

Overseas Adventure Travel[®]

THE LEADER IN SMALL GROUP ADVENTURES SINCE 1978

Your O.A.T. Adventure Travel Planning Guide[®]



Sicily's Ancient Landscapes & Timeless
Traditions

2026

Overseas Adventure Travel®

347 Congress Street, Boston, MA 02210

Dear Traveler,

I am thrilled that you are considering exploring the world with O.A.T. There are so many wonderful destinations to discover, and the itinerary described inside is a perfect way to fulfill a travel dream.

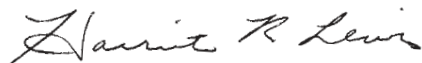
When you join us, you will slip seamlessly into local life as you explore off the beaten path in your small group. Like all our itineraries, this one is designed to give you an intimate understanding of your destination, not just a superficial view. You will get to know community leaders and try your hand at local trades during your *A Day in the Life* experience, share traditional fare and lively conversation during a Home-Hosted Visit, discuss the Controversial Topics impacting everyday life, and visit sites supported by Grand Circle Foundation. And if you choose to travel solo, you will enjoy all these cultural experiences at an unmatched value, with our FREE Single Supplements—just one of the reasons we continue to be the leader in solo travel.

To ensure you experience the true culture and feel supported every step of the way, we provide the services of a local Trip Experience Leader from the beginning of your adventure to the end. Along with introducing you to the history and culture of their homeland, these friendly experts will gladly help you out with any special requests to make your trip even more special. You can also rely on the seasoned team at our regional office, who are ready to help 24/7 in case any unexpected circumstances arise.

Plus, you can put your own personal stamp on your trip, like the **87% of our travelers who customize their experience**. Perhaps you will choose to see more of your destination by adding an optional trip extension to your itinerary. You can also arrive a few days early to explore independently and get acclimated, customize your air itinerary, and more.

I hope you find this Travel Planning Guide helpful. If you have any further questions, do not hesitate to contact one of our Travel Counselors at **1-800-955-1925**.

Warm regards,



Harriet R. Lewis
Chair
Overseas Adventure Travel

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Agrigento

Sicily's Ancient Landscapes & Timeless Traditions Land Adventure

Sicily: Palermo, Mazara del Vallo, Piazza Armerina, Ragusa, Catania, Mount Etna

Group size: No more than 16 travelers

16 days starting from \$5,095

including international airfare

Single Supplement: **FREE**

For departure dates & prices, visit www.oattravel.com/bya2026pricing

An Italian island with 3,000 years of history, Sicily was once home to a Greek colony, a Roman province, an Arab emirate, a Norman kingdom, and more. Experience Sicily's full enchantment on a journey from the bustling markets of Palermo to the Baroque beauty of Ragusa and Catania. Hear the rumbling groans of Mount Etna, spend a night in an *agriturismo*, and immerse yourself in Sicily's landscapes, history, and culture.

IT'S INCLUDED

- 14 nights accommodation
- International airfare, airport transfers, government taxes, fees, and airline fuel surcharges unless you choose to make your own air arrangements
- All land transportation
- 30 meals—14 breakfasts, 9 lunches, and 7 dinners (including 1 Home-Hosted Lunch)
- 24 small group activities
- Services of a local O.A.T. Trip Experience Leader
- Gratuities for local guides, drivers, and luggage porters
- 5% Frequent Traveler Credit toward your next adventure

Prices are accurate as of the date of this publishing and are subject to change.

ITINERARY SUMMARY

DAYS	DESTINATION
1	Fly to Palermo, Sicily
2-4	Palermo
5-7	Mazara del Vallo
8	Piazza Armerina
9-11	Ragusa
12-15	Catania
16	Return to U.S.



WHAT TO EXPECT

① ② ③ ④ ⑤ Moderate

Pacing: 5 locations in 15 days with one 1-night stay.

Physical requirements: Travel on some rugged paths and many cobblestoned streets on foot, as well as over bumpy, narrow rural roads by bus; the ability to climb steep stairs and walk up and downhill is also required in several locations in Sicilian cities and the countryside

Flight Time: Travel time will be 12-18 hours and will most likely have one to two connections.

View all physical requirements at www.oattravel.com/bya

SICILY: THE O.A.T. DIFFERENCE

Unbeatable Value: Travel at the lowest price and per diems in the industry.

People-to-People Experiences: See what's in the typical *cucina Siciliana* (Sicilian kitchen) when you sit down with a smaller group of travelers for a **Home-Hosted Lunch** with a Sicilian family in Mazara del Vallo.

O.A.T. Exclusives: Spend **A Day in the Life** of Castelbuono, a hilltop village crowned with a medieval castle. Here, we'll meet a group of hardworking local donkeys and learn about the town's innovative solution to waste disposal. We'll also tour the castle, visit with locals in Castelbuono's charming *piazza*, and sit down to a traditional Sicilian meal with members of the community to learn about what life is like in this small town. Plus, explore Modica like the locals do as we zip through its narrow streets in vintage Fiat 500s. We'll also discuss the **Controversial Topic** of the local Sicilian Mafia, also known as *Cosa Nostra*, during a conversation with someone who is knowledgeable about the organization.

CUSTOMIZE YOUR ADVENTURE

OPTIONAL EXTENSIONS

Puglia: Italy's Undiscovered Heel
PRE-TRIP: 5 nights from **\$1,895**

Calabria: Southern Italy's Hidden Heartland
POST-TRIP: 5 nights from **\$1,495**

ARRIVE EARLY

We recommend that you relax after a long flight or explore more in depth before your trip. Prices shown include accommodations and private airport transfer.

- Arrive early in **Matera** before your Puglia pre-trip extension from **\$210** per room, per night
- Arrive early in **Palermo** before your main adventure from **\$170** per room, per night

Sicily's Ancient Landscapes & Timeless Traditions

YOUR DETAILED ITINERARY

BEGIN YOUR ADVENTURE WITH AN OPTIONAL PRE-TRIP EXTENSION

5 nights in *Puglia: Italy's Undiscovered Heel*

Day 1 Fly to Bari, Italy

Day 2 Arrive Bari • Transfer to Matera

Day 3 Explore Matera • Visit Sassi di Matera

Day 4 Overland to Lecce • Visit Alberobello • Visit Ostuni

Day 5 Explore Lecce

Day 6 Lecce • Optional Salento's Way tour

Day 7 Fly to Palermo via Rome • Join main trip

Day 1 Depart U.S.

You depart today on your overnight flight from the U.S. to Palermo, Sicily.

Day 2 Arrive in Palermo, Sicily

- Destination: Palermo
- Accommodations: Hotel Federico II or similar

Morning: Arrive in Palermo, Sicily's capital city, in the late morning or early afternoon. An O.A.T. representative will meet you at the airport and assist with the transfer to your hotel.

Lunch: On your own in Palermo. Your Trip Experience Leader can recommend some of their favorite options. Perhaps you may decide to sample some of Sicily's famous seafood.

Afternoon: Free for your own discoveries. Continue exploring Palermo or rest at the hotel.

Dinner: On your own. Your Trip Experience Leader will be happy to share their recommendations, if you'd like. With many restaurants in Palermo to choose from, you should be able to find whatever suits your mood—from simple *friggitoria* (fried food) favored by the locals or a typical Sicilian trattoria, to more upscale Sicilian restaurants.

Evening: Your evening is on your own—you are free to rest in your room after your flight to prepare for tomorrow's discoveries or reach out to your Trip Experience Leader for recommendations on things to do in the area.

Day 3 Explore Palermo • **Controversial Topic: Conversation about Sicilian Mafia with local experts**

- Destination: Palermo
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Dinner
- Accommodations: Hotel Federico II or similar

Breakfast: At the hotel.

Morning: Join your fellow travelers—including those who took our optional *Puglia: Italy's Undiscovered Heel* extension and those who arrived early in Palermo before their main adventure—for a Welcome Briefing led by your Trip Experience Leader.

Then we'll set out to explore the Sicilian capital during a walking tour with our Trip Experience Leader and a local guide. Our exploration will reveal the city's eclectic cacophony of architectural styles, the legacy of a storied and complex past.

Throughout its history, Palermo's strategic position in the middle of the Mediterranean drew the attention of a regular succession of invaders. The Phoenicians, Carthaginians, Greeks, Romans, Normans, Swabians, and French are among those who came, conquered, and left their mark. The cityscape, particularly its civic and religious structures, reflects a strong Baroque influence dating back to the 17th and 18th centuries. And, more recently, reconstruction after heavy World War II bombing added more modern elements to the mix. During our walking tour, we'll explore landmarks such as the Piazza Pretoria, where we'll learn why its 16th-century fountain is referred to as the "Fountain of Shame," and the Teatro Massimo Vittorio Emanuele, a prominent opera house located on the Piazza Verdi.

Our walking tour will conclude at the colorful Capo Market, where we'll taste some local street foods, such as *arancini* (fried rice balls). Sicilian open-air street markets bear a striking similarity to Arab *souks*, and they are a tradition dating back to the ninth century, when Saracens ruled the island.

Lunch: On your own—you might like to continue sampling more street foods, or seek out a local *trattoria* for a bowl of pasta.

Afternoon: You'll have a few hours of free time to spend as you wish.

Later this afternoon, we'll meet back up at our hotel for a conversation about a **Controversial Topic:** the Sicilian Mafia, also known as *Cosa Nostra*. We'll get an overview of the Mafia's history and inner workings—from its 19th century roots that sprung from cynicism and distrust of public institutions, to its rise and spread to America during World War II, and the shadow it casts over Sicilian business, politics, criminal justice, and day-to-day life today.

Dinner: Enjoy a Welcome Dinner at a local restaurant featuring Sicilian cuisine, and toast to the adventure to come. *Salute!*

Evening: You have the freedom to spend the rest of the evening as you wish, whether you want to retire to your room to rest before tomorrow's discoveries or to head back out to explore the nearby area.

Day 4 **A Day in the Life of Castelbuono**

- Destination: Palermo
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch
- Accommodations: Hotel Federico II or similar

Activity Note: The garbage-collecting donkeys do not work on Sundays. If this day falls on a Sunday, you might see the donkeys but their presence is not guaranteed.

Breakfast: At the hotel.

Morning: Our day begins with a drive east to the Madonie Mountains. Here, we'll enjoy our **New! A Day in the Life** of the small hilltop village of Castelbuono, which boasts centuries of rich history and a charming medieval town center.

Shortly after our arrival in Castelbuono, we'll learn about some of the town's more unusual—and hardworking—residents: the donkeys. These donkeys are used to collect the town's garbage and recycling and are especially handy for navigating the narrow medieval alleys that aren't wide enough for cars.

Next, we'll head to Castelbuono's most famous attraction: its medieval castle. In fact, the name Castelbuono means “good castle” in Italian. Construction on the castle began in the 14th century, and over the centuries it underwent more changes and additions as members of the wealthy Ventimiglia family moved from Palermo to Castelbuono. Today, the castle houses the Castelbuono Civic Museum and a chapel featuring impressive medieval art.

We'll then head to Piazza Margherita, the town square. Here, we'll have the chance to meet with locals in the community. We'll conclude our morning with a tasting of locally-made *panettone*, the fruit-studded cake often enjoyed during Christmas and other celebrations. Castelbuono's *panettone* is special because it's made with *manna*, a white sap that comes from nearby ash trees and is used as a sweetener. This is a great opportunity to ask any questions you might have about their lives or what it's like to live in this part of Sicily.

Lunch: We'll savor a tasting lunch of authentic local dishes.

Afternoon: We'll bid a fond farewell to the members of the community we've met and begin our drive back to Palermo. We'll arrive in the late afternoon, and the rest of the day is yours to do as you'd like.

Dinner: On your own. Perhaps you'll return to a favorite dining spot discovered during your time here in Palermo, or ask your Trip Experience Leader for a recommendation. If a sit-down dinner is too much, just grab a couple of slices of *sfincione*, a pizza-like snack loved by the locals.

Evening: Free for your own discoveries. Your Trip Experience Leader will be happy to share their recommendations, if you'd like.

Day 5 Overland to Monreale • Segesta • Overland to Mazara del Vallo

- Destination: Mazara del Vallo
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch
- Accommodations: Mahara Hotel or similar

Activity Note: On departures where this day falls on a Sunday, the Monreale cathedral will be closed. Your visit to Monreale will take place on Day 3 in the morning.

Depending on hotel availability, some groups will stay in Marsala, while some will stay in Mazara del Vallo. All included activities will remain the same regardless of where you stay.

Breakfast: At the hotel.

Morning: We'll check out of our hotel in Palermo and drive to Mazara del Vallo. Along the way, we'll make two stops—the first being Monreale, a town perched on hills overlooking Palermo and the lush valley known as La Conca d'Oro (the Golden Shell). Here, a local guide will take us on a walking tour of a twelfth-century Norman cathedral, a UNESCO World Heritage

Site, known for its Byzantine mosaics and we'll have the chance to observe daily life in this small town.

Next, we'll set off to Segesta, a region that was once home to the ancient Elymians—one of Sicily's indigenous peoples. There, we'll visit an *agriturismo*, a traditional Sicilian farmhouse sanctioned for dining and lodging by the Italian government.

Lunch: At the *agriturismo* featuring fresh and local northern Sicilian fare. While we eat, we'll have a chance to learn about local wine and olive oil production from the *agriturismo*'s owner.

Afternoon: After lunch, we'll set off by foot into the neighboring countryside to revel in views of olive groves, vineyards, and temple ruins. In a reminder of Segesta's ancient Greek heritage, the columns of a well preserved (and unfinished) Doric temple still stand proudly in a remote hilltop location.

After admiring Segesta's ruins from a panoramic viewpoint, we'll continue our journey to Mazara del Vallo. We'll arrive in the late afternoon and the rest of the afternoon is on your own. You're free to relax and get settled into your room, or to explore the area on your own.

Dinner: On your own, whenever you'd like. Your Trip Experience Leader will be happy to provide restaurant recommendations. Perhaps you'll seek out a Mazara del Vallo classic such as *gambero rosso*, red prawns, famous for their distinctive hue and succulent meat, often served over couscous.

Evening: Free for your own discoveries. You can retire to your room for the night or ask your Trip Experience Leader for recommendations.

Day 6 Explore Mazara • Tunisian Kasbah • Home-Hosted Lunch

- Destination: Mazara del Vallo
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch
- Accommodations: Mahara Hotel or similar

Activity Note: Depending on hotel availability, some groups will stay in Marsala, while some will stay in Mazara del Vallo. All included activities will remain the same regardless of where you stay.

Breakfast: At the hotel.

Morning: Today we explore the city of Mazara. As we'll see during our walking tour of the city's historic Kasbah quarter, some 3,000 Tunisians and other Maghreb Arabs live and work here. During our explorations, we'll learn about the challenges and opportunities encountered while intermingling Sicilian and Arab cultures, and the co-existence of Muslim and Christian faiths.

Next, we'll stop to visit the Museum of the Dancing Satyr, home to a mysterious Greek bronze statue with a noteworthy past. In 1998, local fishermen brought the treasure to land, after it had spent 2,000 years resting on a seabed off Sicily's southwestern coast.

