

**NAPLES** ...Now I must give an account of the marvels of this city and I shall divide those within the city from those without. I shall begin, therefore, with what is to be seen within Naples, particularly the churches, giving by way of introduction a general idea of the city... I will begin my impression of Naples, which, as I have already said, besides being very large is everywhere very beautiful: broad, straight streets paved with square slabs of stone, which according to some were taken from the Via Appia; and with superb houses and many palaces along either side of them, which together make a majestic sight... The streets are so full of carriages, chaises and sedan-chairs that it is not all comfortable to walk in them. As for the churches, there are some extremely beautiful ones, and everywhere there are architectural and artistic works of great value. Pavements, pillars, whole walls, of marble, alabaster, porphyry, frescoes, paintings, all arranged and disposed with great artistry and intelligence, so that the eye sees nothing but masterpieces.

...One day I went to the top of the fine and noble monastery of San Martino, which was formerly a royal residence used by the king for the diversions of the chase and was later handed over to the Carthusian order and turned into a religious house, being brought to its present magnificent state by royal munificence. These Carthusians are indeed well-housed, as monarchs rather than as monks, and no other site could surpass this one. From here one can see a wide expanse of sea, and the island of Capri, the place where the Emperor Tiberius had his seraglio, the whole city and its surroundings, mountains, valleys, woods, villages, the fearsome Vesuvius, hills, villas, towns, plains, cottages, and the prosperous countryside, so that the Neapolitans are not wrong when they claim that there is no prospect like it in all Europe. The church is one of the most beautiful in Naples, and apart from the very fine marble work, it has panels which are the most famous in Italy. It has thirteen altars, and the ceiling is adorned with a most beautiful gilded painting by the Cavaliere Lanfranco. There are many paintings in oil, and in all there are more than a hundred works in the royal monastery.

*Italienische Reise*, 1740.

JOHANN KASPAR GOETHE

...This city, which is the metropolis of a kingdom of the same name, stands on the shore of the sea where it forms a basin, which the town encompasses in form of a half moon. From there it rises like an amphitheatre towards hills which are covered with vineyards and delightful gardens, from whence is the finest prospect that can be imagined. Upon one of these hills is the famous castle of Sant'Elmo, built by Charles V, which is a fortress that commands the whole city.

Naples is the see of an archbishop, whose metropolitan church is dedicated to St. Januarius... The Viceroy's palace is one of the noblest structures in the world; the beauty of the architecture and the disposition of the apartments give the same pleasure to the spectator as the magnificent prospect the Viceroy has from a balcony, to which I never saw anything equal for its extent or its agreeable variety. The fine gardens, the harbour, the arsenal, the lofty hills, the terrible mount Vesuvius, in short, the whole city of Naples, all contribute to the prospect from the Viceroy's palace.

*Lettres et mémoires*, London, 1747.

CHARLES LOUIS POLLNITZ

April 1731

...It is not surprising that Virgil should make such fine verses at Naples: the air there is so soft and so pure, the sun so brilliant and so warm, and the face of nature so rich and so diversified, that the imagination feels a vivacity and vigour which it scarce ever perceives in other countries.

I am not a poet, but I am very fond of verses, and I have never read them with more

pleasure than here. Every time that I go to my window, I feel myself electrified, my spirits revive, my imagination warms, and my soul becomes susceptible of the softest and sublimest impressions. This will not surprise you when I have only mentioned the objects which here present themselves to my view.

On the right is the hill of Posilipo, whose form is most agreeable; it is semi-circular, and adorned to the summit with trees and pleasure-houses; from its point, which loses itself in the sea, this mountain increases insensibly till it arrives behind the centre of Naples, and on its summit is seen a vast tower, which overlooks the city and crowns the scene. On the left appears a chain of very high mountains which surround the other side of the gulph, and whose rugged boldness forms a most happy contrast with the elegant and cultivated beauties of Posilipo: — Shakespeare and Corneille would always have looked on the side of Vesuvius; Racine and Pope on the side of Posilipo.

