



Earth Trekkers

Joy Of Water: The Blue Grotto That Was Emperor Tiberius's Infinity Pool

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"My brow still burns from the kiss of the queen; I have dreamed in the grotto where the siren swims . . ."

Gérard de Nerval

Off Italy's fabled Amalfi coast lies the beautiful island of Capri. There you will find a sea cave with startling vivid **blue waters**. To the locals, it is the *Grotta Azzura* – the Blue Grotto.

Formed in prehistoric times when volcanic walls collapsed into the sea the only entrance is a tiny opening in the rock just 1.7 metres high. At high tide, or in bad weather it is inaccessible. Some light enters through this small space but directly below, beneath sea level is a much larger aperture and it is through this that the sunlight enters the cavern, the light refracting back from the white sandy bottom.

However, when light shines through seawater the red light reflections are filtered out so that the light itself is a pure, intense, luminescent blue. Put your hand in the water and it will glow with an eerie light.



The Blue Grotto from Anacapri



Via Expedia

In 27 AD Emperor Tiberius moved from Rome to Capri. So entranced was he with the Grotta Azzura that he commandeered it as his private swimming pool. He built a carved landing stage and had resting areas and niches carved in the rock. There he placed statues to the nymphs and gods of the sea. In 1964 statues of Triton and Neptune were recovered from the seabed and stand now in a small museum on Anacapri.

After the demise of the Roman Empire and for many years afterwards the local, the sailors, the fishermen would not enter the cave which they were convinced harboured demons and monsters. Today, you can enter by rowing boat, with if you wish, an oarsman who will sing you Italian songs and operas. You are no longer allowed to swim.

There are plans to restore the Blue Grotto to its Roman glory; to rebuild the quays and the resting places, to replace the statues that once graced this fabled spot, but as with many things in Italy, little has been done. Still, it is 1500 years since the Roman Empire fell apart.

A few more will not make any difference.

Feature image via [Earth Trekkers](#)

