

# Chilling in Cilento

Forget Tuscany, fall in love with Cilento on a trip to I Moresani – you'll return heavier and happier, says Sarah Jenkins



The terrain in Cilento is varied – the group rode in the hills behind this beach, too

*What you need to know*

- I Moresani, Cilento, is a two-hour drive south of Naples.
- This ride is suitable for intermediate to experienced riders, though there is plenty to entertain non-riding family members, such as walking, cycling and cookery.
- All meals, including wine, are included.
- Riding runs from March to May and September to November. Riders arrive on Saturdays and enjoy seven nights, including five days riding for about five hours a day.
- The price is from £767, excluding flights.

For more information and to book, contact In The Saddle.  
 Visit: [www.inthesaddle.com](http://www.inthesaddle.com) or  
 tel: (01299) 272 997.

POST CARD

Dear Readers  
 Got over my vertigo;  
 ate my bodyweight in  
 mozzarella. Need to  
 negotiate with easy jet  
 about the horse in  
 my luggage...  
 Wish your were here  
 xxxx

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Gino (front) and the guests enjoy a generous picnic in an olive grove



The horses are let loose within the walls of Castel Nuovo for a rest

**D**o you remember the scene in *Jerry Maguire* where Tom Cruise makes that lengthy, heartfelt speech to Renée Zellweger and she interrupts him with a teary: “Shut up. You had me at hello.” It was like that for me at I Moresani, in Cilento, Italy. The place kept on giving me reasons to fall in love with it – the vistas, the horses, the people, the food – but ultimately, I was convinced from the moment I arrived. I Moresani had me at hello – or ciao, I suppose.

Why? Well I’ll start with the people. I arrived at Naples airport late, but owner Gino Fedullo was there to meet me and two other guests – Barbara and Robert.

Having travelled with In The Saddle twice, becoming part of a group on its trips is an obvious benefit. You eat every meal together – in this case along with our guide, Marco Proccedo, and Swedish gap-year student Ellinor – and

even as a lone traveller I laughed as I would with old friends.

Gino couldn’t be more hospitable, nor could his wife, mother-in-law and brothers-in-law – who all play their part on the farm or in the restaurant. I should say “in-love” really, rather than “in-law”, as they did – isn’t everything so much more romantic in Italian?

**Velia, the turbo cob**

Then there’s the horses. On the first day, Marco quizzed me on my riding. “I’m fairly competent and confident,” I said. “But I’m terrified of heights.” On the edge of a cliff, I’d prefer to be on a quiet horse while feeling faint.

Marco gave me the shortest of the bunch, so I’d feel closer to the ground... The fact is all the horses are quiet, and Velia, a 14-year-old Italian-bred turbo cob, was a saint.

What she lacked in height she made up for in heart – not batting an eyelid

at deep water, loose dogs or even crazy Italian driving when we very occasionally had to cross a road.

I didn’t know what sure-footed actually meant prior to riding her. On the first ride, I thought: “We’re not seriously going up/down there are we?” But by the second, I was entirely blasé, with complete faith in her.

All the horses were well matched to their jockeys – a gentle giant for the laidback Robert, and a characterful chestnut for fellow guest Maria, who liked a spirited horse.

The pace of rides is dictated by the ability of the group; there’s no concern about the temperament of the horses.

**Legs of steel**

You’re in the saddle for about 25km-30km a day, and it’s hilly. It would help to have stronger legs than I did on departure. On day two, muscles I didn’t know existed were screaming: “What are you doing to us?!”

If you regularly ride in a two-point seat, as you need to up hills here, you’ll have no trouble. But even if you don’t, you’ll manage – and go home with legs of steel, feeling terribly smug.

We were broken in gently, with a ride towards the town of Pollica along a trail that used to provide hiding places for the Brigands who robbed the nobles.

We stopped on top of a hill, by the convent of San Francesco, where Gino was waiting for us with the first of many monumental picnics. The food at lunch, just like dinner, kept on coming – vegetables, cheese, kebabs.

On this note, I have a confession to make. One lunchtime, following a long canter through a field of 500 century-old trees, in a sun-drenched olive grove, I ate my bodyweight in

mozzarella. Three portions. That’s got to be 1,000 calories.

