

THE BIZARRE & ADVENTUROUS: TOURS BY EX-CONVICTS



Italy introduces a new way to take care of tourists. Ex-convicts are now in charge of assisting the visitors to the region of Campania and in Naples. Such tactics of giving them another chance is highly controversial and raises many questions. On the other hand – a little adventure and insight never hurt anyone.

Italian region of **Campania** is a marvelous part of the country attracting thousands of tourists every year. Local authorities have recently decided to launch a new campaign which is supposed to give ex-convicts another chance and help them find their way back to the society. For years, many of those who were released out of prison had difficulty finding work and having no other options, turned to mafia for help. Here is another way of how to help them and prevent their going underground.

The ex-cons are trained to be able to help the tourists wherever and whenever necessary or desired. They work as guides in Naples and undoubtedly bring a little spice into a casual walk around the city and have many stories to tell. They give advice on the best restaurants which feature the genuine Italian cuisine or even help the tourists cross the street. Only a few months into the new initiative, and trouble arises between the police and the ex-cons, who believe no matter what they do, they will not be given a second chance and be prosecuted for no reason at all. They are easily recognized as all ex-con guides are dressed in bright vests.

Italy is not the only country which has launched such social experiments. **Panama, for example, introduced a similar program in 2004**, helping gang members fight their way to better, clean future. They are trained in several areas, including history, good manners, safety rules or even basic English and rewarded by a monthly payment for their efforts. Many admit the program saved their life and are thankful the chance they got offered. It does not happen every day that ex-convicts get an opportunity to start over.

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