

Villa Gaiola

Region: Amalfi Coast **Sleeps:** 12

Overview

Whether you have seen it in pictures, or observed it as a wide-eyed tourist from a hydrofoil, riding the waves of the Tyrrhenian Sea from over a thousand feet beneath, nothing can adequately prepare you for the sublime and spectacular majesty of Villa Gaiola. Tour guides on day cruises running from Sorrento to Capri introduce it to their passengers as a matter of natural reflex, causing all on board to crane their necks while fixating on this supremely elegant and intriguingly proportioned palazzo. Viewed from the sea, the six-bedroomed Villa Gaiola gives the illusion of defying gravity, appearing to cling to the face of a dizzyingly high cliff.

The villa is only reachable by foot, its gate just a ten-minute walk along narrow footpaths from Ravello's central piazza, at the end of Via dei Fusco. Even from here, Villa Gaiola remains coyly shrouded in its six acres of gardens, with olive and lemon trees just beyond the iron gates. Clusters of blue hydrangea sit alongside a chestnut grove, before an allée of cypress trees guides you to the grand reveal, at the bottom of a flight of steps. As you enter the forecourt, the curvaceous Amalfi coastline, burnished cobalt Mediterranean waters and the beaches of Minori explode into view – along with the magnificent stucco and concrete fortress that is Villa Gaiola, hewn into the mountainside. At once, the optical illusion is broken, the magician's secret revealed - to the disappointment of absolutely nobody.

The villa's thirteen-year build was completed in 1927, becoming the home of Lucille Beckett - daughter of Ernest William Becket, Lord Grimthorpe. However, it is neither Lucille nor Ernest who are mentioned by tour guides to their awe-struck passengers, but the man who became owner of the villa in 1972, the legendary novelist, playwright and essayist – Gore Vidal.

A writer as elegant as the villa itself, Vidal was understandably besotted by this paradisiacal residence, from where he penned some of his greatest books, starting with *Burr* in 1973. Vidal and his partner, Howard Austen, set about embellishing further on Villa Gaiola's beauty, adding more species of flowers, grasses and shrubs to its seven levels of terraced gardens, which cascade in dramatic fashion down six acres of mountainside. The addition of the swimming pool, coinciding with the release of Vidal's novel *Lincoln*, was made in 1984, marble paved terrace and all. Today, the giant oblong pool is complemented by a charming kitchenette, perfect for preparing a romantic alfresco supper.



Upon viewing the property and passing through its mosaic tiled and terracotta hallway, Vidal had already decided to complete the purchase. He was instantly enamoured by the classical Roman floor plan, a sequence of rooms opening off the long halls of the ground floor. The villa was subject to a painstaking renovation in 2016, which resulted in refinished flooring, the installation of frescoes for the twenty-six-foot high ceilings, and the addition of a glorious array of antiques and contemporary Italian masterpieces. All but one of the ground floor rooms were repurposed, now comprising sitting rooms, a winter living room with a working fireplace, and one for the summer, which opens to a panoramic sea view terrace.

Respectfully left untouched during the refurbishment, was Vidal's rococo study, or 'studio' as he called it. In a building comprised of arches, curves and varying heights of almost organic nature, this room, birthplace of so much of Vidal's genius output, is a geometric anomaly – a 'perfect cube'. Still in situ, facing the fireplace, is the suede beige chesterfield from which Vidal would hold court, tumbler of Macallan 12 in hand, his guests in the adjacent club chairs. The fireplace is itself adorned with two framed versions of Vidal's 1976 appearance on Time magazine's cover, an honour he shared with both his father and grandfather. Vidal's vintage globe remains too, alongside his chestnut desk, upon which he would type up his manuscripts.

Also retained and lovingly restored, are the main architectural elements and feature pieces of the original build, such as barrel-vaulted ceilings, designed to keep the house cool in the heat of Amalfian summers, the huge tufa stone mantelpieces, colourful floor tiling, and the ornate grillwork on the arched doors and windows. There is a beautiful wooden bar too, a nod to the Vidalian ritual of finishing work at 4pm, upon which time cocktail hour would begin...concluding after midnight!

The six lavish and characterful suites, which have welcomed guests such as Mick and Bianca Jagger, Andy Warhol and Tennessee Williams, among many other luminaries, are of course finished to the highest standard throughout. Each of the bedrooms are equipped with large smart televisions, king-size beds with headboards crafted from fine leather or fabric, along with exquisite ornamentation. Superior Italian styling is showcased in each suite - floors are made with fine antique ceramic from nearby Vietri, while the fitted bespoke wardrobes come courtesy of local artisans. The Serenity suite's Jacuzzi and the astonishing vistas from Ecstasy's windows have to be seen to be believed, and not just in the bedroom. A wonderful sea view can be enjoyed from the bathroom's rose window, perhaps installed to give guests a reason to step out of the incredible chromotherapy shower.