The Volcano is the most interesting of those mountains by its form which is a very beautiful cone, by its height, and above all by its vicinity to the city: it smokes incessantly, and seems always to threaten Naples with the fate of Sodom, to consume it with fire and brimstone. At its foot is Portici, and all along the coast are towns hanging from the mountains which form the portion of a circle of ninety miles.

The sea is under my window; and besides the ideas which it presents itself, as the most interesting object in nature next to the sun, by its grandeur, beauty, and the variety of its appearances, it here shows all the riches of commerce by large ships which are passing every moment. I often rise before day to enjoy the breath of the morning, and the superb description which the illustrious Rousseau gives of the rising of the sun. In no horizon does he appear with so much splendor, no where else does he so well deserve the epithet of 'golden'. He rises behind Vesuvius to illuminate the pleasantest hill of Posilipo, and the bosom of the most beautiful gulph in the universe, smooth as a mirror, and filled with vessels all in motion. The object which terminates the perspective is the island of Capr ea, famous for the retreat of Tiberius and the rocks of the Sirens: on viewing it, one remembers that near those rocks the prudent Ulysses stopped his ears; and that, not far from hence, the less wise Hannibal gave himself up to the pleasures of harmony, and to the caresses of the seducing Camilla.

*Letters from an English Traveller.*

MARTIN SHERLOCK  
February 1779

...The bay is about thirty miles in circumference and twelve in diameter; it has been named Crater, from its supposed resemblance to a bowl. This bowl is ornamented with the most beautiful foliage, with vines; with olive and mulberry and orange trees; with hills, dales, towns, villas and villages. At the bottom of the bay of Naples, the town is built in the form of a vast amphitheatre, sloping from the hills towards the sea. If, from the town, you turn your eyes to the east, you see the rich plains leading to mount Vesuvius, and Portici. If you look to the west, you have the Grotto of Pausilippo, the mountain on which Virgil's tomb is placed, and the fields leading to Puzzoli and the coast of Baia. On the north, are the fertile hills, gradually rising from the shore to the Campagna Felice. On the South, is the bay confined by the two promontories of Misenum and Minerva, the view being terminated by the islands Procida, Ischia and Caprea; and as you ascend to the castle of St. Elmo, you have all these objects under your eye at once, with the addition of a great part of the Campagna.

*A View of Society and Manners in Italy, London, 1781.*

JOHN MOORE  
1779

...The road ran among volcanic hills where limestone rocks seemed to be quite absent, except here and there. At last we entered the plain of Capua, and then Capua itself, where we rested towards midday. In the afternoon we crossed a beautiful plain, the road leading between fields of corn of a stupendous green, the stalks reaching a span in height. The fields were surrounded by poplars, and from one to another of these hung festoons of grape vines. Thus one approaches Naples, across a countryside of fertile, light soil, diligently cultivated, where the vines, as strong as you could wish, stretch from poplar to poplar, forming a kind of network. Vesuvius was continuously present on our left, smoking mightily, and I was silent, savouring the pleasure of being able to gaze at this wonderful phenomenon. The sky became increasingly bright until the sun came through on our right and flooded with light our temporary, restricted but mobile habitation. The air became purer as we approached Naples, and at last we found ourselves truly in another country.

...The houses, with their flat roofs like terraces, indicate a different climate but nevertheless I do not find them very pleasing. Everyone sits in the sun to enjoy it while it shines. The Neapolitans believe that they possess Paradise, and have a very sorry idea of northern lands. 'Always snow', they say, 'wooden houses: great ignorance but plenty of money'. This is the unflattering picture they have of our countries. The first impression of Naples is happy, animated, gay: the innumerable crowds jostle in confusion, the King is hunting, the Queen is expecting, things could not be better.

*Italienische Reise (1786-1788).*

JOHANN WOLFGANG GOETHE  
Spring 1787

...Returning towards Naples, I was struck by some small one-storey houses built in a strange fashion, without windows, the rooms lit only by the door of the house which opens on to the road. From early morning to late at night the inhabitants sit outside the doorways, retiring at last into their caverns.

