



GUIDE

CAVES AND SEA STACKS LINE

*Discovering the historical and
natural wonders of Ponza*

Departure:	11:00 AM - Molo Musco (under the orange lighthouse)
Itinerary:	Port - Pilate Caves - Sea Stacks - Guardia Lighthouse
Duration:	Short excursion (half day)
Organization:	Cooperativa Barcaioli Ponzesi

COOPERATIVA BARCAIOLI PONZESI

Via Sindaco De Luca, snc (Tunnel)
04027 Ponza (LT), IT

Office Tel.: +39 0771 809929
Mobile: +39 340 397 9916

Web: barcaioliponza.it
Email: barcaioli@barcaioliponza.it

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Safety Tips On Board

Rules to follow on board

The Island of Ponza

Geography and territory

Millennial history

The Bourbon Port

Torre dei Borboni and fortresses

Pontius Pilate Caves

The Roman murena pool

The pagan altar

The Madonna Sea Stacks

The underwater nativity scene

Parata Bay

Volcanic origin

The Belvedere

Calzone Muto

Bagno Vecchio Cove

The Guardia Lighthouse

Useful Information

Contacts

Safety Tips On Board

Welcome aboard! Today we will spend time together discovering the historical and natural wonders of Ponza. Before we begin, here are some important guidelines to ensure your safety and comfort during the excursion.

Rules to follow on board

1. Once on board, please go barefoot; flip-flops can only be used to go to the bathroom.
2. You can use the bathroom at any time during the day, except when we are stopped for swimming.
3. The onboard bathroom is not like the one at home: do not throw any objects (e.g., sanitary pads) or paper into the toilet. Everything goes in the bin. To flush, hold down the button for about 15 seconds. **The sink water is NOT DRINKABLE.**
4. For those with children: always keep them under supervision.
5. To go to the upper deck, go barefoot; we are not responsible for any injuries.
6. When leaving and entering the port and while sailing, hands, legs and objects must stay inside the boat.
7. Diving from the upper deck is not allowed.
8. During navigation, please remain seated to avoid losing your balance.

NOTE: Make sure to take the right boat by checking the flag matching the color of your ticket.

The Island of Ponza

Geography and territory

Ponza has a characteristic **crescent moon** shape and covers an area of about **7.5 km²**. It is predominantly hilly, with four main elevations that the locals affectionately call "mountains", although they don't reach the minimum altitude of 600 meters:

Mountain	Altitude	Notes
Monte Schiavone	about 152 m	
Monte Core	about 201 m	
Monte Tre Venti	about 177 m	
Monte Pagliaro	about 177 m	
Monte Guardia	about 280 m	The highest, reference point

Millennial history

Ponza has been inhabited since the **Neolithic**. The **Volsci**, an Italic people of European origin, were the first to found the first settlements. It was occupied by the **Phoenicians** and then by the **Greeks**, from whom the name "EEA" derives.

In **312 BC** it came under Roman rule, becoming an important strategic and commercial center. During the Second Punic War it provided resources to Rome and obtained tax benefits. With full Roman citizenship, Ponza prospered, hosting **patrician villas** and becoming a tourist destination.

Period	Main events
Neolithic	First settlements of the Volsci
Greek era	Phoenician and Greek occupation (name "EEA")
312 BC	Roman rule - construction of aqueducts, reservoirs and three ports
Middle Ages	Religious and commercial center, pirate raids
1202	Religious influence
1300	Naval battle - Aragonese and Farnese dominations
18th century	Bourbon colonization by Ischian families
1861	Annexation to the Kingdom of Italy
20th century	Political exile and mining exploitation

The Bourbon Port

The excursion begins from the island's **Bourbon port**. Leaving, with a keen eye, we can see on our right the remains of the **Roman port**.



Bourbon Port of Ponza

Torre dei Borboni and fortresses

Looking up, we can see a square-shaped white structure: it is one of the **Bourbon fortresses** on the island. It is currently a hotel, the **Hotel Torre dei Borboni**. Until the late 1800s it was a penitentiary, then it became a defense tower together with the orange lighthouse from which we depart.

We have three **Bourbon fortresses** on the island:

Fortress	Position	Current state
Torre dei Borboni	Port area	Hotel
Forte Papa	Cala Feola	Visitable
Il Fortino	Frontone Cove	Ruins

Next to the Bourbon fortress you can see the **Roman amphitheater** and immediately next to it some terraces. A little further on is the **monumental cemetery**, built on top of a Roman villa from Emperor Augustus's time.

Pontius Pilate Caves

Under the monumental cemetery is the famous **Pontius Pilate Caves** complex, built during the Roman period of the prefecture of Judea, under Emperor Tiberius. **Pontius Pilate** was the fifth prefect of Judea and remained in office for about 10 years.