Villa Gaiola is the very quintessence of luxury, a work of architectural genius, the embodiment of tranquillity. To those passing by off the shores of the Amalfi Coast, it looks impossible. As the former home of a writer who was also one-of-a-kind, its uniqueness and beauty make the most perfect and beautiful sense.

You will be just a ten-minute walk away from the Duomo Square in the centre of Ravello, a clifftop jewel of the Amalfi Coast. You will find superb shopping here, as well as a wealth of fantastic eateries and a vibrant street market on a Tuesday morning.

Facilities

Villa/House • Wow Factor • Heritage Collection • Private Pool • Ideal for Babies & Toddlers • Wi-Fi/Internet • Air-Con • Pets on Request • Walk to Village • Laptop Friendly Workspace • Washing Machine • Safety Deposit Box • Hairdryer • Smart TV • Working Fireplace/Woodburner • Heating • Seaview • Walking/Hiking Paths • Outstanding Landscapes • Outdoor Pursuit & Activities • Tourist Towns & Villages • Historical Sites

Interior & Grounds

Villa Interior(950sqm)

Lower Ground Level

- Audacity Suite – King-size bed, en-suite bathroom with shower, mosaic tiled floor, living room
- Lower ground floor
- Inspiration Suite - Four-poster king-size bed, en-suite bathroom with bathtub and separate shower, living room with original fireplace, mosaic tiled floor, small veranda
- Serenity Suite - King-size bed, en-suite bathroom with shower, mosaic tiled floor, large panoramic veranda with Jacuzzi

Ground Floor

- Entrance hall
- Gore Vidal's preserved studio
- Sitting rooms
- Living room with working fireplace, fresco ceilings
- Lounge with bar
- Living room with private terrace and panoramic sea views
- Kitchen facilities for use of staff only

First Floor

- Desire Suite - Four-poster king-size bed, en-suite bathroom with shower, ceramic tiled floor, fireplace and access to 1,000 square foot panoramic terrace
- Curiosity Suite - King-size bed, en-suite bathroom with shower, ceramic tiled floor, access to 1,000 square foot panoramic terrace
- Ecstasy Suite – King-size bed, en-suite bathroom with shower, ceramic tiled floor, small panoramic terrace
- Access to private terrace with solarium, outdoor shower

External suite(external spiral stair case down 33 steps)

- Studio suite- with king-size bed and en-suite bathroom with shower cubicle
- Air conditioning and refrigerator

Outside Grounds(25,000sqm)

- Swimming pool (15.5m x 5.5m, 2.70m depth) set on a marble paved terrace
- Self-catering kitchenette
- Two guest bathrooms
- Panoramic terraces
- Private park and garden



Facilities

- Wi-Fi
- Air conditioning
- Heating
- Grand piano
- Original artworks
- Frescoed ceilings
- Smart 4K televisions in all bedrooms
- Chromotherapy showers
- Safe for laptop
- Minibar in all bedrooms
- Telephone in all bedrooms
- Jacuzzi
- Hairdryers
- Laundry facilities

Location & Local Information

Ten minutes on foot will bring you to the central square of the gorgeous clifftop town of Ravello, known as the ‘Balcony of the Amalfi Coast’. A long-standing refuge of artists, musicians and authors over the last two centuries, Ravello hosts a range of cultural events throughout the year, including the Ravello Festival. This open-air event takes place at Villa Rufolo throughout July and August, with atmospheric musical performances set against the spectacular backdrop of the Gulf of Salerno. Michelin-starred restaurants share piazzas with trattorias and pizzerias, offering visitors a wealth of enticing dining options in between taking in the breath-taking architecture and enjoying some of the best shopping along the Amalfi Coast.

Great shopping is one of the hallmarks of the towns and villages along this thirty-four mile stretch of coast. Pastel-coloured buildings adorn the narrow streets, housing beautifully designed stores packed with everything from fine Italian leather bags and stylish clothing, to ceramic art and one of the region’s most famous exports – Limoncello. Made with the freshest Sorrento lemons, this locally produced liqueur is available in its own dedicated stores, in a range of imaginatively designed bottles.

Whether you prefer the traditional local recipe, or artisanal varieties infused with concerto or cicerenella, this is an unmissable treat to enjoy during your stay on the Amalfi Coast. Taking small bottles of Limoncello home as gifts is de rigueur when you visit here, but beware – the bottles’ corks can be a little unpredictable in your luggage - we recommend grabbing some decent tape to seal the bottles before you pack them!