...One has only to wander in the streets with one's eyes open to see scenes that are inimitable. On the Molo, one of the noisiest places in the city, I saw yesterday a Pulcinella in combat with a little monkey on a stage of boards, and above on a balcony a beautiful girl offering her charms to the highest bidder. And near the stage a charlatan was offering his secret remedies, valid against all ills, to the crowd which had gathered around him.

...Via Toledo is like a theatre where a great display of superabundance is in progress. All the shops are decorated with comestibles, which hang in garlands almost from one side of the street to the other. The sausages are partly gilded, and decked with red ribbons; all the turkeys have a red flag stuck into them — 30,000 of them were sold yesterday, to which can be added those which are fattened at home. The number of donkeys laden with capons, and those carrying oranges — the piles of these golden fruit spilling out over the pavement — amaze me. The most beautiful sight is however afforded by the shops selling vegetables, where raisins, melons, figs, are displayed for sale, all so pleasingly arranged that it delights both eye and heart. Naples is a country where God often provides his blessing for the delectation of the senses.

(Letter from Tischbein to Goethe, July 1787).

...Our journey hither was through the most beautiful part of the finest country in the world... Our road was through Velletri, Cisterna, Terracina, Capua, and Aversa, and so to Naples. The minute one leaves his Holiness's dominions, the face of things begins to change from wide uncultivated plains to olive groves and well-tilled fields of corn, intermixed with ranks of elms, every one of which has its vine twining about it, and hanging in festoons



between the rows from one tree to another. The great old fig-trees, the oranges in full bloom, and myrtles in every hedge, make one of the delightfulest scenes you can conceive; besides that, the roads are wide, well-kept, and full of passengers, a sight I have not beheld this long time. My wonder still increased upon entering the city, which, I think, for number of people, outdoes both Paris and London. The streets are one continuous market, and thronged with populace so much that a coach can hardly pass...

Your maps will show you the situation of Naples; it is on the most lovely bay in the world, and one of the calmest seas: It has many other beauties besides those of nature. We have spent two days in visiting the remarkable places in the country round it, such as the bay of Baiae, and its remains of antiquity; the lake Avernus, and the Solfatara, Charon's grotto.

*Correspondence*, London, 1775.

THOMAS GRAY  
June 1740

...The Crater of Naples is indeed a marvellous sight, and no pen can convey to the mind the amenity, the amplitude, the variety of these fair shores, for a single glance surpasses any such attempt. The buildings follow one after another so that from Baia to Castellamare they seem to form an almost or indeed a quite unbroken line of vast city, which is taken up again at Sorrento, reaching as far as the promontory of Ateneo. Smoking Vesuvius stands imperious, its lower slopes covered with gleaming white houses and its upper slopes with dark purple lava. Naples climbs the steep slope of the Ermean hill with a line of buildings, and the castle of Sant'Elmo crowns it. Echia stretches out to sea, along it runs the road of Chiaia, once the Olympia of Naples and famous for the Greek games so well illustrated by the learned Ignarra. What shall I say of Posilipo and Mergellina, celebrated by Sannazaro, by Flamminio and by Pontano? The brushes of the most famous landscape painters, the verses of the most noble poets, present but a feeble image of so blessed a shore, which surpasses all colours of the imitating art, the many words of inspired poetry.

From across the sea a strong smell of bitumen assails the nostrils, indicating the presence of the petroleum which, with sulphur and iron, feeds the fires of Vesuvius and which supplied even more generously the volcanoes of ancient times, the vestiges of which can be seen all along these shores. As I gaze at the mountains around, which descend steeply to the sea, forming the walls of the immense crater, it seems to me that the great basin itself was carved out by the action of volcanic eruptions. Sometimes I like to indulge my vivid imagination, fancying myself transported to the darkness of the remotest times and seeing a harvest of volcanoes rise from the water, seething and heaving and thundering horribly, now heaping up with great force and now tearing away the slopes of the wooded Apennines, opening gulfs, raising promontories, detaching islets and reefs, until, after the passage of an infinite number of days, the chemical ferment ceased and the coast assumed the appearance which today renders it full of pleasures and delight; and down from the Apennines came the first inhabitants, later-comers spreading to Ischia, to Cumae, to Paestum, to Capri, bearing the names Chalcidians, Euboici, Sybarites, Teleboi. The mind absorbed in such physical and historical contemplation embraces an immense space of centuries, an immense scene of change, an immense chain of cause and effect, which enlarge it through its own activity, making it conscious of its celestial origin and immortal nature by which it is destined to join in unity with the uncreated principle, abandoning the transience of the body which renders it for a few moments a pilgrim on this earth: 'Let this prison wherein I am enclosed fly open'...

