

GAETA, ITALY

A. I & E BRIEF

1. General Information. Gaeta (ancient Caietae Portus) is a small seaport and summer resort town situated about halfway between Rome and Naples. A town of 25,000 inhabitants, it is the episcopal see of Lazio, province of Littoria. The entire harbor is an Italian Naval Station and the tomb of Munatius Plancus, on the summit of the promontory, is a naval signal station. The Military Presidium is situated in Gaeta. Close to the church of La Trinita is the Montagna Spaccata, where a vertical fissure from 6 to 15 feet wide runs down to sea level. Over the chasm is the Chapel del Crocefisso, the mountain having split, it is said, at the death of Christ. Above the town is a castle erected by the Angevin Kings. The cathedral of St. Erasmus (St. Elmo), consecrated in 1106, has a fine campanile begun in 860 and completed in 1279.

The history of Gaeta is obscure from the time of the break-up of the Roman Empire until 839, when it appears as a lordship ruled by hereditary hypati, or consuls. According to tradition the Gaetani family (the oldest of the Roman princely families) is descended from the hypati. In any case their hold on the city was short-lived. Conforming to the pattern so familiar in the Italian History, Gaeta was to change hands frequently and be the scene of many sieges and battles. Included among her rulers and overlords we find the Arabs, Austrians, French, Spanish, Sardinians, the Norman Counts of Aversa, the King of Sicily, and the papacy. In more modern times, Pope Pius IX, fleeing from Rome in disguise, sought refuge in Gaeta in 1848, and in 1860 it was the scene of the last stand of Francis II of Naples against the forces of United Italy. Gaeta became an Italian Naval base after the unification in 1870. During World War II it was the headquarters of the Tyrranean Sea Naval Command. In the course of the war the most important forts, several times in the past fortified to resist siege, were finally destroyed. Ruins are predominant throughout the town.

2. Restaurants: Restaurants are numerous, but most are below the mark. The following are recommended:

Ristorante Salute-at Caboto Quay
Ristorante Tavernetta-at the New Gaeta Square
Ristorante and Hotel Serapo-at the beach
Ristorante Mirasere-Spiaggia di Serapo beach
Ristorante Quercia-Formia

3. Hotels: There are several small beach hotels and pensions of marginal quality which are not recommended. Recommended is the Hotel Serapo, a modern establishment with accommodations running about 3000 lire, European Plan.

4. Beaches: There is an excellent beach at Gaeta, Spiaggia di Serapo, frequented by summer residents from Naples and Rome. There are a number of good public beaches on the road to Formia.

5. Transportation: Small taxis are available and generally inexpensive except at late hours, but it is best to decide on fares before hiring. There are also a number of hansom cabs which are inexpensive. There are no street cars or rental automobiles available. A bus runs from Gaeta to Formia about every 20 minutes during the day; fare is inexpensive but the buses are often crowded. The bus terminates at the Formia railroad station, which is on the main line between Rome and Naples. Rome is an hour and a half by train. There is also a railroad extension from Formia to Gaeta.

6. Tours: There are no local organized tours. The tomb of Cicero is about 1 km from Formia. Gaeta has limited recreational facilities and these are available only during the summer months. Proximity to Rome and Naples suggests liberty is best spent in either of these cities.

7. Shopping: Shopping is limited. The town has no unusual or striking products to offer.

8. Theatre and Cinema: There is one small Italian language theatre. There is no information on cinemas.

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small
Hall language theatre
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Hall Hall
Robert W. Hall