Pontius Pilate Caves

The Roman murena pool

The caves are a complex structure of **caves and underwater tunnels**. Above the water surface there are passages through which you can move from one pool to another. Underwater there are pools and tunnels for seawater circulation, as fish were raised inside, particularly **moray eels**.

NOTE: The moray eel is a sea snake similar to a grass snake, dark colored with circular yellow spots and white flesh. It is excellent to eat, especially pan-fried in slices.



Inside the Pontius Pilate Caves

The pagan altar

Inside the main cave, at the back, we can see a **pagan altar**. The Romans believed in Gods and stars and, in this pool, the **Draco constellation** was depicted on the ceiling, which unfortunately has largely collapsed and been eroded by wind and sea over time.

On the left, at the back of the cave, you can see a passage where the Romans could move from one pool to another without getting into the water. The Romans had built two pools, one internal and one external, connected by steps carved into the rock that linked the caves to the **Augustan villa**.

The Madonna Sea Stacks

Continuing on, in front of us we can see the first group of sea stacks. They are called the **Madonna Sea Stacks** because in the 1600s a painting depicting the **Blessed Virgin** was found. This painting is now kept in the church of S.S. Silverio and Domitilla in the port area.

On these sea stacks, the Romans made an inlet towards the end of the rock, visible among the vegetation, with the classic wall made with the **opus reticulatum** technique. At this point the Romans had created a **lighthouse** with a wooden structure and boiling oil in the center, to signal the "**formiche**" rocks (very low and difficult to see).



Madonna Sea Stacks

The underwater nativity scene

Under the tip of the sea stack, at a depth of about **15 meters**, there is a small inlet where an **underwater nativity scene** is located.

Parata Bay

Rounding the Madonna sea stacks, **Parata Bay** opens up before us with its sandy bottom. The name comes from World War II: the people of Ponza, suffering from hunger, observed that migratory birds (like quail) rested on this cliff. They began to "**parare**" (local term for "prepare") nets to catch them.

Volcanic origin

Here you can clearly see the difference in colors in the rock, because **Ponza has a volcanic origin**:

Rock type	Color	Characteristics
Trachyte	Brown	Magmatic rock, very hard due to thermal shock of magma in contact with the sea
Tuff	Grey	Composed of sanidine and clinopyroxene
Kaolin	White	Composed of kaolinite

The Belvedere

Looking up you can see a hexagonal structure called **Belvedere**. It was built by the last Bourbon governor in the 1800s, **Gaetano D'Ambrosio**. It is a very interesting structure for its position overlooking the entire port area. It now belongs to a local doctor who has created a **botanical garden** inside (visitable by inquiring at Pro Loco).

With keen eyes, looking at the hexagonal structure, among the vegetation you can glimpse the entrance to the **Roman villa of Emperor Augustus**.

Calzone Muto

Continuing, we see another group of sea stacks called "**Il Calzone Muto**". This sea stack has a very particular rock formation, **unique in the world**: it is found only here in Ponza and in India. The rock is square or rectangular in shape, typical of **unexploded bombs** in contact with water immediately after volcanic eruption.

Bagno Vecchio Cove

Immediately after Calzone Muto opens an inlet called **Bagno Vecchio Cove**. High up and in the center of the cove we can see rectangular openings that house a **Saracen-era necropolis**. On the island we have two necropolises: one here at Bagno Vecchio and another on Chiaia di Luna bay.



Bagno Vecchio Cove and La Scarrubbata

On the right side we see a **mule track**, a trail recommended in the afternoon because the area goes into shade. This area is called "**la scarrubbata**" (dialect term meaning "landslide") and is part of **Monte Guardia**, the highest mountain on the island.

The Guardia Lighthouse

The **Guardia Lighthouse** takes its name from the mountain on which it stands and is very important nationally. It is the **sixth most important lighthouse in Italy** for navigation.



The Guardia Lighthouse

Feature	Value
Night range	24 nautical miles (in good visibility)
Importance	6th most important lighthouse in Italy
Mediterranean Trench	6 miles south, depth about 3000 m

From here the routes of aircraft and ships are traced. Past this point, in the distance on the left you can see the island of **Palmarola**.

Useful Information

Service	Details
Departure	11:00 AM from Molo Musco (under the orange lighthouse)
Type	Short excursion (half day)
Route	From port to Guardia Lighthouse
Pro Loco	For Belvedere visits and information
Mule track	Recommended in the afternoon (shaded area)

Point of interest	Type	Notes
Pontius Pilate Caves	Historical/archaeological	Roman murena pool, pagan altar
Madonna Sea Stacks	Naturalistic/religious	Underwater nativity scene at 15m
Parata Bay	Naturalistic	Volcanic rock colors
Belvedere	Panoramic/botanical	Visitable botanical garden
Calzone Muto	Geological	Unique rock formation in the world
Bagno Vecchio Cove	Historical	Saracen-era necropolis
Guardia Lighthouse	Panoramic	6th most important lighthouse in Italy

Contacts



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