



THE ISLE OF CAPRI



HOW I envy Princess Margaret her first sight of Capri! For me it was the thrill of a lifetime. I'm a real island-lover—anywhere from the Philippines to the Shetlands—but the grandest of them all is the Isle of Capri.

When I put my savings into buying a home there, a little fortress villa called Canzone del Mare (Song of the Sea), I said to myself: "Gracie, you can't speak a word of Italian—you must be nuts!"

But Capri saved my health, and I'm grateful. The big ambition of my life is just to go there and relax.

It's a tiny island, only four miles long and a mile and a half at its widest. To describe it you have to talk daft, like a guidebook. But how else can you tell about

the Bay of Naples than to say it's a heavenly blue? And Capri really does look like a jewel in a lovely setting.

Everything nice grows on the Isle of Capri. On the mountain terraces there are vineyards and olive groves and fruit, and our gardens are as full of colour as a rainbow. The only place I know which matches it is Nassau, in the Bahamas.



I WENT to Capri through reading about the island in a book—Norman Douglas's "South Wind." It was the first holiday I ever had, twenty-one years ago, and all I could say was: "Gee, what a lovely place—I'd give anything to own a blade of grass here."

Canzone del Mare, then called the Villa Patrizzi, was for sale. It was an old English fort with walls four feet thick, hardly any windows and no fireplaces (my Dad came and carved a few later on).

As no one had taken it

by the following summer I began to save up my pennies. Eventually I bought the place for practically everything I had in the world. I was left with £25—and my voice. If only I could hold on to the place, I thought, it would be fine to run a little tea-house for English visitors when I got to the ripe old age of fifty and couldn't sing any more.

Monty Banks (we weren't married or even in love then) was directing me in "Shipyard Sally" at the time. He knew I was in a jam for money and wanted to help by buying the place from me. But I was determined not to accept any help, even if it cost me my dream of Capri.

"Ee . . . no!" I told him. "We all like chocolate but if we can't have chocolate I guess we can do without." However, I managed to get by.

It isn't the swankiest villa in Capri, just three rooms with seven old prison cells turned into a kitchen, bathroom and snuggeries. But I would have been proud to show it to Princess Margaret if

I had the chance, and I'm disappointed not to be there during her visit.

Capri is only three miles from Sorrento—the place you have to go back to in song—but it is about twenty-one miles across the bay from Naples, where Princess Margaret will land when she flies to Italy.

If the Princess decides to stay at an hotel it will probably be the Quisisana, the biggest on the island.

But more likely she will be at one of the lovely private villas.

She will have plenty of company. Lots of English and American people live there, and Capri is simply dripping with nobility. Many

of the English are writers—Graham Greene is among them—and there are bags of film people. I know Ingrid Bergman is there this week.

I don't think there will be much rubber-necking. The fisherfolk and the peasants who live on Capri are too well-mannered to risk spoiling an English princess's enjoyment. And telephone calls from home aren't likely to disturb her—the telephone system is terrible! Even telegrams have a habit of turning up days late.

Princess Margaret will need her summer frocks and her swim suit, for already Capri is getting the kind of weather we hope for in England at mid-summer.

Everybody swims and sunbathes, and if Princess

would be best for her to use our private beach—the only one on the island. Monty, my husband, is in Capri, and we should be thrilled if the Princess borrowed our motor boat, called Our Grace.

It's lucky Princess Margaret likes walking, for walking is the island's main pleasure. Because the view looks different from every angle, they claim there are 365 beautiful walks for visitors to take, unless they would rather gossip with fishermen in the piazza.

Capri is all hillside, so there's no space for riding or golf, and anyway it's a place to take life easily, with no rushing about or clock-watching.

A safe bet is that Princess Margaret will be taken to see the Blue Grotto, most famous of the sea caverns. The grotto is as blue as a sapphire, a trick of the water and the sunlight, and it's a real thrill to swim there.

The Princess may want to climb Monte Solaro, nearly 2,000 feet, and she will certainly be interested in San Michele, with its memories of Axel Munthe



THE main charms of Capri are natural, but it has a night life. There are grand dancing places and clubs which stay open all night up in the town, all very advanced and American. Capri is a great place for parties.

But there are quiet restaurants, too, where

people sing Neapolitan melodies for the sheer joy of it. What they give you to eat is wonderful—especially the lobsters.

Princess Margaret will have a grand holiday—she deserves it. And when she comes home I reckon she will have a warm place in her heart for her first Mediterranean playground



I'M still in love with Peacehaven, my old home in Sussex, but when my concert tour is over I am going back to Capri, taking Mum and Dad for a holiday.

Last time Mum came for a visit she said wistfully, "Ee . . . I would like a bit of Yorkshire pudding."

"Make it yourself, love," I said, and off she went to the kitchen.

Not knowing the language, she tried to make herself understood by shouting at our Italian help at the top of her voice. You could have heard her in London.

But when Mum came back she said triumphantly: "He understood every word I said."

And it was certainly a grand pudding.

My old dream of a tea-house is taking shape, not as I planned it but as a posh restaurant on the beach.

There's no jobs going, lads, so don't write to me. But I am looking forward to finishing the place so I can send my friends there and get a bit of privacy at home!

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