lombard attacks until 838, when it was conquered and looted by Sicardo. However, after his death the following year the town, which owed only token allegiance to Byzantium, declared its independence. The new Republic was governed by a ruler whose title had become *Doge* (Duke) by 958.

This political autonomy enabled Amalfi to become a maritime trading power between the early 9th and late 11th centuries, when the sea power of Byzantium was in decline and a free market developed. Amalfi had a near-monopoly of trade in the Tyrrhenian Sea, with a vast networks of links, selling Italian products (wood, iron, weapons, wine, fruit) in eastern markets and buying in return spices, perfumes, pearls, jewels, textiles, and carpets to sell in the west.

The culture that developed made major contributions to, *inter alia*, maritime law and navigation (the nautical compass was invented in Amalfi) with close links with the east. The layout of the settlements that developed showed eastern influence: the closely spaced houses, climbing up the steep hillsides and connected by a maze of alleys and stairs, are reminiscent of the *souks* of the Levant. A distinctive Arab-Sicilian architecture originated and developed in Amalfi. The eastern connections also brought new or improved crafts to the area - stone-dressing, paper processing, tanning, silkworm culture and the weaving of silk, and polychrome glazed pottery production. Wool was also being spun and woven and exported all over Italy, coral worked for luxury objects, and pasta making and cooking refined.

With the eclipse of the mercantile importance of Amalfi by Genoa, Venice, and, above all, Pisa, and its conquest by Spain, it fell into an uninterrupted decline. The only significant change to the landscape was the reinforcement of the system of watch towers along the coast, to give warning and protection against Turkish attacks.

The towns and villages of the Costiera Amalfitana are characterized by their remarkable architectural monuments, such as the Torre Saracena at Cetara, the Romanesque Cathedral of Amalfi and its "Cloister of Paradise," with their strong oriental influences, the Church of San Salvatore de' Birecto at Atrani, where the *Dogi* of Amalfi were elected, and Ravello with its fine Cathedral and the superb Villa Rufolo.

The Costiera has attracted tourists, from the grandees who followed the Grand Tour from the Renaissance to the thousand of more humble visitors of the late 20th century. Many literary visitors have written eulogies of its qualities and generations of artists have depicted it in different media. They have been brought there to see its architecture, its natural beauties such as the magical Grotta dello Smeraldo, the deep fjord of Furore, and the fine beaches.

Inland the steep slopes rising from the coast are covered with terraces, revetted with drystone walling and used for the cultivation of citrus and other fruits, olives, vines, and vegetables of all kinds. Further inland the hillsides are given over to dairy farming, whose roots are ancient in the area, based on sheep, goats, cattle, and buffalo.

In some parts of the Costiera the natural landscape survives intact, with little, if any, human intervention. It supports the traditional Mediterranean flora of myrtle, lentisk, broom, euphorbia, etc, which can withstand the windswept aridity of much

of the area. Elsewhere there are stands of trees, such as holm oak, alder, beech, and chestnut. Other biotopes shelter pantropical ferns, butterwort, dwarf palms, and endemic carnivorous species. As a result of this immensely varied vegetation, resulting from the irregular topography of the area coupled with proximity of the sea, three natural reserves have been created.

The Costiera is also rich in wildlife. Ravens and peregrine falcons are residents, as are foxes, martens, and otters. The insect fauna is extremely varied, as a function of the diversity of the habitats that the area offers.

The higher mountain areas are noteworthy for the characteristic mule tracks (*mulattiere*) which are a notable feature of the landscape. These not only served as means of communication between the scattered villages and other settlements but also constituted an effective means of catching and channelling rainwater. They were also much used by smugglers after the decline of the Republic of Amalfi. There are many small streams which in places drop over impressive waterfalls; these streams provided the power for the early paper and iron industries, the remains of which are widespread.

There is thus an immense diversity of landscapes, ranging from the coastal settlements through the intensively cultivated lower slopes and large areas of open pastoral land to the dramatic high mountains. In addition, there are "micro-landscapes" of great scientific interest resulting from topographical and climatic variations, and striking natural formations in the limestone karst at both sea level and above.

Management and Protection

Legal status

The area is protected by a number of legislative instruments. The basic statute is Law No 1089/1939 for the protection of the cultural heritage, and this is reinforced by a series of subsequent laws on aspects of town and country planning.