*Giornale del viaggio in Inghilterra*, Venice, 1824.

CARLO GASTONE DELLA TORRE DI REZZONICO  
1793-1794

23. UNKNOWN ARTIST, EIGHTEENTH CENTURY: *View of the Largo di Palazzo*. Rome, Private collection.

This is a view of the so-called 'Largo di Palazzo', the piazza in front of the Royal Palace. On the left can be seen part of the palace, designed by Domenico Fontana, the triple-arched fountain by Pietro Bernini and Michelangelo Naccherino which is now in Via Nazario Sauro, outside the Hotel Excelsior, the colossus of Jupiter known as 'the Palace Giant', placed there in 1668 and removed in 1807, and the group of conventual buildings comprising the Church of San Marco dei Tessitori and the convents *della Croce* and *della Trinità*, all of which have been demolished.



24. UNKNOWN ARTIST, EIGHTEENTH CENTURY: *View of the Porta Capuana*. Rome, Private collection.

A view of the Porta Capuana, built by Ferdinand I of Aragon, from La Vicaria (Castel Capuano), and of the Church of Santa Caterina a Formiello. The column bearing a statue of San Gennaro was erected in 1707 to commemorate the eruption of Vesuvius and provides an earliest date for this interesting painting.



25. UNKNOWN ARTIST, EIGHTEENTH CENTURY: *Santa Lucia from the sea* (detail). Naples, Museo di San Martino.

A fine and realistic view which may be by Leonardo Coccorante. It is taken from a point off the Santa Lucia shore below Pizzofalcone, where the quarters of the Spanish garrison and the palace of the Prince of Iacci can be seen. In the foreground is the little Church of Santa Lucia a Mare and two of the fountains, now gone, which were erected in the last years of the seventeenth century by the Viceroy, the Duke of Medina Coeli.

26. GASPAR VAN WITTEL: *Naples and the Castel dell'Ovo from the sea* (detail). Florence, Palazzo Pitti.

This is one of Van Wittel's finest paintings, a view from the sea off the Chiaia shore. In the centre is the Castel dell'Ovo, with its long jetty out to sea; above the castle is the great building of Pizzofalcone, which since 1651 had been used to house the Spanish garrison. On the right can be seen the building in the garden of the Royal Palace, the storehouses of the Naval Harbour and Castel Nuovo.



