# Monastero Santa Rosa, Amalfi Coast



So, where are we?

High on a clifftop looking out over the fishing village of Conca dei Marini on the Amalfi Coast about ten minutes round the winding road (in the hotel’s free shuttle!) from the pretty little town of Amalfi itself and the famous lemon gardens clinging onto the hillsides for dear life. Quite a pretty spot, you might say, especially if you are coming up that hill… And Positano’s not far in the other direction.

And where we’re staying...?

The Monastero Santa Rosa, a fully working chapel and Dominican monastery since the 17th century (the church bit goes even further back), starts at street level with that chapel (they ring the bells as you arrive!) and then goes down, down, down, past the incredibly appointed spa housed in what feels like an old church, to the infinity pool overlooking the coastline at level minus-five or something.

What’s the style?

When you’re dealing with a building this old, there are limits to where you want to go, style-wise. Ultra-modern would seem quite wrong while pastiche wouldn’t do justice to the authenticity of the place, so they’ve plumped for a Talented Mr. Ripley vibe meets old church. There’s even a confession box in one of the hallways where you can leave comments on the hotel.

And the rooms?

The rooms were, of course, formerly nuns’ cells so they tend to be fairly modest in size, though there are suites where several cells have been knocked together. But nuns presumably never slept in beds this grand, complete with canopies framing a view down over that legendary coastline. Or had sunken baths with views. Or little drawing rooms where you can see nothing but sea and sky through the windows. Well, they must have had the views, but too busy rubbing their rosaries to take much notice.

Is there a story?

You know all about the convent thing, with the last nun checking out in 1902… well the place has been a hotel since the 1920s but had a major upgrade to become (quite literally!) Italy’s favourite hotel in 2012 after an American millionairess spotted the dilapidated property as she swished by in a boat, made her inquiries and got her cheque book out. She’s still very much involved in the hotel to this day, which might be a contributing factor to the elegance of the place.

And to eat?

From the elegant little bar serving up some of the best cocktails we veteran cocktail-guzzlers have ever guzzled, through to the cellar-like restaurant and out to the terrace overlooking the sea - the restaurant is called Il Refettorio - there is no bad place to eat at the Monastero. And that’s before we get to the food, which has its own Michelin star (the chef is actually pulled around Italy to do superstar private dinners). The food is reassuringly Italian with everything from squid starters through a range of pastas - the sea bass ravioli seemed popular - to mains of fish hauled from that very sea there to buffalo fillets to… well, let’s just say, you’re not going hungry. Or disappointed.

So, to sum up...

You don’t top lists like Conde Nast Best Hotel In Italy/Europe/The World for nothing and people don’t come back here year after year because they can’t be bothered to find somewhere else. Old-school elegance, charming hospitality and the finest food…? They might just be onto something.

monasterosantarosa.com