As you would expect, this part of Italy is rightly proud of both its culinary and winemaking heritage. There is no shortage of options when it comes to terrific local restaurants and trattorias, not to mention cookery classes and tasting tours – getting you right to the heart of this region’s passion for food and wine. There are vibrant weekly markets in the towns close by, with Ravello and Sorrento hosting theirs on a Tuesday. These street markets all have their own picturesque backdrops, with crowds gathering at Amalfi’s port on Thursdays treated to an incredible view from the oceanfront path. Those arriving later in the week can gather fantastic ingredients for weekend dinners at Maiori on Friday, as well as having the chance to wander along the promenade and enjoy this pretty harbour town.



You will find plenty of tour operators close by, offering a range of unforgettable experiences. Take a boat cruise over to Capri, with its famous blue grottos and crystalline waters, or head an hour by road to the archaeological marvel that is Pompeii. As well as guided sightseeing tours, many operators offer deluxe packages that include extras, such as snorkelling, lunch and wine tastings, so be sure to shop around to find one that suits you.

Local Amenities

Nearest Airport	Napoli (62km)
Nearest Airport 2	Roma Fiumicino (290km)
Nearest Town	Amalfi (7km)
Nearest Town/City	Sorrento (38km)
Nearest Restaurant	(100m)
Nearest Supermarket	(4km)
Nearest Village	Ravello (1km)

What we love

- This exquisite residence, beautifully refurbished in 2016, is steeped in history, with former custodian Gore Vidal's study available to view.
- Even for the Amalfi Coast, where spectacular views are available across its entire thirty-four miles, the views of the hillside, sea and mountainside from the terraced gardens are truly majestic.
- Each of the six suites are immaculately appointed, with exceptional artworks, king-size beds and stunning private bathrooms.
- The villa's thirteen-year build was completed in 1927, becoming the home of Lucille Beckett - daughter of Ernest William Becket, Lord Grimthorpe.

What you should know...

- The villa is only accessible by foot, just ten minutes from the centre of Ravello.
- Due to the seven levels of terraced garden, this villa is not suitable for those with mobility issues.
- The office room of Gore Vidal closed to the public, used only as museum.
- The rooms, all located in the main building, are distributed on different levels and can only be reached by using stairs.
- Villa Gaiola is a historical-cultural property subject to protections and constraints and is not equipped with an elevator system, nor can it be equipped with it.
- The villa's private swimming pool isn't fenced, so children should always be supervised when outdoors.
- Child supervision is mandatory especially in the outdoor areas/garden.
- Weddings, stag/hen parties and any special events are on request only and subject to prior arrangement with the owner and additional charges.
- Kitchen facilities for use of staff only.

Terms & Conditions

- Security deposit: €15000 charged to client's credit card by the owner as a pre-authorisation upon arrival and refunded two weeks after departure, subject to full inspection.
- Arrival time: 3.00 p.m.
- Departure time: 11.00 a.m.
- Energy costs included?: Yes.
- Linen & towels included?: Yes.
- Pets welcome?: On request only and with prior agreement with the owner.
- Smoking Allowed?: No.
- End of stay cleaning included?: Yes. However, guests are required to leave the accommodation clean, tidy and in the same condition as on their arrival. Any extra cleaning, laundry, maintenance and/or rubbish disposal required will be charged against the security deposit.
- Minimum stay: 7 nights. All other durations on request.
- Tax: Italian Visitors Tax payable locally in cash (typically costs €1-€10 per adult per night - please enquire if exact amount is required).
- Heating costs included?: Yes.
- Pool towels included?: Yes.
- Insurance: Guests are required to be in possession of a valid insurance policy, which covers them for cancellations, loss of personal belongings, personal liability and any accidental damage caused during their stay.
- Internet access?: Wi-Fi internet access included.
- Pool opening dates?: Please note that pool opening dates are subject to local weather conditions and pool maintenance requirements and that cooler months may not be suitable for swimming.
- Changeover day: Flexible.
- Stag & Hen Do's Allowed? : Weddings, stag/hen parties and any special events are on request only and subject to prior arrangement with the owner and additional charges.
- Other Ts and Cs: Please note that published rates are only valid for the current year. Any bookings for subsequent years will be on request only and correct rates will be confirmed at the time of booking.
- Other Ts and Cs: Please note that your booking will only be confirmed once we have checked availability with the owner or their property manager.
- Other Ts and Cs: Due to the seven levels of terraced garden, this villa is not suitable for those with mobility issues.
- Other Ts and Cs: The villa's private swimming pool isn't fenced, so children should always be supervised when outdoors.