Then, we'll break into even smaller groups and drive to the homes of some local families for a **Home-Hosted Lunch**. This is a unique opportunity to learn more about life in the region—so come hungry for a home-cooked meal and bring plenty of questions for your generous hosts.

Lunch: Your small group will be welcomed into the house, apartment, or small villa of a local family to enjoy a traditional Sicilian lunch. Our meal will consist of typical western Sicilian fare, which will likely include a traditional seafood dish (vegetarian options will also be available). While Mazara del Vallo has

Phoenician origins, we'll see during this meal that the city's modern-day cuisine owes much to the Arabs, who ruled Sicily from 827 to 1061.

During our time here, we'll enjoy the company of one or more generations of family members, providing a wide-ranging perspective of life in the region. Our hosts may include former fishermen and their families, as well as locals working in a variety of other professions.

Afternoon: After lunch, we'll drive back to our hotel, arriving in the mid-afternoon. The rest of your day is free—check with your Trip Experience Leader for suggestions.

Dinner: On your own.

Evening: You'll have the evening free for your own discoveries or relaxation. Your Trip Experience Leader will be happy to share their recommendations, if you'd like.

Day 7 Museo del Sale visit • Boat ride to Mothya Island • Sicilian cooking lesson

- Destination: Mazara del Vallo
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner
- Accommodations: Mahara Hotel or similar

Activity Note: Depending on hotel availability, some groups will stay in Marsala, while some will stay in Mazara del Vallo. All included activities will remain the same regardless of where you stay. The cooking class will be at a restaurant in Marsala for groups staying in Marsala; and at a restaurant in Mazara del Vallo for groups staying in Mazara del Vallo.

Breakfast: At the hotel.

Morning: Our destination this morning is *Museo del Sale*, a semi-working salt museum in the province of Trapani. To get there, we'll drive through a windmill-dotted landscape set against dramatic mountains. At the museum, we'll view the 17th-century mill and

learn how the region has been shaped by the age-old Trapani tradition of salt production and refining. We'll also view historic photos of salt workers, highlighting the division of labor between the skilled elders who maintained the windmills to the young apprentices who hauled water.

Weather permitting, we'll then board a small boat for a bracing and windswept ride to the small island of Mothya. Some 2,700 years ago, the Phoenicians built a settlement here, and it was once a thriving trade outpost. We'll delve into the island's history while our Trip Experience Leader takes us on a walking tour of the island and its ancient fortress.

We'll also visit the Giuseppe Whitaker museum, which houses numerous ancient artifacts, including the fifth century *Motya Charioteer* sculpture. Believed to have been commissioned by a wealthy chariot racer, it was constructed by a leading Greek artist in the period following the defeat of the Persians.

Lunch: We'll make the most of the island's scenic views during a light picnic lunch featuring a variety of Sicilian dishes.

Afternoon: We'll explore the island in greater detail with our Trip Experience Leader, this time via a 1-mile walk along a network of footpaths connecting Mothya's interior to the shore. Along the way, we'll witness the ongoing excavation projects that continue to reveal new insights into how the island's relatively small amount of real estate was developed and used to its full potential.

After our walk, a short boat ride will take us back to the mainland. From there, we'll return to our hotel in Mazara del Vallo. The rest of the afternoon is free for you to relax or do some independent exploring.

Later this afternoon, our small group will regroup for a short walk to a local restaurant. Here, we'll take part in a cooking class to learn how to make Sicilian *parmigiana*, traditional pasta, and Sicily's famous *pesto alla trapanese*—a pesto combining almonds, cherry tomatoes, basil, garlic, and olive oil. To top off our culinary pursuits, we'll learn how to prepare an almond parfait.

Dinner: We'll dine on the dishes we make as we prepare them.

Evening: The evening is yours after dinner, with the freedom to enjoy your final night in Mazara as you'd like. Ask your Trip Experience Leader for recommendations.

Day 8 Overland to Piazza Armerina • Valley of the Temples • Agrigento

- Destination: Piazza Armerina
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner
- Accommodations: Vecchia Masseria or similar

Breakfast: At the hotel.

Morning: Today we'll journey inland, toward Sicily's center and our home for the night, an authentic *agriturismo*. To break up our drive, we'll stop this morning at the UNESCO-protected site of the Valley of Temples, situated just outside the city of Agrigento. Agrigento was once the Greek city of Akragas, one of the most culturally advanced cities of the ancient world. Here in the Valley of Temples, we'll set off by foot with a local guide to explore the archaeological remains of the Greek temples, each built between 510 and 430 BC. In addition to the honey-colored architecture, the area provides sweeping views of the neighboring hillsides, where homes and agricultural plots form a patchwork display of green, brown, and white.

Lunch: At a local restaurant in Agrigento, featuring regional fare.

Afternoon: We'll continue our drive, journeying deep into the Sicilian hinterlands to Piazza Armerina, reaching out *agriturismo* in the late afternoon. We'll check in and get our room assignments upon arrival, which gives us a few free hours to enjoy the space before dinner. Perhaps you will relax in your room or take in the expansive views of surrounding mountains, forests, and farmland. Or, enjoy the farmhouse's amenities, which may include an outdoor pool and outdoor terrace.

Dinner: In the *agriturismo*'s restaurant, with cuisine that features locally grown ingredients.

Evening: On your own—you're free to explore the *agriturismo* and its amenities as you wish.

Day 9 Overland to Ragusa • Villa Romana del Casale • Winery Tour

- Destination: Ragusa
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner
- Accommodations: Hotel Il Barocco or similar

Breakfast: At the hotel.

Morning: We'll begin our day with a short drive to the ruins of Villa Romana del Casale. Constructed in the middle of the fourth century AD as a hunting lodge, the villa was covered by a landslide in the twelfth century. Nearly 800 years later, 20th-century excavations began to reveal some of the finest examples of Roman mosaics in all of Europe—scenes range from Homeric escapades to insightful depictions of daily life. The villa is now a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

Later this morning, we'll visit Tenute Senia Winery, a family-run estate. There, we'll meet the Nicosia sisters, who inherited the business from their father (who inherited the business from *his* father). Winemaking

is a male-dominated industry in Sicily, and the winery's future was uncertain after their father's retirement. But since the sisters took over, the winery has won numerous awards and recognitions, and they have successfully guided it into a new era. If feasible, we'll take a guided tour of the grounds and learn about the evolution of the family business during our time here.

Lunch: We'll enjoy a wine tasting at lunch.

Afternoon: After lunch, we'll continue on to Ragusa. This city with ancient roots was devastated by an earthquake in 1693, and the aftermath changed the city significantly. Wealthier members of the population decided to build their new town higher up a cliff, while the rest of the inhabitants rebuilt on the original site, at the bottom of a gorge. These two distinct towns remained separate entities until 1926, when the higher and lower sections became one (along with a jumble of homes and churches that cling to the walls of the ravine that divide them).

We'll arrive at our hotel in the mid-afternoon. You'll have a couple hours of free time to settle into your room or explore as you wish before. Later this afternoon, we'll gather for a brief orientation walk around the vicinity of the hotel. This is a great time to ask your Trip Experience Leader for restaurant recommendations.

Dinner: A light dinner and *aperitivo* at a local restaurant.

Evening: On your own—you are free to rest in your room for the evening, begin to discover the city's charm, or people watch from an outdoor table at one of Ragusa's cafés. You can also ask your Trip Experience Leader for recommendations on things to do in the area.

Day 10 Old Town Ragusa • Fiat ride through Modica

- Destination: Ragusa
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Dinner
- Accommodations: Hotel Il Barocco or similar

Activity Note: This morning's walking tour includes numerous flights of steep steps—we will take our time and include several stops along the way.

Breakfast: At the hotel.

Morning: We'll set off on a walking tour with a local guide to discover the Baroque splendor of Ragusa. Ragusa is home to one of Sicily's best-preserved old towns—*Ragusa Ibla*—and O.A.T. is one of the very few travel companies to include this special locale. As we explore this UNESCO World Heritage Site, we'll behold richly ornamented Baroque structures, elaborate balconies, and sumptuously decorated churches. A highlight among highlights is the 18th-century Duomo di San Giorgio: Set in the center of town, it features a neo-classical dome added in 1820.

Lunch: On your own. Ask your Trip Experience Leader for recommendations on the best places for local fare. Fans of the *Inspector Montalbano* TV series may wish to check out *A Rusticana*, a local eatery where some scenes were filmed.

Afternoon: You have several hours of free time after lunch to explore *Ibla* as you'd like, whether you'd prefer to stroll the picturesque alleys and stairways, or sample a treat from a local shop that specializes in delicious wine-flavored ice creams. You may also wish to visit *La Bottega di Maristella*, a local shop that specializes in the art of Sicilian *sfilato*—an ancient style of embroidery. Later this afternoon, we'll regroup and drive to Modica, another UNESCO-listed town, where we'll break up into even smaller groups of 2 and board an iconic form of transportation: vintage

Fiat 500s. These small Italian cars are not only immediately recognizable—they're also ideal for maneuvering the narrow streets and lanes of Modica, as you'll discover during our ride. Along the way, you'll see how Modica was also shaped by the 1693 earthquake. Like Ragusa, it is divided into upper and lower sections and features Sicilian Baroque architecture.

Dinner: At a local restaurant in Modica.

Evening: We'll drive back to Ragusa after dinner. You're free to spend the rest of the evening as you'd like—and your Trip Experience Leader is ready with recommendations.

Day 11 Val di Noto farm visit • Optional Sicilian cooking class

- Destination: Ragusa
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch
- Accommodations: Hotel Il Barocco or similar

Activity Note: The farm you visit today and the activities available will vary by departure.

Breakfast: At the hotel.

Morning: Today we'll drive into the Sicilian countryside and through the UNESCO-protected Val di Noto valley, where we will visit a local family on their farm. Set against the rugged peaks of Modica, the valley is both an agricultural oasis and powerhouse. Home to a mix of small-scale and large-scale production, this area is one of the biggest exporters of greenhouse produce in all of Europe, as well as one of the primary sources for milk, dairy, and meat production. However, as we'll learn, the methods of cultivation and animal husbandry vary greatly from producer to producer.

When we arrive at the farm, we'll be welcomed by our hosts and have a chance to learn about their cultivation philosophy and their

experience in the agricultural business. Then, we'll head out on a tour of the property. We'll stroll through the fields, pausing to look at their produce or any animals they may have and hearing about how they work to reap abundant, quality harvests, all while working with nature—not against it. For many farmers in Sicily, this means keeping their harvests small so they don't compromise the quality and heritage of what they produce.

In the late morning, we'll return to the farmhouse and roll up our sleeves to take part in a simple hands-on preparation of one of the dishes we'll later enjoy at lunch. We could also be asked to help with the harvesting of a crop or to collect some veggies our host decided to cook for us today at lunch.

Lunch: At the farmhouse with our hosts. Our menu will be dictated by the season, as well as the quality of the yield for that year. Although the dishes will vary, our meal will consist of an assortment of fresh cheeses, fresh produce, hearty pastas, tender meats, and of course, a variety of wines.

Afternoon: We'll round out our meal the Sicilian way, with espresso and fruit or dessert. We'll return to Ragusa by mid-afternoon, and the rest of the day is on your own. Or, you can choose to join an optional cooking class to learn the secrets to creating some of Sicily's iconic dishes. Our hands-on lesson will take place at Terrazza dell'Orologio, an historic trattoria and wine bar in Ragusa Ibla known for its elegant takes on traditional Sicilian dishes. Here, we'll discover what goes into making the most authentic *caponata*, forming perfect rice balls for *arancini*, and crafting the rich and heavenly filling of the *cannolo*, Sicily's favorite sweet treat. After our lesson, we'll sample the fruits of our labor at a buffet before returning to our hotel.

Dinner: Travelers on the optional tour will enjoy an included buffet during their lesson. Otherwise, dinner is on your own.

Evening: Free to do as you'd like.

Day 12 Overland to Catania • Siracusa • Explore Ortigia

- Destination: Catania
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Dinner
- Accommodations: Hotel Una Palace or similar

Activity Note: Today's boat ride is contingent on weather conditions.

Depending on hotel availability, some groups will stay in Catania, while some will stay in Aci Castello. All included activities will remain the same regardless of where you stay. Please also note, today's boat ride is contingent on weather conditions.

Breakfast: At the hotel.

Morning: We say goodbye to Ragusa and drive east to Siracusa. Known as the birthplace of the famed mathematician Archimedes, Siracusa was one of the most powerful ports of the ancient Mediterranean world. Now more than 2,700 years old, the city boasts a rich and storied history—evident in the Greek, Roman, and Baroque architecture that has helped earn the city UNESCO World Heritage Site status.

When we arrive, we'll meet with a local guide and set off on a discovery walk of Ortigia, a small island packed with history just off the coast of Siracusa. Here, a blend of architectural styles awaits, from Greek and Roman ruins to Medieval Norman structures and Baroque buildings. Highlights include the fountain of Arethusa, the Temple of Apollo, and the Piazza del Duomo, the pedestrian square that serves as the heart of Ortigia.

Lunch: On your own. You have the freedom to seek out a spot yourself, or ask your Trip Experience Leader for recommendations. There are plenty of family-run *trattorie* lining the alleys here, or you could pop over to Ortigia's famous outdoor market for some deep-fried sardines or other Sicilian favorites.

Afternoon: You'll have some free time to continue exploring Ortigia and Siracusa on your own. Our small group will reconvene in the mid-afternoon to make our final discoveries of Ortigia, this time from the sea. During a scenic boat tour, we'll witness the island's rocky cliffs and seaside landmarks.

After our tour concludes, we'll drive north to Catania, a vibrant city perched on the edge of the Ionian Sea. You'll have some free time to settle into your hotel room and begin exploring the city. Later, we'll gather in the lobby for a brief orientation walk with our Trip Experience Leader to get to know the area.

Dinner: At a local restaurant.

Evening: Your evening is free to begin exploring Catania on your own.

Day 13 Explore Catania • World War II Museum • Conversation about volcanology

- Destination: Catania
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch
- Accommodations: Hotel Una Palace or similar

Activity Note: Depending on hotel availability, some groups will stay in Catania, while some will stay in Aci Castello. All included activities will remain the same regardless of where you stay. Please also note, if this day falls on a Monday, the World War II Museum is closed. In that instance, we will visit the museum on another day during our time in Catania.

Breakfast: At the hotel.

Morning: We'll begin our day with a visit Catania's local World War II Museum. The museum is dedicated to the Allied landing on the southern coast of Sicily, which we'll learn more about from a local guide during our visit. After, we'll set out on a walking tour of Catania, Sicily's second-largest city.

Founded in the eighth century BC, Catania was once among Italy's most important cultural centers, particularly during the Renaissance period. Sicily's first university opened here in 1434, and Catania's tradition of education and industry continues to thrive here today. You'll also witness the city's spirit of tenacity, well-represented by the Cathedral of Catania: Originally erected in the eleventh century, it has endured damage from numerous earthquakes over the years. Now a UNESCO-protected landmark, it has been repaired or restored every time, and today features a rich blend of Norman and Baroque architecture.

