

## Isola della Gaiola...



...paradise

...or cursed...

### What a View!



Isola della Gaiola is a small but beautifully formed island just off the Gulf of Naples. The island is actually two islets connected by a narrow stone bridge just a few feet in length. At one time, it was known as Euplea and was considered the protector of safe navigation.

Noble Romans built holiday homes across this stretch of coast and the remains of an Imperial Age villa can be seen today in the clear waters surrounding the island. The island is part of the Gaiola Underwater Park, a protected marine area owned by the region of Campania.



The park is a 100 acre marine preserve; it protects the diverse marine ecosystem as well as the ancient underwater Roman ruins. The ruins are scattered around the crystal clear waters and some of the marine creatures here are found nowhere else on Earth.

Some scholars believe that the greatest poet, Virgil, taught here. There's even a private villa--a bit of a ruin now--where you can enjoy the spectacular panoramic views.

For all appearances, Isola della Gaiola seems to be a quaint, romantic getaway, but history took a turn for the bizarre, ultimately leading to its reputation among locals as a forsaken, cursed place.



In spite of its beauty, views and crystal-clear blue waters, it has remained abandoned for the last 40 years and locals refuse to go near it. Some of the island's unlucky owners faced economic ruin. Tales of murders, drownings and suicide abound. It's an island with a mysterious history and an abundance of misery.

The problem started in the 1800s when a hermit known as Il Mago, or The Wizard, lived on the island. He lived isolated from others except for the local fishermen, who occasionally gave him hand outs. He was a solitary soul and no one could explain where he went when he simply vanished—poof!—without a trace, never to be seen again. Did he put a curse on the island?

Let's take a look at the owners and their doomed histories.



**Luigi de Negri** bought the island in 1871 and built the villa that still stands guard on the island today. He owned a large and important fishing company. Unfortunately, he had to sell his possessions—including the island—when his company went bankrupt

In 1911, **Captain Gaspare Albenga** was sailing his ship around the perimeter, trying to decide whether or not to buy the island. His ship disappeared—along with him.

In the 1920s a Swiss owner, **Hans Braun**, was found murdered and wrapped in a rug from the villa. His poor widow drowned in the sea not long after.

**Otto Grunback**, a visitor to the island, had a heart attack and died while on site.

**Maurice-Yves Sandoz**, owner of the island--a writer and pharmaceutical industrialist--was locked up in an asylum in Switzerland and committed suicide there in 1958.

**Baron Karl Paul Langheim**, a German industrialist, was the next owner. His company also went bankrupt. He sold the island to **Gianni Agnelli**, owner of Fiat.



Agnelli experienced many personal hardships in his life. His only son's body was found under a bridge in an apparent suicide, and his nephew, whom he was grooming to take over the business, died of a rare form of cancer at age 33. He wasn't so lucky either.

Who was next?

American industrialist **Jean Paul Getty**. He had his fair share of misfortunes: the suicide of his oldest son, the death of his youngest son, and the kidnapping of a grandson by an organized crime group (who cut off his ear before returning him for the 3 million dollar ransom).

The last owner was **Gianpasquale Grappone**, who ended up in prison.

His wife did not drown offshore, however; she died in a car accident.

A cable car once connected the island with the mainland. There is the tale of a woman swept out to sea while riding it in 1926. Another tragedy?

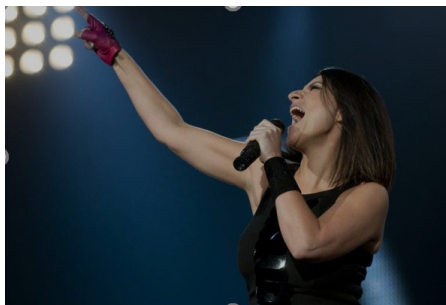
The curse did not even seem to be content with restricting its misery to its own turf. As recently as 2009, Franco Ambrosio and his wife were found mysteriously and brutally murdered in their villa--directly opposite the island.

Italians are a superstitious bunch, so it's always possible that these stories might have become somewhat exaggerated with time. But no one has stepped up to buy it again. And so it remains desolate and forgotten, a place surrounded with whispers of curses and misfortune.

The island is very close to the coast so if you put it on your future list to visit--if you dare--it's a very short swim (only 90 feet!) from shore. You can enjoy the beauty, the sea, its unique scenery, its history and probably get glimpses of the ruins in the clear water below.

Or maybe you shouldn't.

Here's a short video with more views. Just [click here](#).



Since this message was so full of dark stories, here's a little something to lift your spirits. Italian pop legend Laura Pausini wrote and won the Best Original Song award at the 2021 Golden Globes.

The song, “Io Sì (Seen),” is from the Sophia Loren Netflix film *The Life Ahead*. Performed by Pausini, it was written by Diane Warren, Pausini herself and Niccolò Agliardi. The video of the song is different and very moving. [Golden Globe winner](#)

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