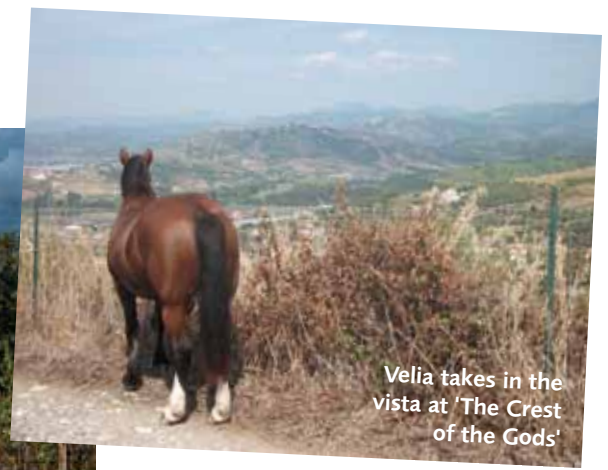
The food at I Moresani is something else, with the majority made at the farm. Goats, boar, cattle, and chickens are reared, and a plethora of vegetables and fruits are grown all around the villas in which you stay.

I digress, I didn’t come here to eat, I came to ride – and it’s a good job, since five hours a day in the saddle and a few laps of the pool kept the kilos at bay.

Full (a sensation you get used to here), we rode on to Celso, a little →



Each evening, Sarah came downstairs to this view, before heading to drink wine from the same grapes



Velia takes in the vista at 'The Crest of the Gods'

town cut into the hillside in 1050, where our horses wandered through the narrow cobbled streets.

Meandering back towards home brought new meaning to the term “winding down”, and by the time I reached the dinner table – via the swimming pool – I was relaxed.

Gino threw a party, complete with live local pop folk band, and the vino and laughs flowed between dances.

During the ride, Marco had passed me a handful of crushed myrtle he'd picked off the plant and that evening we drank homemade myrtle liquor. Later, he sent my way a fistful of finocchi (fennel) – the basis for the following night's tippie.

## What goes up...

Our second ride was more challenging. “We'll have lunch in that castle,” said Marco, pointing at a speck on a hill.

En route, we waded through streams plump from the previous nights' storms – Marco went ahead with a long stick to check the water wasn't too deep.

The smell of the herbs under the horse's hooves was intense – at one

point, in the dewy shrubbery, it felt like I was wandering through a Mojito.

What goes down must come up and we (well, the horses) had one hell of a climb up to medieval Castel Nuovo Cilento. We balanced in two-point seat, and as we reached a plateau Marco said: “I hate to be the bearer of bad news, but we're now halfway up.”

That went down like a lead balloon. He was only partly lying, but boy was it worth it when we peaked – as Robert said: “Prettier than our Newcastle”.

We set the horses loose in the walled fortress while we had our picnic. They gallivanted around threatening to jump the table before resting in the shade.

Looking back at how far we'd come, it felt like a serious achievement (even more so for the horses). That's the great thing about this trip; it's a mini adventure. You get that buzz, but not at the expense of fear or danger, which is surely the best kind of escapade.

## 'You call it vertigo'

Next day, we started heading for the mountains, so I had another go at getting the point across about my fear of heights. When the penny dropped, Marco replied: “Ah, yes, you call it vertigo, no problem, I have that, too. Just don't look down.”

Marvellous. “It's alright, everybody,” I joked. “Marco's scared, too!”

In the event, there was nothing to be afraid of, and even lily-livered me, who can't stand on an upturned bucket without feeling faint, didn't have a moment's concern.

The following day's ride took us 750m above sea level, along the crest of Mount Stella, towards the town of the same name, so called for its star shape. The view from here I'd have tackled arachnophobia for.

On our final two days, we headed to the beach, which we would have done sooner had the tides allowed it.

Having looked from our vantage points over to the sea on the past few rides, it was wonderful during those hot days to make it down to the sand and dip the horses' hooves in the waves.

Riding down hills, through olive groves, and then onto the sea, you're left thinking: “It doesn't get much better than this.”

In the refreshing breeze, I plotted to smuggle Velia away and move to Cornwall, so I could do this every day. In fact, why stop at Cornwall?

The climate in Cilento is ideal for riding. Only on day two of our trip did the rain come down – for the first time in three months. It made up for lost time with a deluge. The horses were tacked up, but us fair-weather riders opted to make this our rest day.

We weren't bored, with cookery lessons, trips to Pompeii or Greek ruins at Velia in the offing. I chose the latter, and Ellinor amazed as a tour guide at the site we would later canter by.

I didn't want to leave I Moresani. The experience lifted me out of the daily grind and gave me renewed spark. I hope to go back before that fades.

In the meantime, I'm riding as much as possible in a two-point position, eating copious amounts of mozzarella, and rolling the “R”s in names like “Barbara” – just to remember. 📌

## Holiday essentials

- **A seat saver.** Failing that, Savlon
- **Swimming costume** – the pool will cry out to you after a long ride
- **Sunglasses with a cord**
- **A camera** (and bumbag)
- **Your dancing shoes** – for Sunday night's party



Sarah and Velia cool off in the surf