

What To Do When You Get Scared in Naples

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When you are waiting for the world's best pizza place to open and you wander down a dark, narrow street in Naples, you start to get scared.

When you get scared, you start to pretend like you "belong there" and try to blend in.

When you start to blend in, the vacationing Italians from other provinces will approach you and try to speak to you in Italian whilst pointing at a map.

When they speak Italian and start pointing inquisitively, you don't understand a single word and start to get scared again. You become scared like Dante in a dark forest.

*Nel mezzo del cammin di nostra vita
Mi ritrovai per una selva oscura
Che la diritta via era smarrita.*

When you start to get scared again and recite the opening lines of *Inferno*, you back into a stream of traffic and almost get run over by a woman and a toddler on a moped.

When a moped-driving toddler whose mom is riding bitch almost mows you down, you scream and run down *Via San Gregorio Armeno*—past the nativity scenes, past what you swear are the leopard, lion, and she-wolf from Dante's dark forest, and you leave your loved one behind.

When said loved one finally catches up to you, they will find you cowering in a corner of the *Piazzetta Divino Amore*.

When you calm yourself, you start to look around the miniature *piazza*. As you look around, you notice that there is a fruit stand, a café, a wine bar, and a souvenir store, all of which are located directly across from the Police Commission. *Bellissima!* You relax, finally, as this is probably one of the safest places to be in Naples. This is where you decide to have something to drink.

Introducing Naples' Wine Café, an adorable family-run (aren't they all?) wine bar/beer joint/liquor store that features a small indoor bar and a large outside patio surrounded by hedges.

A darling twenty-something will greet you and bring out some of the coldest, most refreshing beer you've ever tasted, along with a heaping pile of salty potato chips. If beer isn't your thing, there are plenty of wines to sample along with a full bar.

Inside, there are bottles of wine and limoncello for sale, in case you decide you want some souvenirs. For something more authentic, you can venture next door to the souvenir shop where they sell wooden bell wind chimes, small nativities, painted tambourines, and cords of applewood bark—presumably for pizza ovens—for €3.00.

As you sit and enjoy your beverage, you will notice three things:

First, there is graffiti everywhere in Naples. I recommend spending a few minutes trying to determine which are the bad words, and later try to use them *sotto voce* when Italian tourists shove maps in your face.

Second, no one owns a clothes dryer here. Instead, they hang their laundry outside of the window. This is very common in all parts of Italy. Somehow, though, it will seem sadder here. Partly because of the rough-hewn fashion of these parts, and partly because it is raining today, just as it has been for the past couple of days. I mean, can you say <insert Italian graffiti word here>?

Lastly—and this is best to contemplate about after more than one drink—this wine bar is located directly across from *la Polizia*. I mean, come on. What kind of a liquor business owner sets up shop next to the po-po? Or do you think the family was there first, and one day, the husband (presumably Mario) came home and said, "*Bella*, I heard the worst <insert Italian graffiti word> news today! You won't believe who is moving into the neighborhood?" You also consider that perhaps the rent is cheaper here because of the proximity to the 5-0. Oh wow, you think. Is it possible that *la Polizia* come for a cold one after their shifts or—let's be honest since this is Italy—during their shifts?

Satiated and secure, now you are ready to venture back out into the pretty, gritty streets of Naples. This time, you can meander back up the *Via San Gregorio Armeno* and stop and look at the intricate nativity scenes without fear of fearsome beasts or *i turisti*. Now you know where the police station is, and where a delightful wine café is, too.

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