Lunch: At a local restaurant.

Afternoon: Enjoy a few hours of free time for independent exploration. Later this afternoon, our group will meet a local volcanologist and learn about life in a volcanic region. He'll share his insights about the inherent risks and advantages to living in the shadow of Mount Etna, as well as answer any questions we may have.

Dinner: On your own in Catania. You can ask your Trip Experience Leader for dinner suggestions. You might even check out Trattoria di De Fiore, a local hot spot where chef Rosanna (from Jamie Oliver's TV series *Jamie Cooks Italy*) has been creating classic Catanian fare for more than 50 years.

Evening: You're free to spend the rest of the evening as you wish.

Day 14 Catania • Visit Taormina

- Destination: Catania
- Included Meals: Breakfast
- Accommodations: Hotel Una Palace or similar

Activity Note: Depending on hotel availability, some groups will stay in Catania, while some will stay in Aci Castello. All included activities will remain the same regardless of where you stay.

Breakfast: At the hotel.

Morning: Today we explore hillside Taormina, home to a Greco-Roman theater that is one of the most highly regarded ancient sites in Sicily. After a short drive from Catania, we'll get to know the city during a walking tour with our Trip Experience Leader and a local guide. We'll visit the famous amphitheater and take in its commanding view—perched atop a hill, the brick and stone structure offers a view of the building-speckled coastline, the Ionian Sea and Mount Etna. Moving on, we'll explore Taormina's more contemporary delights: winding streets lined by pastel-hued buildings, many accented by wrought-iron balconies.

Lunch: On your own. Ask your Trip Experience Leader for recommendations. The main street of Taormina is lined with dining choices, including tasty home-style Sicilian cooking at spots.

Afternoon: After lunch, you'll have some free time to explore Taormina on your own. Continue meandering down the charming streets of town, or take a cable-car ride down to the sea. We'll return to Catania later this afternoon. The rest of the day is yours to relax, unwind, or explore on your own.

Dinner: On your own, whenever you'd like. You may consider seeking out unique *antipasti*.

Evening: Free for your own discoveries. Perhaps you'll seek out a local wine bar with your fellow travelers.

Day 15 Catania • 4-wheel-drive journey to Mount Etna

- Destination: Catania
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner
- Accommodations: Hotel Una Palace or similar

Activity Note: Depending on hotel availability, some groups will stay in Catania, while some will stay in Aci Castello. All included activities will remain the same regardless of where you stay. Please also note, today's activity may be altered due to snow or inclement weather. While it also includes about 2.5 miles of hiking—at an altitude of 6,000 feet—travelers can elect not to participate in the hiking portion of the excursion if they feel it may be too difficult.

Breakfast: At the hotel.

Morning: Our destination today is the magnificent Mount Etna, a UNESCO World Heritage Site. The highest Italian mountain south of the Alps, Mount Etna stretches to a height of more than 10,000 feet. It's not only the tallest active volcano in Europe, it's also one of the most active volcanoes in the world—with rich volcanic soil that brings abundant vineyards and orchards to its slopes.

Our Etna exploration begins in 4-wheel-drive vehicles. We'll drive to the volcano in the company of a local nature guide who will set the stage for what awaits us. Upon arrival at the northern slope, we'll go off the beaten path to explore some of Etna's lava flows. We'll pause on occasion to get out of our vehicles and hike along the volcano's slope to take in the commanding views.

Lunch: At a local restaurant on the slopes of Mount Etna.

Afternoon: We'll make our way back down the mountain and to Catania, arriving at our hotel in the mid-afternoon. The rest of the afternoon is yours for any last-minute explorations. Early this evening, we'll gather in the hotel for a special Farewell Drink—a chance to recognize our experiences shared and memories made here in Sicily.

Dinner: We'll continue the celebration at a nearby restaurant, sitting down as a group one final time for our Farewell Dinner. Over a meal of classic Sicilian fare, we'll toast to the discoveries we've made.

Evening: On your own. You may choose to return to your room to rest before your return flight home tomorrow, explore the city a little more, or join fellow travelers in the main hotel area for a nightcap to chat about the highlights of your adventure.

Day 16 Return to U.S. or begin your post-trip extension

- Destination: U.S.
- Included Meals: Breakfast

Activity Note: Please be aware that most return flights to the U.S. depart early in the morning, often at 6 AM, requiring travelers to leave the hotel around 3 AM. Specific departure times may vary based on your home city.

Breakfast: At the hotel. Boxed breakfasts will be available for travelers with early flights.

Morning: Transfer to the airport and catch your return flight home.

Travelers taking the *Calabria: Southern Italy's Hidden Heartland* post-trip extension will fly to the Italian mainland this morning.

END YOUR ADVENTURE WITH AN OPTIONAL POST-TRIP EXTENSION

5 nights in *Calabria: Southern Italy's Hidden Heartland*

Day 1 Strait of Messina ferry crossing •
Overland to Reggio di Calabria & Pizzo

Day 2 Pizzo • Excursion to Zungri
and Tropea

Day 3 Overland to Civita • Visit a
silk factory

Day 4 Mountain hike at Mount Pollino •
Overland to Morano Calabro • Civita

Day 5 Paestum visit • Overland to Salerno

Day 6 Salerno • Return to U.S.

OPTIONAL TOURS

During your trip you will be able to book optional tours directly with your Trip Experience Leader. They will ask you to confirm the payment for these tours by filling out a payment form. Optional tours can only be purchased with a credit or debit card. We accept Visa, MasterCard, and Discover credit cards. We also accept Visa and MasterCard debit cards, but it must be a debit card that allows you to sign for purchases.

In order to correctly process these charges, there can be a delay of 2–3 months from the date of your return for the charges to be posted to your account. Therefore we ask that you use a card that will not expire in the 2–3 months following your return.

Please note: *Optional tour prices are listed in U.S. dollar estimates determined at the time of publication and are subject to change. Optional tours may vary.*

Sicilian cooking class

(Day 11 \$90 per person)

Our optional cooking class will reveal the secrets to creating some of Sicily's iconic dishes. Our hands-on lesson will take place at Terrazza dell'Orologio, an historic trattoria and wine bar in Ragusa Ibla known for its elegant takes on traditional Sicilian dishes. Here, we'll discover what goes into making the most authentic *caponata*, forming perfect rice balls for *arancini*, and crafting the rich and heavenly filling of the *cannolo*, Sicily's favorite sweet treat. After our lesson, we'll sample the fruits of our labor at a buffet before returning to our hotel.

PRE-TRIP

Puglia: Italy's Undiscovered Heel

INCLUDED IN YOUR PRICE

- » Airfare from Brindisi to Palermo
- » 5 nights accommodation
- » 10 meals—5 breakfasts, 3 lunches, and 2 dinners
- » 7 small group activities
- » Services of a local O.A.T. Trip Experience Leader
- » Gratuities for local guides, drivers, and luggage porters
- » All transfers

PRE-TRIP EXTENSION ITINERARY

Discover Puglia's hidden treasures, from the Baroque beauty of Lecce to the unique conical-roofed homes of Alberobello—and explore an unspoiled region of Italy where few American travelers have been before.

Day 1 Fly to Bari, Italy

- Destination: Bari, Italy

You depart today on your overnight flight from the U.S. to Bari, Italy.

Day 2 Arrive Bari • Transfer to Matera

- Destination: Matera
- Included Meals: Dinner
- Accommodations: Locanda di San Martino or similar

Morning: You'll arrive in Bari, Italy in the morning or afternoon. An O.A.T. representative will meet you at the airport and assist with the transfer to your hotel in Matera.

Lunch: On your own—you're free to explore or relax in your room as you settle in after your flight.

Afternoon: Following some free time, we'll gather as a small group later this afternoon for a short Welcome Briefing with your Trip Experience Leader. You will be joined by

travelers who arrived early in Matera before their pre-trip extension. We'll take a short orientation walk around the hotel's vicinity, including where to find an ATM or local market.

Dinner: We'll enjoy a Welcome Dinner at a local restaurant featuring Matera's local cuisine.

Evening: After dinner, you are free to explore or retire for the night. If you'd like local recommendations, your Trip Experience Leader can provide their top tips.

Day 3 Explore Matera • Visit Sassi di Matera

- Destination: Matera
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch
- Accommodations: Locanda di San Martino or similar

Breakfast: At the hotel.

Morning: We'll meet with our Trip Experience Leader and embark on a walking tour of Matera's Sassi district, so called for the

stretch of ancient caves of worship we'll discover in Sassi di Matera—a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

Sassi di Matera consists of two original districts in the valley, Sasso Caveoso and Sasso Barisano. Our walking tour will take us back in time as we journey past quarries, ravines, and sculpted gardens toward a network of small cave churches, crypts, and fortifications. During the walk, you may see the churches of San Pietro Barisano, Sant'Agostino, and Santa Maria de Idris, which overlook the scenic neighboring valley. You'll want to keep an eye out for medieval paintings on many of the churches' walls.

Lunch: At a local restaurant, featuring Matera's specialties.

Afternoon: Enjoy some free time to continue exploring at your own pace. Wander through Matera, taking in its architecture, winding streets, and local shops.

Dinner: You are free to discover some of Matera's local cuisine on your own tonight, or ask your Trip Experience Leader for their recommendations.

Evening: The evening is free for you to explore the city, spend time reflecting with fellow travelers, or rest.

Day 4 Overland to Lecce • Visit Alberobello • Visit Ostuni

- Destination: Lecce
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch
- Accommodations: Palazzo Bignami or similar

Breakfast: At the hotel.

Morning: Today we'll bid farewell to Matera and transfer to Lecce, with a couple of stops along the way to break up our drive. Our first

stop is Alberobello. This charming Italian town is known for its *trulli*, the conical-roofed and dry-stone dwellings that have earned UNESCO World Heritage Site status. Built out of limestone—and without cement—these homes date back as far as the mid-14th century, but remain remarkably well-preserved today.

During our walking tour with our Trip Experience Leader, we'll stroll the town's narrow streets, plus see what it's like inside an authentic *trullo*. Then, we'll say goodbye to Alberobello and take a short drive to one of the suggestive Apulian villages we'll sample more of the region's local flavors during a visit to an olive oil farm. Here, we'll meet with a farm worker and learn the ins and outs of the oil making process. Then, we'll take a quick drive to nearby Ostuni. Ostuni is also called *La Città Bianca*—The White City—named for its white buildings perched above the Adriatic.

Lunch: At a local restaurant. Perhaps you'll try a new local specialty.

Afternoon: We'll explore the city's medieval streets with our Trip Experience Leader before continuing on to Lecce. When we arrive to Lecce, in the late afternoon, the rest of your day is free.

Dinner: On your own this evening. With lots of students in this important university town, Lecce is filled with good pizzerias and *trattorie*. Ask your Trip Experience Leader for local recommendations.

Evening: On your own—ask your Trip Experience Leader for recommendations on how to begin your discoveries.

Day 5 Explore Lecce

- Destination: Lecce
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch
- Accommodations: Palazzo Bignami or similar

Breakfast: At the hotel.

Morning: Today we set off for a walking tour of Lecce with our Trip Experience Leader. Located in the UNESCO-protected region of Salento, Lecce is a town that's rumored to have been around since the Trojan Wars. The modern-day city, however, can trace its history as far back as the third century BC, when it was conquered by the Romans.

During our exploration, we will notice another strong influence: the Baroque period. During the early 17th century, the style was a craze that swept across Italy—and its legacy is evident today in Lecce's Piazza del Duomo and the Basilica di Santa Croce, the latter of which is accented by a rose window. During our explorations, we will visit these two paragons of Lecce's Baroque splendor.

Lunch: At a local restaurant.

Afternoon: On your own, with the freedom to continue discovering Lecce as you wish. Perhaps you'll venture into the Cattedrale Dell'Assunzione Della Vergine, a 17th-century cathedral renowned for its gilded, opulent interior. Or you may choose to seek out the town's 16th-century city gates.

Dinner: On your own—ask for a recommendation, seek out a courtyard restaurant or head to one of Lecce's many good-value spots that specialize in simply-prepared regional fare.

Evening: Free to do as you'd like.

Day 6 Lecce • Optional Salento's Way tour

- Destination: Lecce
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Dinner
- Accommodations: Palazzo Bignami or similar

Breakfast: At the hotel.

Morning: Enjoy a free morning in Lecce today. Or, you may choose to join our full-day optional Salento's Way tour.

We'll begin with a drive to Galatina, one of Puglia's baroque gems with its incredible 14th-century Basilica di Santa Caterina d'Alessandria.

Lunch: On your own for travelers who do not participate in the optional tour. Those on the optional tour will enjoy a light lunch and a wine tasting at a winery near Galatina.

Afternoon: Discoveries on our optional tour will also include Otranto, in the far eastern corner of Italy's boot heel. A strategic port during Roman times, Otranto is renowned today for its extensive mosaics, some dating as far back as the twelfth century. It also offers visitors vistas of sunbaked seaside buildings, ancient ruins, and a ship-dotted Mediterranean harbor. Travelers not on our optional tour can continue exploring Lecce or enjoying the hotel amenities. Your Trip Experience Leader will be happy to provide recommendations for how to enjoy this free time. Those on the optional tour will return to Lecce in the late afternoon.

Dinner: At a local restaurant, featuring Italian fare.

Evening: On your own—you are free to rest up before tomorrow's journey to Palermo. Or, if you'd like, you may seek out final discoveries in Lecce.

**Day 7 Fly to Palermo via Rome •
Join main trip**

- Destination: Palermo
- Included Meals: Breakfast

Breakfast: At the hotel.

Morning: Fly via Rome to Palermo, where you'll meet the rest of your group and begin your *Sicily's Ancient Landscapes & Timeless Traditions* adventure.

OPTIONAL TOUR

Salento's Way

(Day 6 \$150 per person)

This full-day optional tour begins in the seaside town of Otranto, situated in the Salento Peninsula in the far eastern corner of Italy's boot heel. Once a strategic port during Roman times, Otranto is renowned for its extensive mosaics, some dating as far back as the 12th century. A wine-tasting will be included in this optional tour, along with a visit to Galatina, one of Puglia's baroque gems with its incredible 14th-century Basilica di Santa Caterina d'Alessandria. Later this afternoon, we return to Lecce to meet up with the rest of our group.

POST-TRIP

Calabria: Southern Italy's Hidden Heartland

INCLUDED IN YOUR PRICE

- » Ferry to Calabria
- » 5 nights accommodation
- » 11 meals—5 breakfasts, 3 lunches, and 3 dinners
- » 13 small group activities
- » Services of a local O.A.T. Trip Experience Leader
- » Gratuities for local guides, drivers, and luggage porters
- » All transfers

POST-TRIP EXTENSION ITINERARY

Sprawling down rugged mountain slopes to the sea, Calabria has nourished rich cultures in dramatic settings for nearly 3,000 years. As you meet the friendly local Calabrese, and soak in the magnificent views, you'll find it easy to fall in love with Calabria.

