



Photographs of Positano on this page were taken by Albert Leach during his stay there last year (except for two at top right). The two people, incidentally, are painter Randall Morgan, Art Director of the Art Workshop, and Irma Jonas, an associate.



Naples to Amalfi and back every day during the season have to bypass it, consequently offering the passengers no more than a momentary glimpse of pastel-colored houses cascading down the mountainside to the sea. There is also a daily boat from Naples during the summer, but the nearest railroad is ten miles away and the closest airport is at Naples. As picturesque as it is inaccessible, Positano is truly a haven for those who are seeking a retreat rather than a resort. Its clustered stucco houses—pink, yellow, buff, and white—set off by the rich greenery of vineyards and fruit trees, rise tier on tier from a gently curving beach almost to the mountain top several thousand feet above. *La Divina Costiera*—The Divine Coast—the Italians call this particular section of the Sorrentine Peninsula, and it is indeed well named, for no matter which way one looks there is a startlingly beautiful vista of soaring mountains, picturesque dwellings, and azure sea.

But despite its primitive charm, Positano is equipped to accommodate visitors in several attractive modern hotels as well as in more modest but quite acceptable "pensioni," or boardinghouses. There are also a score of new shops, several restaurants, a cinema (Italian films only), and now an art school, the Positano Art Workshop, of which Randall Morgan, well-known American painter, is the director. Both amateur and advanced painters are welcome here at a modest weekly fee of \$55 which covers both tuition and living expenses in a first-class hotel. The school this year will be open until October first.

Life is pretty much on the simple side in Positano. During the day there is excellent swimming at two delightful beaches, as well as boating, fishing and, for the hardy, breathtaking walks in the mountains. Those less interested in getting exercise can enjoy the ever-fascinating scenery from an open "carrozza" drawn by a horse bedecked with a jaunty ribbon bow or an ostrich plume. At night visitors who crave sociability may gather at the *Buca di Bacca*—The Cave of Bacchus—a pleasant restaurant-tavern on the beach, which is the center of Positano's social life. During the height of the season, from mid-July through September, there is dancing at the *Buca* as well as at the Sirenuse. Positano's most elegant hostelry, which is owned and operated by the mayor, Marchese Paolo Sirsale.

Catching a glimpse of a well-known American or European personality is not among the least of Positano's attractions. Last summer Paul McCobb, the

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Off the beaten track

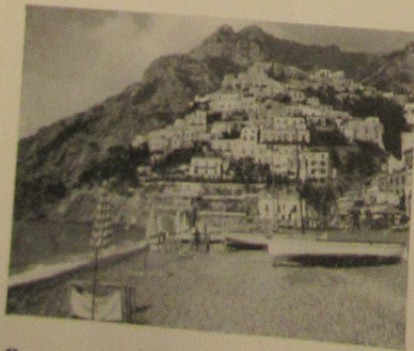
The two letters in this section concern Positano, Italy, that idyllic fishing village that is becoming a mecca for artists. The first comes from Albert Leach, Publicity Director of Cheney-Greeff.

The Positano Workshop referred to in the letters is now in its second year and is a branch of a school conducted in Mexico for eight years — one of the more elongated extension courses, geographically speaking. During July it is holding an international exhibition of contemporary art by Bargheer, Bonatti, Craemer, Cremonini, De Angelis, De Magret, Di Lieto, Harloff, Marquardt, Martin, Morgan, Moriconi, Olsen, Orloff, Pagliacci, Pepper, Ruta, Sohn-Rethel, Sachetti, and Verga.

Sirs:

Virtually unknown to Americans even five years ago, a centuries-old little Italian fishing village clinging to the precipitous Mediterranean coast about 40 miles south of Naples, is fast becoming a favorite retreat for U. S. painters, designers, writers, and others seeking a place of unspoiled beauty. Positano is the name of this veritable escapist's paradise, and although it is located on the famed Amalfi Drive just about halfway between Sorrento and Amalfi, its inaccessibility has kept the news of its spectacular beauty from spreading abroad until only recently.