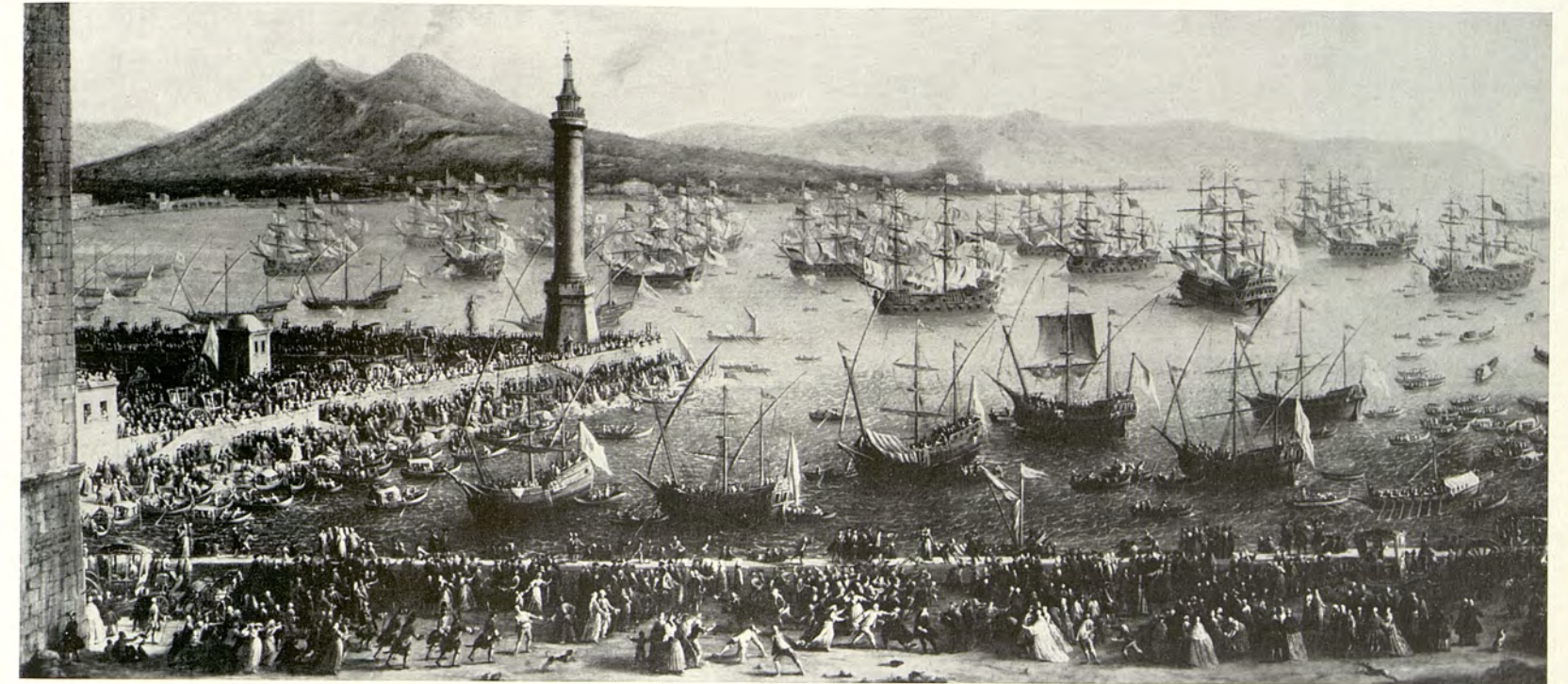
27. ANTONIO JOLI: *The Molo Grande*. Beaulieu, Collection of Lord Montagu.  
The Molo Grande, or Molo Angioino, seen from below the lighthouse. The trees were cut down in 1779. At the end of the avenue is the Church of San Giacomo.

28. ANTONIO JOLI: *Piazza del Mercato*. Beaulieu, Collection of Lord Montagu.  
The vast Piazza del Mercato, looking towards the Church of Santa Maria del Carmine, whose façade was completed by Giovanni del Gaizo in 1766. Along the church runs the street leading to the Porta del Carmine, and on the right is the keep of the Castel del Carmine.



29. ANTONIO JOLI: *The Embarkation of Charles III*. Madrid, Prado.  
The painting commemorates the king's embarkation for Spain on 6 October 1749. The wide panorama over the Bay of Naples and the Molo Grande includes in the foreground the Minister, Tanucci, in his coach. Off-shore lies the Spanish fleet.

30. ANTONIO JOLI: *San Carlo all' Arena and the Albergo dei Poveri*. Rome, Private collection.  
On the left is the Church of San Carlo all' Arena, built at the beginning of the seventeenth century, on the right the vast Poor-house begun in 1751, designed by Ferdinando Fuga. Next to the Poor-house is the garden which is today the Botanical Garden. In the coach in the centre, Queen Maria Carolina is showing to the people one of her numerous children.



31. ADRIEN MANGLARD: *Naples from Posillipo*. Vienna, Harrach Gallery.

This is a view which became very conventional in the second half of the eighteenth century and throughout the nineteenth century. Naples, with Pizzofalcone and Castel dell'Ovo prominent, is seen from Posillipo, with Vesuvius in the background.

32. PIETRO FABRIS: *The Embarkation of Charles III from the Darsena*. Rome, Private collection.

The painting commemorates the king's departure for Spain. It is interesting for its accurate portrayal of the old Naval Harbour.