Day 1 Strait of Messina ferry crossing • Overland to Reggio di Calabria & Pizzo

- Destination: Pizzo countryside
- Included Meals: Dinner
- Accommodations: Popilia Country Resort or similar

Activity Note: If today's activities fall on a Monday, we'll visit the Bergamot Museum instead of the Archaeological Museum. The Bergamot Museum allows visitors to step back in time and understand how this citrus fruit shaped the local economy and the lives of those who live here.

Morning: After bidding farewell to the rest of our group, we'll begin our journey to mainland Italy. From Catania, we'll drive to the Strait of Messina ferry port and take a quick ferry across the water to Calabria. Then we'll continue by bus to Reggio di Calabria, Calabria's oldest and most populous city.

We'll enjoy a late-morning visit to the Bronzes of Riace, life-sized, UNESCO-protected Greek warrior statues. While these pieces date back to the fifth-century BC Greek era, they were not discovered until 1972. It took a decade to restore them and prepare them for public display, and we'll see the results of that extensive restoration and preservation work when we see the statues up close at the Archaeological Museum.

Lunch: On your own—you might pick up something at a local *salumeria* or to ask your Trip Experience Leader for their top recommendations.

Afternoon: We'll regroup and drive to Pizzo, a picturesque Calabrian town situated on a steep cliff overlooking the Gulf of Santa Eufemia. On a walking tour, we'll admire the ancient buildings of the town's main square, Piazza Della Republica, and the historic homes and small villas that line its maze of narrow lanes. Pizzo is also home to Castello Murat, a 15th-century

castle where Joachim Murat, Napoleon's brother-in-law, was executed. During your free time, you might sample the town's specialty: *tartufo*. Created here in Pizzo, this popular dessert features creamy gelato filled with molten chocolate.

Later this afternoon, we'll leave Pizzo and drive into the countryside to reach our hotel. Then, you'll have some free time to relax or explore on your own.

Dinner: At the hotel restaurant.

Evening: On your own—you are free to relax, enjoy the expansive hilltop views, or chat with your fellow travelers.

Day 2 Pizzo • Excursion to Zungri and Tropea

- Destination: Pizzo countryside
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch
- Accommodations: Popilia Country Resort or similar

Breakfast: At the hotel.

Morning: We'll begin our day with a drive to Zungri, a hilltop village known for the hundreds of caves and grottoes dotting its sandstone cliffs. In Greek, Zungri means "rock," and this is a true Calabrian village of rock. With a local guide, we'll explore some of the caves and learn about the Basilian monks who established this ancient settlement and lived here between the twelfth and 14th centuries. Then, we'll take a quick drive to Tropea. One of the most picturesque cliff-side villages on Calabria's Tyrrhenian coast, Tropea is considered one of Italy's best kept secrets. Our Trip Experience Leader will take us on a walking tour of Tropea's historic center, a maze of cobblestone streets lined with grand 17th- and 18th-century *palazzi*, cafés, *gelaterie*,

and artisan shops. Legend has it that Tropea was founded by Hercules, who is honored in the name of the main square, Piazza Ercole.

Lunch: At a local restaurant in Tropea.

Afternoon: We return to Pizzo in the mid-afternoon. You have the remainder of the day to explore on your own or relax at the hotel.

Dinner: On your own—ask your Trip Experience Leader for some dining suggestions.

Evening: You're free to enjoy the expansive hilltop views, or relax and prepare for tomorrow's transfer to Civita.

Day 3 Overland to Civita • Visit a silk factory

- Destination: Civita
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Dinner
- Accommodations: Borghi del Pollino or similar

Breakfast: At the hotel.

Morning: Today we transfer to Civita. As we drive, we'll pass through idyllic countryside and learn about the rebirth of Calabria's ancient silk industry. Mulberry trees once flourished in southern Calabria's mild Mediterranean climate and the region became a center of Europe's silk industry—but that was six centuries ago. We'll learn about a recent attempt to revitalize silk production during a stop at a silk factory in the village of San Floro. We'll tour the local factory and museum overlooking the scenic San Floro hills with our Trip Experience Leader, and learn about the life cycle of the silkworm and the history of the silk industry in Calabria. We'll also witness some traditional hands-on techniques for silk production before continuing our journey to Civita.

Lunch: On your own. We'll stop in an area with a few dining options on our way to Civita.

Afternoon: We'll arrive in Civita by the mid-afternoon. A hilltop town of well-preserved stone houses at the edge of Pollino National Park, Civita occupies a bluff of volcanic rock on the slopes of Mount Pollino. The town became an enclave for Albanian refugees fleeing a 15th-century Ottoman invasion. Like more than 30 other villages in Calabria with Albanian roots, Civita has retained this heritage ever since, with Italo-Albanians now recognized as an ethnic minority in Italy.

Our home for the next two nights will likely be bed & breakfast-styled lodgings on the slopes of Mount Pollino. Because of the small size of these accommodations, our groups will likely be spread out between different accommodations.

After settling in, we'll regroup and take an orientation walk to get familiar with our surroundings. We'll stop by Devil Bridge, an ancient road built over one of Italy's deepest gorges, Raganello Gorge. From here, we'll enjoy magnificent panoramic views of the village below, as well as the rocky, mountainous landscape.

Dinner: At a local restaurant.

Evening: On your own—you're free to return to your room or unwind with your fellow travelers in the common areas.

Day 4 Mountain hike at Mount Pollino • Overland to Morano Calabro • Civita

- Destination: Morano Calabro
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch
- Accommodations: Borghi del Pollino or similar

Activity Note: Today features roughly 2.5 miles of hiking, both along the slopes of Mount Pollino and while walking along steep, narrow, and uneven town streets, which also feature

carved stone steps. In the event of inclement weather, some of the day's activities may be adjusted.

Breakfast: At the hotel.

Morning: Our first destination this morning is the scenic, UNESCO-protected landscapes of Mount Pollino, the 7,375-foot peak that punctuates this landscape. A hike through the area with our Trip Experience Leader will give us a glimpse into the way the limestone landscape has been shaped by nature over the centuries, forming an assortment of grottoes and canyons.

Then we'll continue to Morano Calabro, a UNESCO-listed hillside town. The small community was built on and up the side of a hill, and a dense and compact collection of simple, angular buildings—many capped by the same red-hued roofs—gives it a striking, hive-like feel. Atop the hill and crowning the town is its Norman-Swabian castle, which we'll visit shortly after arrival.

Lunch: At a local restaurant in Morano Calabro.

Afternoon: We'll explore the town with our Trip Experience Leader by foot, winding our way down the hillside setting. So many of Morano's medieval touches are very much intact today, especially its narrow, winding streets and stone stairs carved into the hillside. Then we'll return to Civita.

Dinner: On your own—your Trip Experience Leader can provide recommendations on dining, entertainment, and where to find the best gelato in town.

Evening: You're free to explore Civita as you'd like.

Day 5 Paestum visit • Overland to Salerno

- Destination: Salerno
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner
- Accommodations: Villa Poseidon or similar

Activity Note: Today we'll travel by bus for a total of about 3.5 hours, breaking up our journey with a stop in Paestum.

Breakfast: At the hotel.

Morning: Today we travel to Salerno, on Italy's western coast. Along the way, we'll stop for a visit to Paestum, the famed seventh-century BC Greek outpost. In its 2,600 years, this site has been one of great upheaval: It was wrested from Greek control by the Romans, abandoned during the Middle Ages, and restored after the 19th century. It became familiar to Americans when Allied Forces used these beaches for their successful World War II invasion in September 1943.

When we arrive in Paestum, you'll have some time to explore this UNESCO site on your own. Perhaps you'll take in the site's most well-known features: three Doric temples to Hera, Athena, and Poseidon. Each sun-bleached temple rises from the grassy clearing around it, its tenacious columns standing the test of time. Oldest is the temple to Hera (also known as "the Basilica"), dating back to 560 BC. The largest and best-preserved, however, is the temple of Poseidon—capped by stone eaves, it gives the best insight into how these structures looked when finished out with wooden beams and terra cotta roof tiles.

Lunch: At a local restaurant near Paestum.

Afternoon: We'll drive to Salerno and check into our hotel. You'll have some free time to settle in or explore the area.

Nestled along the sea just a short distance from the Amalfi Coast, Salerno benefits richly from its environment: Palm tree-lined boulevards

stretch out before craggy mountain backdrops, and the sun-drenched piazzas are accented by statuary and fountains.

Dinner: We'll enjoy a Farewell Dinner at a local restaurant, featuring local cuisine and wine to toast to the discoveries we've made in southern Italy.

Evening: On your own. You are free to rest up for the next day's flight home, get a taste of local culture in the Rione Duomo district, or ask your Trip Experience Leader for recommendations on how to make the most of your time here in Salerno.

Day 6 Salerno • Return to U.S.

- Destination: U.S.
- Included Meals: Breakfast

Activity Note: Please be aware that most return flights to the U.S. depart early in the morning, often at 6 AM, requiring travelers to leave the hotel around 3 AM. Specific departure times may vary based on your home city.

Breakfast: At the hotel. Boxed breakfasts will be available for travelers with early flights.

Morning: Transfer to the airport in Naples and catch your return flight home.

TRAVEL DOCUMENTS & ENTRY REQUIREMENTS

Your Passport

- Must be in good condition
- Must be valid for at least 6 months after your scheduled return to the U.S.
- Must have the required number of blank pages (details below)
- The blank pages must be labeled “Visas” at the top. Pages labeled “Amendments and Endorsements” are not acceptable

Need to Renew Your Passport?

Contact the National Passport Information Center (NPIC) at **1-877-487-2778**, or visit the U.S. Department of State’s official website at **www.travel.state.gov** for information on obtaining a new passport or renewing your existing passport. The U.S. Department of State allows for passport renewal by mail or, for applicable citizens, renewal online. We advise you review the process and requirements for online passport renewal on the official website.

You may also contact our recommended visa service company, PVS International, at **1-800-556-9990** for help with your passport.

Recommended Blank Pages

Please confirm that your passport has enough blank pages for this adventure.

- **Main trip only:** If you are taking only the main trip, you will need 2 blank passport pages.
- **Pre-trip extension to Puglia:** No additional passport pages needed.
- **Post-trip extension to Calabria:** No additional passport pages needed.
- **Post-trip extension to Amalfi Coast and Naples:** No additional passport pages needed.
- **Both a pre and a post-trip extension:** You will need a total of 2 blank pages.
- **Stopover in Munich or Rome:** No additional passport pages needed.

Visa Required

We’ll provide you information with detailed instructions, application forms, and fees about 100 days prior to your departure. In the meantime, we’re providing the information below as a guideline on what to expect. This info is for U.S. citizens only. All visas and fees are subject to change.

- **Europe (Italy, Sicily):** U.S. citizens will require an online visa-waiver to enter countries in the European Union. There is no set timeline for when this requirement will start – O.A.T. will contact all impacted travelers before their departure once the start date is confirmed.

Traveling Without a U.S. Passport?

If you are not a U.S. citizen, or if your passport is from any country other than the U.S., it is your responsibility to check with your local consulate, embassy, or a visa services company about visa requirements. We recommend the services of PVS International, a national visa service located in Washington D.C.; they can be reached at **1-800-556-9990** or **www.pvsinternational.org**.

Traveling With a Minor?

Some governments may require certain documentation for minors to enter and depart the country or to obtain a visa (if applicable). For further detail on the required documentation, please contact your local embassy or consulate.

Emergency Photocopies of Key Documents

We recommend you carry color photocopies of key documents including the photo page of your passport plus any applicable visas, air itinerary, credit cards (front and back), and an alternative form of ID. Add emergency phone numbers like your credit card company and the number for your travel protection plan. Store copies separate from the originals.

If you plan to email this information to yourself, please keep in mind that email is not always secure; consider using password protection or encryption. Also email is not always available worldwide. As an alternative, you could load these documents onto a flash drive instead, which can do double-duty as a place to backup photos during your trip.

Overseas Taxes & Fees

This tour may have taxes and fees that cannot be included in your airline ticket price because you are required to pay them in person onsite. All taxes are subject to change without notice and can be paid in cash (either U.S. or local currency).

RIGORS, VACCINES & GENERAL HEALTH

Is This Adventure Right for You?

Please review the information below prior to departing on this adventure. We reserve the right for our Trip Experience Leaders to modify participation, or in some circumstances send travelers home, if their condition would adversely affect the health, safety, or enjoyment of themselves or of other travelers.

PACING

- 5 locations in 15 days with one 1-night stay

PHYSICAL REQUIREMENTS

- Not appropriate for travelers using wheelchairs, walkers, or other mobility aids
- You must be able to walk 3-5 miles unassisted and participate in 6 hours of physical activities each day, including extended periods of standing at times.
- Activities include a 2.5-mile walk and 3-hour bus ride on Day 8; a 3-hour walking tour (that may require walking down approximately 350 steps, and numerous uphill and downhill sections along the way) on Day 10 in Ragusa; and approximately 2.5 miles of hiking at an altitude of 6,000 feet on Day 14
- Agility and balance are required for walking on uneven surfaces, such as uphill paths and cobblestone streets
- We reserve the right for Trip Experience Leaders to restrict participation, or in some circumstances send travelers home, if their limitations impact the group's experience

CLIMATE

- Daytime temperatures range from 60-95°F
- Sicily has a typical Mediterranean climate, with hot, dry summers and warm, rainy winters
- Sicily can sometimes reach temperatures of 100°F with high humidity in the summer
- July, August, and September departures may also experience Sciroccos, hot winds from the Sahara that occasionally elevate temperatures to up to 110°F; Sicily's long hot summers often extend into October.

TERRAIN & TRANSPORTATION

- Travel on some rugged paths and many cobblestoned streets on foot, as well as over bumpy, narrow rural roads by bus
- Ability to climb steep stairs and walk up and downhill is required in several locations

- Travel by 20-53-passenger motor coach, 16-40-passenger boat, Fiat 500 car, 4-wheel-drive vehicle, and local bus
- Motor coach may change during the journey, and is not guaranteed to be the same vehicle the entire duration of the trip.

FLIGHT INFORMATION

- Travel time will be 12-18 hours and will most likely have 1-2 connections of between 2-3 hours
- International flights to Sicily depart around midnight

ACCOMMODATIONS & FACILITIES

- Hotel rooms are smaller than those in the U.S. and offer basic amenities
- Some hotels do not have an elevator
- All accommodations feature private baths

Steps to Take Before Your Trip

Before you leave on this adventure, we recommend the following:

- Check with the CDC for their recommendations for the countries you'll be visiting. You can contact them online at www.cdc.gov/travel or by phone at **1-800-232-4636**.
- Have a medical checkup with your doctor at least 6 weeks before your trip.
- Pick up any necessary medications, both prescription and over-the-counter.
- Have a dental and/or eye checkup. (Recommended, but less urgent)

No Vaccines Required

Recommended Vaccines

At the time of writing there were no required vaccines for this trip. The CDC recommends that all travelers be up to date on their routine vaccinations and on basic travel vaccines like Hepatitis A and Typhoid, but these are suggestions only. However, this could change in future so we encourage you to check with the CDC yourself before meeting with your doctor.

