



A Sweet and Glorious Land: Revisiting the Ionian Sea

John Keahey

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In the winter of 1897-1898, Victorian writer George Gissing made a well-chronicled journey throughout southern Italy. The result was a book, *By the Ionian Sea*, in which he detailed the influence of ancient Greece on the peninsula and contrasted the glory of Greece and its magnificent cities to the southern Italy of the late 1800s. The book was published in 1901 and has since become a classic in travel literature.

A hundred years later, award-winning newspaper journalist John Keahey sets off to retrace Gissing's footsteps. His goal is to compare and contrast the two Italys, seeing first-hand all the changes that have occurred over the past century. He explores the outdoor markets in Naples, journeys to the charming coastal town of Paola, takes a train ride out of the Calabrian mountain town of Cosenza and into the port city of Taranto, and makes his way down to Reggio at the toe of Italy's boot. Along the route, he visits modern-day Crotone, the Ionian coastal city that was famous in antiquity as the place where Pythagoras had his school, as well as where Hannibal, pursued for 15 years along the length of Italy by the Romans, embarked in shame for Carthage (now in modern-day Tunisia). Going beyond Gissing's journey, Keahey also makes an additional stop at Sibari near where the site of ancient Sybaris has been partially excavated.

From train rides through the lush countryside to the crisp mountain air of Catanzaro, Keahey paints a beautiful and compelling picture of one of the lesser known parts of the country. *A Sweet and Glorious Land* is not only a wonderful travelogue but also an intriguing story of southern Italy and its people.

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