For Positano can be reached only by the small local busses or private cars that can negotiate its single roller-coaster road that zigzags down into the village from the main highway far above. The big tourist busses which carry thousands of sightseers from



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designer, spent several weeks there, as did Finn Juhl, prominent Danish designer. Henry Dreyfuss, the noted American industrial designer, stopped off for several days, and Adlai Stevenson and his son spent the Fourth of July weekend there. Among other notables who visited Positano last summer were Tennessee Williams, Stella Adler, Lana Turner, Les Barker, and Anna Magnani.

There are a number of interesting and inspirational side trips by car or launch to nearby places such as Paestum, just beyond Salerno, where three superb Greek temples still stand in all their glory; Ravello, high on the mountain top above Amalfi, where Wagner is said to have composed part of Parsifal; Pompeii and Herculaneum (Ercolano), sites of the historic Roman excavations; beautiful but over-commercialized Capri; and the less well known but more interesting island of Ischia. Within sight of Positano are the Galli Isles, fabled locale of Ulysses' encounter with the sirens, and now owned by Leonide Massine of Russian Ballet fame.

All during the summer there is a colorful "festa" every day or two in one of the many towns and hamlets which dot the countryside. These celebrations, held in honor of each locality's patron saint, are the occasion for a one- or two-day holiday with a band, a religious procession, fireworks, games of chance, and a general carnival spirit which is as infectious as it is intriguing.

Positano's own festa, held on August 14 and 15 each year, tops them all, for this is not only a religious holiday but commemorates an historical event of great importance to the Positanesi. One dark night during the Middle Ages, so the legend goes, a band of marauding Saracens stole ashore and, after overcoming the guards, set fire to all the buildings and made off with the village's most precious possession, a Byzantine painting of Positano's Protectress, the Black Madonna. Suddenly, though, as the pirates were getting under way, an angel appeared above them in the sky and commanded them to return the painting "subito." Not only did they do so at once but they were so overcome by this frightening symbol of Christian might that they promptly became converts on reaching shore, and joined the Positanesi in an all-night celebration!

This highly dramatic event, known as *La Sberga dei Saraceni*—The Landing of the Saracens—is yearly reenacted on the Eve of the Feast of the Assumption, August 15, by the villagers before an audience of around 25 to 30 thousand Italians and others who come just for the occasion. All street lights are extinguished and the drama unfolds, illuminated by spotlights and torches. With their highly imaginative costumes, made by a Milanese couturier

who summers in Positano, these untutored performers stage a production that is a lot more dramatic and realistic than many a professional one.

By American standards, the cost of living in Positano is amazingly low. A room and three meals can be had for as little as \$3 a day, while even at the luxurious Sirenuse the daily rate is only \$7 for a charmingly furnished room with private bath and terrace. Villas and apartments are available at comparable prices, but these are difficult to find except on a long-term lease or out of season.

What will happen to little Positano in the next few years is difficult to say. Some enterprising Italian may decide to install an elevator or an escalator to augment the present network of ancient stone steps by which one now gets about the town. At the moment, though, this seems unlikely and the hardships imposed by nature in creating so fantastic a setting are quite sufficient to discourage all visitors but those sincerely interested in seeing its unique charm left unchanged.

Albert M. Leach
New York, N. Y.

Gustatory and other additions

Mrs. Edna S. Lewis, one of the directors of the Positano Art Workshop, dropped in to Interiors' offices shortly before her departure from New York, and when we asked her for additional facts that might not have been covered by Mr. Leach, obligingly sat down and dictated the following:

Sirs:

Historic spots on the Salerno peninsula and some of the most famous resorts of Italy are easily accessible by private car from Naples, Pompeii, Amalfi, Sorrento, Ravello, Capri, Vietrio (a ceramic center), and Paestum with its

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