Medication Suggestions

- An antibiotic medication for gastrointestinal illness

Traveling with Medications

- **Pack medications in your carry-on bag** to avoid loss and to have them handy.

- **Keep medicines in their original, labeled containers** for a quicker security screen at the airport and a better experience if you get stopped by customs while overseas.
- **Bring copies of your prescriptions**, written using the generic drug name rather than a brand name to be prepared for any unforeseen loss of your medications.

We recommend checking with the State Department for medication restrictions by country: **travel.state.gov** (Go to “Find International Travel Information”, select “Country Information”, then enter the country into the search bar; if you don’t see any medications specifically mentioned under the “Health” section, then you can presume major U.S. brands should be OK).

Staying Healthy on Your Trip

Jet Lag Tips

- Start your trip well-rested.
- Begin a gradual transition to your new time zone before you leave or switch to your destination time zone when you get on the plane.
- Attempt to sleep and eat according to the new schedule.
- Avoid heavy eating and drinking caffeine or alcoholic beverages right before—and during—your flight.
- Drink plenty of water and/or fruit juice while flying
- Stretch your legs, neck, and back periodically while seated on the plane.
- After arrival, avoid the temptation to nap.
- Don’t push yourself to see a lot on your first day.
- Try to stay awake your first day until after dinner.

Allergies

If you have any serious allergies or dietary restrictions, we advise you to notify us at least 30 days prior to your departure. Please call our Travel Counselors at **1-800-221-0814**, and we will communicate them to our regional office. Every effort will be made to accommodate you.

Water

- Tap water in Sicily is safe to drink. It is also OK to brush your teeth or wash fruit with tap water.
- If you prefer bottled water, it is readily available and inexpensive. (Bottled water is not included in the price of your tour.) Or you could bring a reusable water bottle from home to fill out at the hotel before heading out for the day.

- When in doubt about the water, salads, or ice, just ask the restaurant or your Trip Experience Leader.

Food

- The food in Sicily shouldn't cause any health problems—salads, fruit, and dairy products are all fine.
- Be careful with food that has been cooked and left to go cold, which might happen in some self-service places.

Electricity Supply for Medical Devices

Electricity is as readily available in Sicily as it is in the U.S., but there can be occasional power outages. If you have a medical device that relies on electricity (such as a CPAP), you may wish to bring a battery as a backup.

MONEY MATTERS: LOCAL CURRENCY & TIPPING GUIDELINES

Top Three Tips

- **Carry a mix of different types of payments**, such as local currency, an ATM card, and a credit card.
- **Traveler’s checks are not recommended.** They can be difficult to exchange and the commission fee for cashing them is quite high. It’s more practical to view them as a last resort in the event of a special situation.
- **You will not be able to pay with U.S. dollars on this trip;** you will need euros instead.

Local Currency

For current exchange rates, please refer to an online converter tool like www.xe.com/currencyconverter, your bank, or the financial section of your newspaper.

Euro Countries: European Euro (€)

How to Exchange Money

If you want to exchange money before your trip, you can usually do so through your bank or at an exchange office. Your departure airport in the U.S., a travel agent, or an AAA office are also possible outlets. Or you can wait and change money on the trip instead—but it might be helpful to arrive with some local currency in case you run into a bank holiday or an “out of order” ATM.

On your trip, the easiest way to obtain local currency is to withdraw funds from a local ATM. The ATM will give you local money and your bank at home will convert that into U.S. dollars.

You may be able to exchange cash at some hotels, large post offices, and money exchange offices, however they do not typically offer good exchange rates and can be difficult to find. To exchange cash, you’ll usually need your passport and bills in good condition (not worn, torn, or dirty). New bills (post 2014) are best.

Please note that many banks in Europe will only exchange money for their own customers. Never exchange money on the street. All exchange methods involve fees, which may be built into the conversion rate; ask beforehand.

ATMs

When using the ATM, keep in mind that it may only accept cards from local banks, and may not allow cash advances on credit cards; you might need to try more than one ATM or more than one card. Many banks will charge a set fee or a percentage fee each time you use a foreign ATM. We recommend that you check with your bank before you depart. Don’t forget to memorize the actual digits of your card’s PIN number (many keypads at foreign ATMs do not include letters on their keys—they only display numbers.)

In most countries, ATMs are widely available in major cities. If you are in a rural location, it will likely be harder to find an ATM. If you are visiting a country that has different expectations for ATMs, they will be listed below.

Credit & Debit Cards

While traveling, most countries and major cities will accept credit cards. We suggest that you bring one or two, especially if you are planning a large purchase (artwork, jewelry). We also suggest that you bring more than one brand of card (i.e. Visa, MasterCard, American Express) if possible, as not all are accepted around the world. If you are visiting a country that does not commonly accept credit cards, they will be listed below.

Italy: Credit and debit cards are widely accepted in Italy. Occasionally a small “Mom and Pop” restaurant will be cash only, and street vendors or taxis usually are cash only, but most other businesses will take cards.

Notify Card Providers of Upcoming Travel

Many credit card companies and banks have fraud alert departments that will freeze your card if they see suspicious charges—such as charges or withdrawals from another country. To avoid an accidental security block, it is a good idea to notify your credit card company and/or bank you will be using your cards abroad. You can do this by calling their customer service number a week or two before your departure. Some banks or credit card companies will also let you do this online.

You should also double-check what phone number you should call if you have a problem with a card while you are abroad. Don’t assume you can use the 1-800 number printed on the back of your card—most 1-800 numbers don’t work outside of the U.S.!

Tipping Guidelines

Of course, whether you tip, and how much, is always at your own discretion. But for those of you who have asked for tipping suggestions, we offer these guidelines:

- **O.A.T. Trip Experience Leader:** It is customary to express a personal “thank you” to your Trip Experience Leader at the end of your trip. As a guideline, many travelers give \$10–\$14 USD (or equivalent in local currency) per person for each day their Trip Experience Leader is with them. Local currency is often more convenient and appreciated. *Please note that these tips can only be in cash. If you are taking any of the optional extensions, your Trip Experience Leader during the extension(s) may not be the same as the one on your main trip.*
- **Housekeeping staff at hotels:** The equivalent in euros of \$1–2 per room, per night
- **Waiters:** Your Trip Experience Leader will tip waiters for included meals. If you are dining on your own, tipping is often included in the price; look for the words *servizio incluso* in the menu or bill. If tipping is not included, a tip of 5% to 10% is customary. In addition, you may see the word *coperto* on your bill. This is not a tip, but more of a cover charge for the use of the table.

- **Public Restrooms:** Many public restrooms in Italy are manned by cleaning staff. It is customary to leave a small tip for them—about EUR .50 per person. Some restrooms are pay-toilets; you pay the staff at the entrance to the restroom or drop the appropriate coin into the slot on the stall door. Prices range from EUR .50 to EUR 1.00 per single use. Many restaurants, cafes, and shops have pay-toilets or expect you to make a purchase before using the facilities.
- **Included in Your Trip Price:** Gratuities are included for local guides, drivers, and luggage porters on your main trip, extensions, and all optional tours.

Please note: For your convenience, tips to O.A.T. staff can be paid in U.S. dollars or local currency. Please do not use personal or traveler's checks for tips.

AIR, OPTIONAL TOURS & STAYING IN TOUCH

Land Only Travelers & Customized Air

Quick Definitions

- **Land Only:** You will be booking your own international flights. Airport transfers are not included.
- **Air-Inclusive:** You booked international air with us. Airport transfers are included as long as you didn't customize your trip's dates (see next bullet).
- **Arrive Early or Stopover (select adventures only):** If you chose one of these Customization options and purchased air through O.A.T, accommodations and airport transfers are included. However, if you chose one of our Customization options, but did not purchase air through O.A.T., accommodations are included, but airport transfers are not. If you chose one of our customization options, and purchase air through O.A.T. but not the accommodations, the airport transfers are not included. We have included transfer options below.
- **Customization on Your Own:** If you have not purchased air through O.A.T. and decided to arrive early, stay longer, or stop in a connecting city on your own, you are responsible for airport transfers and accommodations. For your convenience, a preliminary list of your included hotels is available on your My Account at www.oattravel.com/myaccount under "My Reservations" to help you with selecting a hotel for your additional time.

Air Inclusive Travelers

If you have purchased international air with us, there are some points that may be helpful for you to know.

- **Flying with a Travel Companion:** If you're traveling with a companion from a different household, and both of you are beginning and ending your trip at the same airport on the same dates, let us know you'd like to travel together and we'll make every effort to arrange this (please note, however, that this is not always possible). If you request any changes to your flights, please be sure that both you and your companion tell us that you still want to fly together.
- **Selecting Your Seats:** If your airline allows pre-assigned seats, you will be able to select and view them directly from the airline's website after booking. Some airlines will not allow seat confirmation until your reservation is ticketed 45-30 days prior to departure, and/or they may charge a nominal fee. You may locate your itinerary on an airline's website utilizing the Record Locator Number found on the Air Itinerary in your My Account.

Airport Transfers Can Be Purchased

For eligible flights, airport transfers may be purchased separately as an optional add-on, subject to availability. To be eligible, your flight(s) must meet the following requirements:

- You must fly into or fly home from the same airport as O.A.T. travelers who purchased included airfare.
- Your flight(s) must arrive/depart on the same day that the group arrives or departs.
- If you are arriving early, you must have arranged the hotels through our Arrive Early personalization option

Airport transfers can be purchased up to 45 days prior to your departure; they are not available for purchase onsite. To learn more, or purchase airport transfers, please call our Travel Counselors at **1-800-221-0814**.

If you don't meet the requirements above, you'll need to make your own transfer arrangements. We suggest the Rome to Rio website as a handy resource: www.rome2rio.com

Optional Tours

Optional tours are additional add-on tours that allow you to personalize your adventure by tailoring it to your tastes and needs. And if you decide not to join an optional tour? Then you'll have free time to relax or explore on your own—it's about options, not obligations.

What You Need to Know

- All optional tours are subject to change and availability.
- Optional tours that are reserved with your Trip Experience Leader can be paid for using credit/debit cards only. We accept MasterCard, Visa, and Discover credit cards; we can also take MasterCard or Visa debit cards as long as the card allows you to sign for purchases. (You won't be able to enter a PIN.)
- To ensure that you are charged in U.S. dollars, your payment will be processed by our U.S. headquarters in Boston. This process can take up to three months, so we ask that you only use a card that will still be valid three months after your trip is over. The charge may appear on your credit card statement as being from Boston, MA or may be labeled as "OPT Boston".
- Your Trip Experience Leader will give you details on the optional tours while you're on the trip. But if you'd like to look over descriptions of them earlier, you can do so at any time by referring to your Day-to-Day Itinerary (available online by signing into My Account at www.oattravel.com/myaccount).

Communicating with Home from Abroad

Cell Phones

If you want to use your cell phone on the trip, check with your phone provider to see if your phone and service will work outside of the U.S. It may turn out to be cheaper to rent an international phone or buy a SIM card onsite. If you want to use a local SIM, just make certain your phone can accept one.

Calling Apps

Another option is to use a smartphone app like Skype, FaceTime, or WhatsApp. We recommend you use WhatsApp to communicate with home while abroad and with your Trip Experience Leader while onsite. You will need a Wi-Fi connection if you do not have international coverage. Other calling options include smartphone apps such as Skype or FaceTime. You will need a Wi-Fi connection for these apps and the calls may count towards your phone plan's data allowance. Many smartphones—and some tablets or laptops—come with one of these apps pre-installed or you can download them for free from the appropriate apps store.

Calling Cards and 1-800 Numbers

When calling the U.S. from a foreign country, a prepaid calling card can be useful because it circumvents unexpected charges from the hotel. Calling cards purchased locally are typically the best (less expensive, more likely to work with the local phones, etc.).

One reminder: Do not call U.S. 1-800 numbers outside the continental United States. This can result in costly long distance fees, since 1-800 numbers do not work outside the country.

Internet

Most hotels in Italy have Internet services available, some for free, some for an hourly charge. Sometimes the charge depends on your location—for example, there may be complimentary WiFi service in a common area, like the lobby or reception, but the WiFi in the guest rooms is a paid service. Most hotels will also offer a limited number of computers in the lobby or business center for guests to use.

So you can either bring your own device during the trip and use WiFi where it is available, or leave your device at home and rely on hotel computers.

How to Call Overseas

When calling overseas from the U.S., dial 011 for international exchange, then the country code (indicated by a plus sign: +), and then the number. Note that foreign phone numbers may not have the same number of digits as U.S. numbers; even within a country the number of digits can vary depending on the city and if the phone is a land line or cell phone.

Sicily: +39

Italy: +39

PACKING: WHAT TO BRING & LUGGAGE LIMITS

Luggage Limits

MAIN TRIP LIMITS	
Pieces per person	One checked bag and one carry-on per person.
Weight restrictions	Varies by airline. The current standard is 50 lbs for checked bags and 15 lbs for carry-ons .
Size Restrictions	Varies by airline. Measured in linear inches (<i>length+width+depth</i>). Generally, 62 linear inches is the checked bag limit; carry-on limit is 45 linear inches .
Luggage Type	Duffel bag or soft-sided suitcase. Please do not bring a hard-sided (clamshell) suitcase.
TRIP EXTENSION(S) LIMITS	
Same as the main trip.	
REMARKS/SUGGESTIONS	
<p>Luggage rules: Luggage rules and limits are set by governmental and airline policy. Enforcement of the rules may include spot checks or may be inconsistent. However one thing is the same across the board: If you are found to have oversized or overweight luggage, you will be subject to additional fees, to be assessed by—and paid to—the airline in question.</p>	

Don't Forget:

- **These luggage limits may change.** If the airline(s) notify us of any changes, we will include an update in your Final Documents booklet.
- It's a good idea to reconfirm baggage restrictions and fees directly with the airline a week or so prior to departure. For your convenience, we maintain a list of the toll-free numbers for the most common airlines on our website in the FAQ section.
- **Baggage fees are not included in your trip price;** they are payable directly to the airlines.

Your Luggage

- **Checked Luggage:** One duffel bag or soft-sided suitcase. Look for one with heavy nylon fabric, wrap-around handles, built-in wheels, and a heavy duty lockable zipper. Please do not bring a rigid (plastic shell) suitcase.
- **Carry-on Bag:** You are allowed one carry-on bag per person. We suggest a tote or small backpack that can be used as both a carry-on bag for your flight and to carry your daily necessities—water bottle, camera, etc—during your daily activities.
- **Locks:** For flights that originate in the U.S., you can either use a TSA-approved lock or leave your luggage unlocked. Outside of the U.S. we strongly recommend locking your luggage as a theft-prevention measure.

Clothing Suggestions: Functional Tips

As you will experience a wide range of temperatures and weather conditions, we suggest several layers of clothing. If you like to hand-wash your clothes, look for fabrics that will dry out overnight. You can buy clothing designed especially for travel, with features like wrinkle-resistant fabric or built-in sun protection.