The communes concerned are subject to Law No 1497/39, which relates to the conservation of the landscape and environmental qualities of their territories. Permission to carry out any construction work requires the permission of the relevant *Soprintendenza per i Beni Ambientali, Artistici e Storici* (Salerno and Avellino).

A number of individual monuments are covered by Law No 1089/1939. In these cases the authorization of the Ministry of Cultural and Environmental Property (*Ministerio per i Beni Culturali e Ambientali*) is required for any work to be carried out. Owners have an obligation to maintain their properties and must notify the authorities of any change of ownership under the legal principle of the *vincolo*. The scope of this law is extended by Law No 431/1985, which imposes an obligation to prepare landscape management plans or town planning schemes.

Management

Ownership of the properties included within the nominated areas is distributed between central, regional, provincial, and commune administrations and many private individuals and institutions.

Regional Law No 35/1987 gave approval to the land coordination and landscape management plan for Sorrento and Amalfi, within which the nominated area is located. The objectives of this plan are to restore the relationship of the peninsula and its territory, to protect the environment (both natural and man-made), soil conservation, upgrading of the urban infrastructure, and enhancement of the role of tourism as a positive force. General Town Plans (*Piani Regolatori Generali* - PRGs) at local level are required to conform with standards laid down in the plan. So far, twelve of the fifteen communes have adopted PRGs, and all will be covered by the end of 1997. Furthermore, there is an absolute ban on any form of unauthorized building imposed by Regional Law No 35/1987

Law No 142/1990 created the *Comunità Montana* "Penisola Amalfitana," which is responsible for preparing policies for the development and enhancement of local resources and the coordination of all planning, implementation, and management of public works and programmes. It was set up with the objective of speeding up the decision-making process and achieving a more cost-effective management of public affairs. It is also charged with the preparation of long-term socio-economic development plans so as to strengthen and develop economic activities and improve social services.

It has developed, in collaboration with the *Soprintendenza per i Beni Ambientali, Artistici e Storici*, an active and effective policy for enhancing the Costiera, giving priority to the protection, rehabilitation, and restoration of what is recognized to be one of the most impressive stretches of Mediterranean coastline. This policy provides for retention of the *status quo* so far as building is concerned, so as to prevent further construction of unsympathetic tourist facilities, but at the same time not inhibiting sustainable development for what is in many ways an economically deprived area. Ravello has been selected as the pilot scheme for implementing this policy.

Conservation and Authenticity

Conservation history

Because of the statutory role of the *Soprintendenza per i Beni Ambientali, Artistici e Storici* the designated monuments in the area have been subject to systematic conservation programmes for many years. More recently, following the introduction of the requirement to produce urban management plans, more attention is being paid to the towns and villages. However, the overall level of conservation in parts of the nominated area still remains unsatisfactory. The programmes of the *Comunità*

Montana "Penisola Amalfitana" described above are actively directed towards improving this situation.

Authenticity

The overall authenticity of the landscape as a whole, with its rich diversity of scenery and settlement, is high. The influence of later 20th century tourist development is minimal when considered against the background of the entire nominated area.

Evaluation

Action by ICOMOS

An ICOMOS expert mission visited the nominated property in February 1997.

Qualities

The Costiera Amalfitana is an outstanding cultural landscape covering an area of dramatic scenery rising steeply from the coast to rugged mountains. Within it there is an exceptional diversity of landscape types, ranging from ancient urban settlements through areas of intensive land-use and cultivation and pastoralism to areas untouched by human intervention. The complex topography and resulting climatic variations provide habitats for an exceptional range of plant species within a relatively confined area.

Comparative analysis

This landscape is one that may be duplicated elsewhere on the Mediterranean littoral. However, its cultural, environmental, and scenic diversity is such that it contains within a relatively small area an epitome of the entire region, and one that has changed remarkably little over many centuries.

ICOMOS recommendations for future action

The area originally nominated contained certain areas where the essential qualities of a cultural landscape of World Heritage class had been irrevocably lost. ICOMOS recommended that these should be excluded from the nominated area, and this recommendation was accepted by the State Party.

Recommendation

That this property be inscribed on the World Heritage List on the basis of *criteria ii, iv, and v*:

The Costiera Amalfitana is an outstanding example of a Mediterranean landscape, with exceptional cultural and natural scenic values resulting from its dramatic topography and historical evolution.

ICOMOS, September 1997