- **Footwear:** You'll be on your feet a lot during the trip, and walking over some rough and slippery surfaces. The soles of your shoes should offer good traction. Sturdy and comfortable walking shoes with arch support are suggested.
- **Light rain gear is recommended.** Regardless of when you travel, rainfall is a possibility. While it may not rain on your trip, we suggest you bring a waterproof shell or coat, preferably with a hood. This might be a better choice than a folding umbrella, which is usually less effective in wind. (Plus it can be tricky to try to hold onto an umbrella and take photos at the same time.)
- **Layers are key.** We suggest wearing layers, so you can adjust to warmer and cooler conditions as needed.

Style Hints

- **Dress on our trip is functional and casual.** You might want to bring one slightly dressier outfit for dining on your own at a nice restaurant, or for the Welcome and Farewell Dinners, but that is totally up to you.

Recommended Packing Lists

We have included suggestions from Trip Experience Leaders and former travelers to help you pack. These packing lists are only jumping-off points—they offer recommendations based on experience, but not requirements. Each travelers packing list may be different depending on the climate you are used to. We recommend using www.weather.com and consulting the “Climate” chapter of this handbook.

And don't forget a reusable water bottle—you'll need it to take advantage of any refills we offer as we are working to eliminate single-use plastic bottles on all of our trips.

Recommended Clothing

- Shirts: A mixture of short and long-sleeved shirts in a breathable fabric, like cotton or cotton-blend. Polo shirts are more versatile than T-shirts.
- Trousers and/or jeans.
- Shoes and socks: Sturdy and comfortable walking shoes with arch support are suggested. Bring at least a couple pairs of medium- to heavy-weight socks for hiking.
- Underwear and sleepwear
- Light rain jacket/windbreaker with hood
- Wide-brim sun hat
- Swimsuit for hotel pools

Seasonal Clothing Recommendations

For spring departures:

- Light pieces and cotton sweaters for daytime
- Slacks, long-sleeve shirts, warmer dresses, and a heavy sweater or fleece jacket for evenings.

For summer departures:

- Short-sleeve shirts and lightweight slacks or shorts for daytime
- Cotton or linen skirts or sundresses
- Cotton sweater or some other warm layer for cool evenings

For fall departures:

- Rain gear and/or an umbrella—fall is the rainiest time of year.
- Be sure to check the weather online as temperatures fluctuate this time of year.

For winter departures:

- Warm pants and socks, long-sleeved tops, a fleece or a wool sweater, and an outer jacket

- Layering is key this season, allowing you to adjust as the temperatures fluctuate

Essential Items

- Daily essentials: toothbrush, toothpaste, floss, hairbrush or comb, shaving items, deodorant, etc. Our hotels will provide the basics like soap and shampoo, but if you are sensitive to fragrances or new products, you may wish to bring your preferred brands. Most hotels do not provide a washcloth, so you may wish to pack one.
- Spare eyeglasses/contact lenses. If you wear eyeglasses, consider a string or band to keep them from falling into the water during the rafting excursion.
- Sunglasses, 100% UV block
- Sunscreen, SPF 15 or stronger
- Insect repellent
- Cold-water hand-wash laundry soap such as Woolite and plastic hang-up clothespins
- Light folding umbrella
- Photocopies of passport, air ticket, credit cards
- Moisturizer and sun-blocking lip balm
- Packets of pocket-size tissues or small roll of toilet paper
- Moist towelettes and/or anti-bacterial “water-free” hand cleanser
- Water bottle (narrow-mouth)
- Electrical converter & plug adapter
- Camera gear with extra batteries or battery charger

Medicines & First Aid Gear

- Your own prescription medicines
- Travel first aid kit: Band-Aids, headache and pain relief, laxatives and anti-diarrhea tablets, something for upset stomach. Maybe a cold remedy, moleskin foot pads, antibiotic cream, or allergy medication.
- An antibiotic medication for gastrointestinal illness

Home-Hosted Visits

Many of our adventures feature a visit with a local family, often as part of the *A Day in the Life* experience. It is customary, though not necessary, to return your hosts' generosity with a small gift. If you do bring a gift, we recommend that you bring something the whole family can enjoy, or something that represents your region, state, or hometown. Get creative and keep it small—peach jelly from Georgia, maple sugar candy from New England, orange blossom soap from California; something that can be used or used up is best. When choosing a gift, be certain to consider the local culture as well. For example, we do not recommend alcohol in Muslim communities because it is forbidden in Islam, and your hosts may be religious. Not all O.A.T. adventures include a Home-Hosted Visit; please check your final itinerary before you depart.

Electricity Abroad

When traveling overseas, the voltage is usually different and the plugs might not be the same shape.

Voltage

Electricity at hotels in Italy is 220 volts. In the U.S. it is 110 volts. Most of the things a traveler will want to plug in—battery chargers, smartphones, tablets or computers—can run off both 110 and 220-240. But you should check the item or the owner's guide first to confirm this before you plug it in. Plugging a 110V U.S. appliance into 220/240V 50/60Hz service will ruin the motor. If you have something that needs 110 volts—like a shaver or a hairdryer—you can bring a transformer to change the current. (But transformers tend to burn out, so it might be better to leave whatever it is at home.)

Plugs

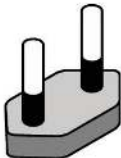
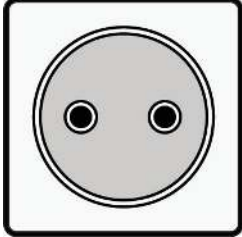
The shape of plugs will vary from country to country, and sometimes even within a country depending on when that building was built. To plug something from the U.S. into a local socket you'll need an adapter that fits between the plug and the socket. Although you are only traveling in one country on this trip, it may be easier to purchase an all-in-one, universal adapter/converter combo. Versatile and lightweight, these can usually be found at your local electronics goods or hardware stores. Sometimes you can buy them at large retailers too, like Target or Walmart. If you forget to bring an adapter, you might also find them for sale at the airport when you arrive at your destination.

Different plug shapes are named by letters of the alphabet. Standard U.S. plugs are Type A and Type B. Here is the list of plugs for the countries on this trip:

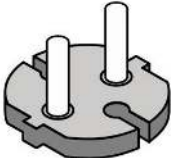
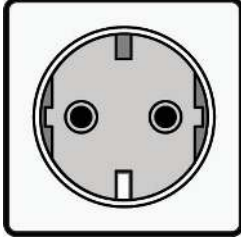
Sicily: C or F

Italy: C, L, or F

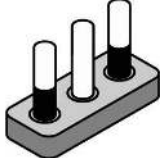
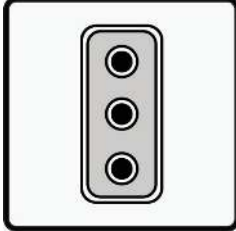
Type C



Type F



Type L



Availability

Barring the occasional and unpredictable power outage, electricity is as readily available on this adventure as it is in the U.S.

CLIMATE & AVERAGE TEMPERATURES

Sicily: Sicily's varied topography includes mountains in the north and east (where Mt. Etna's snow-capped peak dominates), a vast central plateau with near desert-like conditions, and a fertile coastline dotted with sea-level resort towns. Consequently, the island has an array of weather patterns, depending on where you are—down by the sea, up in the mountains, or inland. In coastal cities and towns—like Palermo and Catania—the year-round weather is relatively mild. Winter temperatures average in the 50s and often reach into the 60s. Occasional rains are followed by long periods of sunny weather. Spring comes early and ushers in even warmer temperatures, mostly in the 70s, though the weather can still be somewhat unpredictable. Summer has settled, sunny weather, and high temperatures can range from 75 to 100 in July–August. In contrast, near the mountains weather can be very unpredictable: chilly, mild, sunny, or wet. Night temperatures always drop due to the higher altitude. Inland weather tends to be dry and sometimes windy.

Puglia: Puglia enjoys a Mediterranean climate, with hot, dry summers and mild, rainy winters. Along the coast, snow is rare as Puglia is one of the hottest and driest regions in Italy, with temperatures in the summers easily reaching the low 100s. In Lecce, the Puglia city near the southern tip of the region, the temperatures are moderate year-round with summer months like July and August capable of getting exceptionally hot and dry. Rain in Lecce is most common between October and March, giving the city a beautiful wildflower blooming season in April and May.

Calabria: Calabria has a typical Mediterranean climate, with some influence from the nearby Tyrrhenian Sea and mountains. Cities on the west coast of Calabria, like Pizzo, experience heavy rainfall due to the sea compared to the eastern coast, where a hot air current from Africa leaves cities like Catanzaro or Crotona hot and dry.

Winter Departures: If you are traveling during the winter, please be aware that the weather in Italy can be somewhat volatile at this time of year, though it's still relatively mild compared to that of the rest of the world. Moreover, while “off-season” travel may involve stints of inclement weather, it rewards you with the chance to explore Italy's museums, piazzas, and ruin sites at a time when they are wonderfully free of the summer tourist crowds.

NOTE: If you are taking one of our optional stopovers before or after your OAT adventure, please be aware the climate and temperatures might be different from what you experienced during your tour. To prepare for weather differences and pack appropriate clothing, we recommend the following world weather sites:

- www.intellicast.com
- www.weather.com
- www.wunderground.com

Climate Averages & Online Forecast

The following charts reflect the **average** climate as opposed to exact weather conditions. This means they serve only as general indicators of what can reasonably be expected. An extreme heat wave or cold snap could fall outside these ranges. As your departure approaches, we encourage you to use www.weather.com for a more accurate forecast of the locations you visit.

Average Daily High/Low Temperatures (°F), Humidity & Monthly Rainfall

MONTH	PALERMO, SICILY			RAGUSA, SICILY		
	Temp. High-Low	% Relative Humidity (am-pm)	Monthly Rainfall (inches)	Temp. High-Low	% Relative Humidity (am-pm)	Monthly Rainfall (inches)
JAN	59 to 50	77 to 72	2.8	61 to 50	--	3.6
FEB	59 to 50	77 to 71	2.6	61 to 48	--	2.5
MAR	61 to 52	78 to 71	2.3	64 to 50	--	1.7
APR	65 to 55	77 to 71	1.7	68 to 54	--	0.9
MAY	71 to 61	80 to 73	1.0	75 to 59	--	0.8
JUN	77 to 68	77 to 71	0.5	84 to 66	--	0.4
JUL	83 to 73	76 to 70	0.2	88 to 72	--	0.3
AUG	84 to 75	77 to 71	0.5	90 to 73	--	0.8
SEP	80 to 71	76 to 69	1.6	82 to 70	--	2.5
OCT	73 to 64	76 to 68	3.9	77 to 64	--	3.0
NOV	67 to 58	75 to 68	3.7	70 to 57	--	3.7
DEC	61 to 53	76 to 71	3.1	63 to 52	--	4.5

MONTH	CATANIA, SICILY			LECCE, ITALY		
	Temp. High-Low	% Relative Humidity (am-pm)	Monthly Rainfall (inches)	Temp. High-Low	% Relative Humidity (avg)	Monthly Rainfall (inches)
JAN	60 to 42	88 to 63	2.9	55 to 40	--	2.37
FEB	62 to 42	87 to 62	2.1	56 to 40	--	2.41
MAR	64 to 44	88 to 62	1.8	60 to 42	--	2.46
APR	69 to 47	87 to 61	1.4	66 to 47	--	1.79
MAY	76 to 53	83 to 60	0.8	76 to 54	--	1.09
JUN	83 to 60	76 to 56	0.2	84 to 61	--	0.08
JUL	89 to 65	74 to 54	0.2	89 to 65	--	0.64
AUG	90 to 67	79 to 59	0.4	89 to 66	--	1.42
SEP	84 to 63	86 to 62	1.8	82 to 61	--	2.14
OCT	77 to 57	89 to 65	4.2	72 to 55	--	3.58
NOV	69 to 50	90 to 65	2.5	63 to 42	--	3.74
DEC	62 to 44	88 to 65	3.4	57 to 42	--	2.71

MONTH	PIZZO, ITALY		
	Temp. High-Low	% Relative Humidity (avg)	Monthly Rainfall (inches)
JAN	60 to 48	73	1.00
FEB	60 to 48	70	0.93
MAR	63 to 50	69	0.56
APR	67 to 54	70	0.61
MAY	75 to 61	68	0.10
JUN	83 to 69	65	0.02
JUL	88 to 74	63	0.01
AUG	89 to 75	65	0.01
SEP	83 to 69	70	0.43
OCT	76 to 63	74	0.54
NOV	68 to 56	73	0.66
DEC	62 to 51	72	1.04

ABOUT YOUR DESTINATIONS: CULTURE, ETIQUETTE & MORE

O.A.T. Trip Experience Leaders: A World of Difference

During your adventure, you'll be accompanied by one of our local Trip Experience Leaders. All are fluent in English and possess the skills, certification, and experience necessary to ensure an enriching adventure. As locals of the regions you'll explore with them, our Trip Experience Leaders provide the kind of firsthand knowledge and insight that make local history, culture, and wildlife come alive. Coupled with their unbridled enthusiasm, caring personalities, and ability to bring diverse groups of travelers together, our Trip Experience Leaders ensure that your experience with O.A.T. is one you'll remember for a lifetime.

Sicilian Culture

When you consider that Italy did not even exist as a unified nation until 1861, it makes perfect sense why Sicilians consider themselves Sicilian first, Italian second. Theirs is an ancient and complicated society whose earliest known tribes date as far back as 8,000 BC. By 750 BC, the island hosted Greek and Phoenician colonies, which were soon followed by waves of Carthaginians, Romans, Ostrogoths, Vandals, Arabs, Normans and a host of European kingdoms. The Greeks and Arabs had an especially profound influence—more so than in the rest of Italy—and it is alive and well in the Sicilian language, cuisine, architecture, agriculture and civil society.

Sicily sits in a region of extreme seismic and volcanic activity, pocked by rugged mountains, buffeted by harsh Aeolian winds and baked in near-constant sunlight. Sitting smack in the middle of the sea routes of myriad invaders, its has been dominated by distant rulers for most of its history. As such, it is no wonder that its language has no future tense, and that its character has been formed by a certain tension. Sicilians are fatalistic, skeptical, traditionalist, and pragmatic—but also deeply passionate, gregarious, loyal and possessed of a wickedly dark sense of humor. That they embrace life so fully is the real wonder of their story.

Family is the bedrock of Sicilian society, and how your family appears to the outside world is a matter of considerable importance. People are expected to dress well, behave modestly and perform their familial and social duties. Even today, if they do this with too much showiness, they may be accused of *spagnolismo*, a demeaning reference to the perceived ostentation of the Spanish (*spagnuolo*) overlords who were forced out of Sicily in 1861. (Sicilians don't easily let go of grudges.)

While men reign as the traditional heads of each family, Sicilian women work hard to keep the household wheels turning. They lag behind their sisters in other modern European nations in terms of political, social and economic equality, but this is beginning to change. For now, the Sicilian woman exerts a powerful influence as the family's moral and spiritual compass.

Religion and Religious Observances

On a day-to-day basis, the influence of religion is even more pronounced here than in Italy. Most Sicilians describe themselves as practicing Catholics, and attend church regularly. Devotion to Mary is particularly strong, and most people also pray to particular saints, asking them to intervene in their affairs. There is a small but growing Muslim population, comprised mainly of North African immigrants. Though Jews were present in Sicily for at least 1,400 and possibly 2,000 years, they faced frequent persecution. The Arab dominion of Sicily brought more tolerance and justice for the Jews, but both Muslims and Jews were finally expelled from the island in 1492. Since then, the Jewish population has remained very small.

There is a Catholic religious observance, holiday or festival for nearly every day of the year, and every town has its own patron who is celebrated on their saint's day with parades, fireworks, special foods, music and more.

For instance, from February 3–5, Catania erupts with an around-the-clock celebration of Sant' Agata. On March 19, Sicilian tables and altars overflow with food in honor of St. Joseph, and the evenings are lit by bonfires. Syracuse honors Santa Lucia delle Quaglie for the first and second Sundays of May, carrying her silver statue around the main square. The second week of July brings *U Fistinu*, a massive celebration of Santa Rosalia.

The two most important holidays are Christmas and Easter. The Christmas season begins on December 8 (the Day of the Immaculate Conception), and ends on January 6 (Epiphany). In general, the festivities are far more religious and less commercial than in the U.S. Nativity scenes are the dominant decorations, and while gift giving is important, it takes a back seat to family time, feasting, music, mass, and folk traditions. On Christmas Eve, Sicilians enjoy the Feast of Seven Fishes. It harkens back to the liturgical calendar which once proscribed which days were "meat" days and which were "lean." Children look forward to Epiphany, when Lady Befana (a good witch) rides her broomstick to deliver candy to those who behaved well.

The other big festival is Easter (*Pasqua*), which begins with the observance of Lent. This six-week period of penitence is when devout Catholics give up something they enjoy as a way of confirming their faith. Lent begins on Ash Wednesday, when many Sicilians go to church to receive a cross made of ashes on their forehead, which they will then wear for the rest of the day. Note that Carnival—which is meant to blow off steam before the seriousness—comes before Lent, but is not considered a religious festival. Instead it usually involves street parties, costumes, music, masks, eating, drinking, and crowds.

Lent ends during *Settimana Santa* (Holy Week). This runs the week before Easter, and includes the Monday after. The holiday is observed with colorful processions, many depicting the passion of Christ, and each with its own special motifs that vary from town to town.

Note that smaller shops or family-run restaurants may be closed during Holy Week or on special hours. Larger or famous sites generally stay open as normal except on Easter Sunday or Monday. If you have your heart set on a specific attraction, check their schedules in advance to avoid disappointment.

Visiting Churches

Many churches run special services that you are welcome to attend—even if you are not Catholic. Otherwise, you are welcome to visit outside of services. Most churches in Sicily have a dress code, whether overtly stated or not. Typically, they request that you cover your shoulders and that shorts or skirts reach the knee. It is rare nowadays for churches to require women to cover their heads. If you'll be traveling during warm weather and want to go sleeveless or wear a tank top, then we suggest that you throw a light sweater or cover-up into your daypack. A pashmina-type shawl is ideal for covering shoulders or low-cut blouses, or even wrapping around the waist as a sarong.

Language

You might be surprised to know that the Sicilian language, *Sicilianu* or *Sìculu*, is not a dialect of Italian, but a distinct language in and of itself that is recognized as such by UNESCO. Like Italian, it is a Romance language, meaning it has Latin roots. But Sicilian is much older than Italian and has many elements of Greek, Punic, Phoenician, Arabic, French, Catalan, and Spanish.

With the inception of public school education in 1900, Italian became the national tongue and is spoken by nearly everyone. But even mainlanders sometimes have trouble understanding the local pronunciations. For example, in Sicilian, Bs are mostly pronounced as Vs, so the word *la barca* (the boat) sounds like “a varca.” Double Ls found in words such as *bello* (beautiful) become Ds and sound like “beddu.” Sicilians also tend to put their verbs at the end of a sentence.

English is also increasingly spoken here, especially among young people and in the cities, though not as widely as elsewhere in Italy. But never fear: Sicilians are very outgoing and love to converse, even if that just means using gestures and body language. To break the ice, bring along some family photographs, or a few postcards of your hometown. But please do learn a few phrases in the local language. Your efforts will be greatly appreciated, even if your pronunciation is off.

Hotel Courtesy in Italy

Italian hotels do not allow food and beverages to be taken from their breakfast rooms, nor is it courteous to eat or drink food or beverages purchased elsewhere in hotel common rooms. In conformity with municipal laws to promote urban decorum, hotels do not allow hanging laundry on room balconies. Travel clotheslines, used in your bathroom, are a more private and effective solution.

Taking Photographs

When taking photos of people in most countries, be polite and ask permission to take a close-up. In many countries, you should not be taking photos of children or older women without permission. Do not take photographs of military personnel, military compounds, or other official institutions/personnel (such as police). This may result in the confiscation of your camera.

Please obey any signs regarding photos at museum or sites; the no-flash rule protects the fragile artifacts and artwork from damage by repeated exposure to light. Occasionally, there may also be a small fee levied by the museum or site for the privilege of taking photos.

Safety & Security

As you travel, exercise the same caution and awareness that you would in a large American city. Carry a one-day supply of cash, and your passport, in a travel pouch. Don't leave valuables unattended in your hotel room – use a room safe as needed. In any sort of puzzling street situation, try to keep one hand on your wallet or money belt.

Sicilian Cuisine

The cuisine of Sicily is markedly different than on the Italian mainland—just like Sicilians themselves. One reason is geography. Sicily is blessed with abundant sunshine, fertile volcanic soil, and mild Mediterranean winters that allow for year-round agriculture. The freshness and quality of the ingredients make even the simplest Sicilian dishes pop with intense flavor. Another reason is the culinary legacy of the invaders who came to Sicily. The Greeks brought capers, grapes, pomegranates, figs, olives and hazelnuts. The Romans cleared forests to plant wheat, and we all know what Sicilians do with wheat: they make what is arguably the best pasta and bread in Italy. Later, French and Spanish chefs introduced New World items like tomatoes, turkey and potatoes. Popular dishes include:

- **Caponata:** A stew of fried eggplant, celery, onion and tomatoes flavored with capers, raisins and pine nuts.
- **Maccu:** A creamy soup based on fava beans and fennel.
- **Farsumagru:** Beef roulades stuffed with sausage, eggs, bacon and cheese, is Sicily's premier meat dish, contributed by the chefs of the Bourbon court.
- **Sfincione:** Pizza with caciocavallo cheese, onions and bread crumbs
- **Pani câ meusa:** A soft sesame roll filled with cheese and fried cow's lung and spleen.
- **Pasta con le sarde:** Bucatini pasta with sardines, fennel, pine nuts, raisins and saffron.
- **Pasta alla Norma:** Pasta with fresh tomato sauce, fried eggplant, and shaved dry, salty ricotta cheese. A dish that is famous on the east side of Sicily and that takes its name from the Opera, written by the classical composer Vincenzo Bellini.
- **Involtini di pesce spada:** Swordfish rolled with capers, basil and olives, then breaded and fried.
- **Cannoli:** Tubes of fried dough filled with creamy ricotta, pistachios, chocolate and more.

Italian Cuisine

Italy may have been unified as a nation in 1861, but its cuisine is another story—and a glorious one at that. Here, gastronomy has always been a matter of regionalism and seasonality. The country is divided up in to 20 distinct regions, each with its own specialties. The good news is that there is certainly culinary overlap, and since Italians are famously passionate about food, you can enjoy many beloved regional dishes all over Italy.

The structure of a typical Italian meal is designed to stimulate your appetite, and promote moderation—along with variety. So it will begin with dishes like the following:

- **Aperitivo:** A glass of sparkling prosecco or spumante white wine.
- **Antipasto all’Italiana:** Raw vegetables served with various cheeses and salami
- **Fritto Misto:** A lightly fried seafood mix, usually with calamari, shrimp, and fish such as sardines or anchovies.
- **Crostini:** Chicken liver pate or fresh cut tomatoes served on a thin piece of toasted bread
- **Caprese Salad:** Thick slices of tomato and mozzarella flavored with fresh basil leaves, olive oil.

The first course, called Primo, comes next. Here is where you may enjoy your carbohydrates with a small dish such as:

- **Tagliatelle al Tartufo:** Long ribbons of delicate tagliatelle pasta, swirled with warm melted butter, garlic, and decadently topped with black truffle shavings and parmesan cheese
- **Ribollita:** A bean and kale soup served with toasted bread. On the second day, the soup is cooked again in a pan with olive oil, hence the meaning “boiled twice”.

The main course is called Il secondo. This is usually a small, simply prepared dish of chicken, meat, or fish including:

- **Bistecca alla Fiorentina:** A T-Bone steak from a local breed of cow, the Chianina cattle
- **Lampredotto:** A panino stuffed with the fourth stomach of a cow and soaked in broth, with salsa Verde and black pepper from Florence
- **Polpette:** Savory and seasoned Italian meatballs.

Your meal will conclude with a Dolce (sweet) such as:

- **Tiramisu:** A layered confection of sponge cake, mascarpone cheese, coffee and liqueur.

Dolci may be served with coffee or an alcoholic digestivo such as herbal amaro or limoncello. It is meant to aid your digestion of a memorable meal, one that will certainly have been toast-worthy

Shopping: What to Buy, Customs, Shipping & More

There may be scheduled visits to local shops during your adventure. There is no requirement to make a purchase during these stops, and any purchase made is a direct transaction with the shop in question, subject to the vendor’s terms of purchase. O.A.T. is not responsible for purchases you make on your trip or for the shipment of your purchases.

Returns

If you discover an issue with an item, you should contact the vendor directly and expect that any resolution will take longer than it would in the U.S. We recommend that you keep a copy of all your receipts, invoices, or contracts, along with the shop's contact information. Keep in mind, local practice may vary from U.S. standards, so don't assume that you have a certain number of days after the purchase to speak up or that you are guaranteed a refund.

Crafts & Souvenirs

Sicily

Among the most popular Sicilian crafts and gift items are ceramics, wine and food. You can find wonderful items in the street markets and groceries of Palermo, Catania, Syracuse and Taormina—capers, pistachios, olive oil, Marsala wine, Etna honey, and candied fruits and marzipan in a myriad of shapes and colors. Other popular souvenirs include brightly colored Caltagirone pottery, handmade jewelry and decorative items made from lava stone, old-fashioned lace, or hand-painted miniature Sicilian carts and puppets. Sicily is not a high-fashion destination like Italy, though you will find some designer shops in Palermo and Taormina. A more iconic clothing item would be the traditional flat *coppola*, a hat similar to what we call a newsboy cap that is simple—but very stylish.

Value Added Tax: In Italy, a Value Added Tax is levied on most articles, services, and meals, and ranges from 4% to 22%. Depending on how much you spend on certain goods in specially marked Tax Free Shopping stores, you may be eligible for a partial refund of this tax. Ask the shopkeeper, salesperson, or our local staff for details. Be sure to save all receipts and the special Global Tax Refund forms for Customs, as receipts alone are not enough.

Italy

Popular souvenirs include leather goods, silk ties, knitwear, gold jewelry, ceramics, straw goods and other handicrafts, small cabinets, and jewelry boxes. Each region in Italy has its specialties. You'll also see many different items made from olive wood or Carrara marble; just remember that any marble items you purchase should be put into your checked luggage for the flight home. (If you put them in your carry-on, they may be confiscated by security as "weapons".) In Italy, a Value Added Tax is levied on most articles, services, and meals, and ranges from 4% to 22%. Depending on how much you spend on certain goods in specially marked Tax Free Shopping stores, you may be eligible for a partial refund of this tax. Ask the shopkeeper, salesperson, or our local staff for details. Be sure to save all receipts and the special Global Tax Refund forms for Customs, as receipts alone are not enough.

U.S. Customs Regulations & Shipping Charges

For all things related to U.S. Customs, the ultimate authority is the U.S. Bureau of Customs & Border Protection. Their website, www.cbp.gov has the answers to the most frequently asked questions. Or you can call them at **1-877-227-5511**.

The top three points to know are:

- At time of writing, your personal duty-free allowance is \$800 for items brought with you. Items totaling more than \$800 are subject to duty fees.
- **Items shipped home are always subject to duty when received in the U.S.** Even when the shop has offered to include shipping and duties in the price, this typically means shipping to the nearest customs facility and payment of the export duties—not door-to-door shipping or payment of the import duties. All additional duties or shipping charges would be your responsibility. Unless an item is small enough to send by parcel service (like FedEx), chances are you will need to arrange shipping or pick-up once the item is in the U.S. and will need to pay customs duties.
- It is illegal to import products made from endangered animal species. U.S. Customs & Border Protection will seize these items, as well as most furs, coral, tortoise shell, reptile skins, feathers, plants, and items made from animal skins.

DEMOGRAPHICS & HISTORY

Sicily

Facts, Figures & National Holidays

- **Area:** 9,927 square miles
- **Capital:** Palermo
- **Languages:** Most people in Sicily speak both Italian (the official language) and Sicilian, a distinct historical Romance language.
- **Ethnicity:** Mostly Italian, with smaller groups of Romanians, Tunisians, and Moroccans
- **Location:** Italy is bordered by France, Slovenia, Austria, Switzerland and the Ligurian, Tyrrhenian, Ionian, Adriatic and Mediterranean seas.
- **Geography:** Sicily is the largest island in the Mediterranean Sea, located just off the “toe” of Italy. Sicily enjoys mountains in the north and east, a vast central plateau, and a fertile coastline dotted with sea-level resort towns.
- **Population:** 4,969,147 (estimate)
- **Religions:** Christian 80% (overwhelming Roman Catholic), Atheists and Agnostics 20%, Muslims estimated at less than 2%
- **Time Zone:** Italy is on Central European Time, six hours ahead of U.S. EST. When it is 6am in Washington D.C., it is noon in Rome. Daylight Saving Time begins the last weekend in March and ends the last weekend in October.

National Holidays: Sicily

In addition to the holidays listed below, Italy celebrates a number of national holidays that follow a lunar calendar, such as Easter. To find out if you will be traveling during these holidays, please visit www.timeanddate.com/holidays.

01/01 New Year's Day

01/06 Epiphany

04/25 Liberation Day

05/01 Labor Day

06/02 Republic Day

08/15 Assumption of Mary

11/01 All Saints' Day

12/08 Feast of the Immaculate Conception

12/25 Christmas Day

12/26 St. Stephen's Day

Sicily: A Brief History

Sicily sits like a giant rock at the toe of Italy's boot, and indeed, it has been kicked around quite a bit during its 8,000-year history. But the Italians were not the first to tread on this storied island.

There is evidence of Paleolithic settlement in the caves of northwest Sicily. But by 5,000 BC, the earliest tribes to live here were immigrants: the Sicani from North Africa, the Siculi from Latium (Italy) and the Elymni from Troy. By 900 BC the Phoenicians arrived, and their Carthaginian heirs founded Palermo. Today, the Phoenician legacy lives on in the enigmatic ruins of Mothya.

Attracted by the island's strategic location, the Greeks arrived in 750 BC and established colonies in Syracuse, Agrigento, Segesta, Selinute and beyond. Hellenic culture thrived, but the island became a battleground as the Carthaginians rose against the Greek interlopers. Beaten but not broken, the Carthaginians remained until the Romans drove them out in 211 BC. Rome made Sicily its first province, but never realized its dream of making it Rome's granary, as the empire was increasingly beset by corruption and war. In 826 AD, the Arabs arrived, bringing advances in agriculture, irrigation, art, architecture and land reform. Palermo was made the capital, boasting more than 100 mosques.

The Arabs' success attracted the Normans, who conquered Sicily in 1071. But the Normans were outnumbered by their vanquished foes, and had to accept and integrate Arab administrative and judicial systems. It was not a hard pill to swallow, for the Norman King Roger I was entranced by the lavishness of Arab culture. He employed many Arabic craftsmen and architects, and promoted a tolerant society where Muslims, Jews and Christians lived in peace. The legacy of the Norman golden age lives on in Palermo's opulent palaces and churches.

In 1194, the kingdom fell to the Hohenstaufens, who ruled until 1266 when the House of Aragon took over. The Crusades swept through the island, sowing the seeds for more conflict. Sicily fell to French, Spanish and Austrian rule in succession before the Spanish Bourbons united the island with Naples in 1734. They redistributed many lands, an act that resulted in many minor legal disputes among ordinary Sicilians. Tired of being governed by generations of absentee rulers, the people turned to influential local "godfathers" who understood *la cosa nostra*, "our thing," and could dispense a quick form of justice. The Sicilian Mafia was born.

Sicily joined a unified Italy in 1861, but the Rome-based government was still disconnected from Sicilian life. By the end of the century, poverty drove thousands of Sicilians to America. Italy joined the Allies in World War I; then in the 1920s, Mussolini and his Fascist Party ushered in one of the darkest periods in Italy's history. Viewing the mafia as a threat to his power, he sent Cesare Mori to fix "the Sicilian problem," largely crippling the Mafia. When Mori's campaign ended in 1929, the Sicilian crime families had been all but broken up. Many Mafioso fled to the U.S. and Canada.

During World War II, with Mussolini allied with Hitler, Sicilians who had emigrated to America worked with Allied intelligence to identify Nazi sympathizers in Sicily. Some of these informants were Mafiosi, and in exchange for their help they struck deals that let them to regain a foothold in Sicily—*See below for details on how and why the Sicilian Mafia played such a significant role in the Allied victory during World War II.*

The murders of state officials continued until 1995, when newly empowered leader Bernardo Provenzano ushered in a relatively peaceful era known as a Pax Mafiosa. He also put an end to the murders of informants and their families. After 43 years on the run, Provenzano was arrested in 2006.

Today, the Mafia still exists in Sicily, with ties to the United States. While they have undeniable influence over politics and certain businesses, they tend to keep a low profile due to scrutiny from law enforcement. While many Sicilians would prefer not to discuss this aspect of their culture with visitors, we have an open conversation during our adventure with a Mafia expert and the son of a former crime boss. (For more on the Sicilian mafia, you'll find a wealth of information on Wikipedia.)

Today, Sicilians are the proud custodians of a vast repository of historic treasures. Though many were left by onetime oppressors, their preservation reflects the endurance of the Sicilian spirit.

Events that Shaped the 20th Century

Unlikely Allies—How the Sicilian Mafia Helped the Allies Win World War II

Italy fought with the Allies during the First World War, so why did they switch sides in World War II? When World War I broke out, Italy took a position of neutrality. In 1915, however, lured by expectations of territorial gains for the winning side (and a secret treaty they had signed), Italy's leaders joined the Allies against the Central Powers. The decision to go to war was highly unpopular with Italians, especially since most of Italy's troops were peasants forced to fight for a cause they didn't even understand. And with some 600,000 killed and almost a million wounded, they paid dearly. To make matters worse, any spoils of victory Italy assumed would be coming its way never materialized. During the peace settlement at Versailles, in fact, the Italian delegation was all but ignored by the "Big Three" (U.S., Britain, and France).

Adding insult to injury, postwar Italy's economy was already in shambles. Now with a war to pay for, it gets much worse. Along with bread riots, strikes, massive inflation, and political instability, there were no jobs for Italy's returning soldiers. This all sets the stage for the rise of Benito Mussolini. Ever the opportunist, the war veteran and former Socialist seizes the moment. In 1919, he gathers a ragtag group of disgruntled ex-soldiers in Milan and starts the Fascist party, promising to restore order, return Italy's sense of national pride, and bring back the glory of the Roman Empire. The party gathers momentum and within three years Mussolini is appointed prime minister. And in 1925, "Il Duce" assumes full dictatorial powers.

Build-Up to War—And Shut-Down of Sicilian Mafia

Most Italians willingly submitted to the Mussolini dictatorship into the 1930s. It seemed a small price to pay for the restored order, increased prosperity, and other successes of Fascist Italy's early years. Efficient new power and steel industries helped Italy weather the Great Depression better than other countries, and a massive public works program provided jobs for thousands of unemployed Italians. In fact, Mussolini became widely admired on the world stage for his success in transforming his divided and demoralized nation. But while northern Italians embraced Fascism, it was a different story in the south—especially Sicily. With their longstanding anti-government and anti-police sentiments, Sicilians had a strong distrust of the new dictatorial regime—or any central government. They felt the Mafia already gave the island the order and stability that had never been provided to them by the state.

Mussolini had already been lukewarm about the Mafia, stemming from a 1924 visit to Sicily when he felt he wasn't shown the proper respect. Now he felt they posed an existential threat to Fascism itself. In Mussolini's mind, the Mafia was the sole barrier to his dream of national unity under a Fascist Italy. While it would have made more sense to introduce true economic and social reform to the island, he decided to suppress the Mafia instead. He sent his tough law enforcer Cesare Mori to Sicily where he was tasked with subduing and humiliating *mafiosi* and their families. Some 11,000 Sicilians (including many with no Mafia ties) were arrested or simply machine-gunned to death in a series of savage purges. Many others fled the island to the U.S. and Canada; among them Carlo Gambino and Joe Bonnano, who made it to New York City and would eventually start their own Mafia families in America.

Mussolini's support began to wane in 1935, with Italy's invasion of the East African nation of Ethiopia. Since Italy had been denied territorial gains after the "betrayal by the Allies" at Versailles (like Germany's "stab in the back," Italians called it a "mutilated victory"), now he would just take it. Mussolini's support took another hit when he provided aid to fascist forces in Spain's civil war. As other European leaders abandoned him, Mussolini drew closer to another rising dictator, Adolf Hitler. And in 1939, Italy and Germany signed the Pact of Steel, an alliance that precipitated Italy's disastrous involvement in World War II. Mussolini thought his power and dreams of "empire building" would be strengthened by an alliance with Nazi Germany. Meanwhile, it was the Mafia in the United States—who still retained their strong ties to Sicily—who were the ones gaining power.

The Enemy of My Enemy is My Friend—U.S. Gets in Bed with Lucky Luciano

At the outbreak of World War II, the U.S. government was aware of the shared hatred between Mussolini and the Mafia. And it didn't take them long to use it to their advantage. While the government would deny it for almost 40 years, a collaboration between the U.S. Office of Naval Intelligence and the Mafia—code-named Operation Underworld—began shortly after the SS *Normandie*, a captured French liner being retrofitted in New York's harbor for U.S. troop deployment, caught fire and capsized in early February 1942. Nazi sabotage was suspected.

Since German U-boats operating off the coast had already sunk more than a hundred U.S. merchant ships, Naval intelligence grew increasingly concerned that enemy spies were working along New York's waterfront. Their initial investigation went nowhere, as the tight-lipped longshoremen of the mob-controlled waterfront simply ignored them. So, the navy contacted Joseph "Socks" Lanza, someone with Mafia ties who ran the Fulton Fish Market. They wanted to know if he could help them ferret out Nazi spies or point out any Mussolini supporters among the mostly Italian-American fishermen and dockworkers.

The mob/navy collaboration started off well, but New York's waterfront covers a wide swath, and Lanza didn't control it all. "Socks" informed the navy there was only one man capable of "snapping the whip in the entire underworld"—the imprisoned "boss of bosses" Charles "Lucky" Luciano. Even after six years behind bars, Sicilian-born Luciano still wielded absolute power on the docks. Using Meyer Lansky as an intermediary, the Navy contacted Luciano and

they struck a deal—Luciano guaranteed the full cooperation of his organization in providing intelligence to the Navy for the duration of the war, and in return, the State of New York would commute Luciano’s sentence.

The public might have recoiled at the Navy’s secret arrangement with the country’s most vicious criminals, but under the Mafia’s watch, not a single act of sabotage, dock strike, or suspicious fire took place in New York for the rest of the war.

The Godfather Part II—Lucky Luciano Recalled for Allied Invasion of Sicily

By January of 1943, the Allies were on the offensive in the Mediterranean. Having defeated the Germans and Italians in North Africa, they were now ready to open a second European front—but where? After much debate, it was decided to invade Mussolini’s Italy—Churchill referred to it as “the soft underbelly of Nazi Europe.” To do this, they would first have to attack Sicily, in an amphibious invasion code-named “Operation Husky.”

Planning is critical for a difficult operation like an amphibious landing, so U.S. Naval Intelligence once again turned to Lucky Luciano. From his jail cell, Luciano used his Sicilian contacts to see that the navy was provided with maps of the island’s harbors, photographs of the coastline, and the names of trusted contacts in the Sicilian Mafia—who wanted nothing more than to see Mussolini crushed. Luciano even asked if he could personally join the fight in Sicily—his request for this potential public relations nightmare was quickly denied.

It is difficult to know what impact—if any—Luciano and his Sicilian connections had on Operation Husky. But it’s interesting to note that after American and British landing craft crashed through the waves to land on beaches of Sicily on the night of July 9, 1943, the two forces split. Montgomery’s British Eighth Army advanced north along Sicily’s eastern coast. They encountered stiff resistance, got bogged down constantly, and lost many lives. Patton’s Seventh Army had a much easier go of it as they cut across the western half of Sicily and took Palermo—and their casualties were just a fraction of those suffered by the British. Many think it wasn’t just a coincidence.

The War’s Aftermath—Death of Fascism and Rebirth of Sicilian Mafia

While Allied operations in Sicily were mopping up, on the Italian mainland Mussolini was placed under arrest. Italy’s new Prime Minister, Marshal Badoglio, immediately switched sides to the Allies, ending Fascism. The war would drag on for two more years, but Hitler’s “Fortress Europe” had been penetrated. Sicily, the first piece of the Axis homeland to fall to Allied forces, all but assured Germany’s defeat in World War II. In terms of the size of the landing area and number of troops put ashore on the first day, Operation Husky was bigger than Operation Overlord, the Allied invasion of Normandy that would overshadow the invasion of Sicily the following year.

The U.S. government, sympathetic to the plight of Sicilians, encouraged the new Italian government to grant the island the autonomy they had long desired, which they did in 1945. As thanks for their help in the liberation of Sicily—and as a bulwark against any future communist

leanings in Sicily—the U.S. army appointed local *mafiosi* mayors throughout the island and provided them with financial and other assistance. The Sicilian Mafia was soon restored to power in the post-Mussolini Italian Republic. They also kept their promise to Lucky Luciano.

After serving 9 1/2 years, Luciano's sentence was commuted on January 4, 1946—with the condition that he be immediately deported back to his native Italy (ironically, the person who got Luciano out of jail, New York Governor and former prosecutor Thomas E. Dewey, was the one who *put* Luciano in jail). He left in style, though. Luciano was in custody aboard the freighter *Laura Keene*, and the night before it sailed to Italy, all of New York's top gangsters came aboard with an Italian feast and champagne to bid him farewell—including Meyer Lansky, Frank Costello, Albert Anastasia, Bugsy Siegel, William Moretti, Tommy Lucchese, Joe Adonis, Stefano Magaddino—and three showgirls from the Copacabana Club.

Italy

Facts, Figures & National Holidays

- **Area:** 116,348 square miles
- **Capital:** Rome
- **Languages:** Italian is the official language; German, French, and Slovene are also spoken in towns near the borders of Austria, France, and Slovenia.
- **Ethnicity:** Italian, with small clusters of German-, French-, and Slovene-Italians in the north and Albanian- and Greek-Italians in the south
- **Location:** Italy is bordered by France, Slovenia, Austria, Switzerland, the Ligurian Sea, the Tyrrhenian Sea, the Ionian Sea, the Adriatic Sea, and the Mediterranean Sea.
- **Geography:** Italy lies in southern Europe and includes the Mediterranean islands of Sicily, Sardinia, and several other small islands. The region of Tuscany is a blend of rugged hills, fertile valleys, and long stretches of sandy beaches that curve along the west coast of central Italy and fringe the pine-forested coastal plain of the Maremma. Sicily enjoys mountains in the north and east, a vast central plateau, and a fertile coastline dotted with sea-level resort towns.
- **Population:** 58,853,482 (estimate)
- **Religions:** Christian 80% (overwhelming Roman Catholic), Atheists and Agnostics 20%, Muslims estimated at less than 2%
- **Time Zone:** Italy is on Central European Time, six hours ahead of U.S. EST. When it is 6am in Washington D.C., it is noon in Rome. Daylight Saving Time begins the last weekend in March and ends the last weekend in October.

National Holidays: Italy

In addition to the holidays listed below, Italy celebrates a number of national holidays that follow a lunar calendar, such as Easter. To find out if you will be traveling during these holidays, please visit www.timeanddate.com/holidays.

01/01 New Year's Day

01/06 Epiphany

04/25 Liberation Day

05/01 Labor Day

06/02 Republic Day

08/15 Assumption of Mary

11/01 All Saints' Day

12/08 Feast of the Immaculate Conception

12/25 Christmas Day

12/26 St. Stephen's Day

Italy: A Brief History

Italy proudly wears the mantle of Rome, the polity from which so much of Italy's historical, cultural, and religious heritage has derived. But even though the Romans were the first to unify the peninsula, they were not the first to dominate it. That honor goes to the Etruscans, whose empire, Etruria, reached its zenith in the 7th century BC. It was centered between the Arno and Tiber rivers, mostly in Tuscany. The Etruscans were farmers, miners, seafarers and warriors, but they were riven by factionalism and in 509 BC, their last king was tossed out by Ligurian-Latin nobles in the small town of Rome. Tired of monarchs, they created the first Roman Republic.

Etruscan culture disappeared by the 2nd century AD, but the Romans were quick to appropriate many aspects of the Greek culture that had taken root in southern Italy and Sicily, where there were Hellenic colonies called "Magna Graecia." As the colonies were absorbed, so were Greek religion, architecture, and the basic tenets of democracy. During the 1st century BC, Julius Caesar defeated Gaul, making Rome the ruler of the entire Mediterranean world. After Caesar's assassination in 44 B.C., his nephew Octavian, later called Augustus, became Rome's first official emperor. The capital became an architectural showcase, and new territories stretched across Europe into Asia Minor, existing under a "Pax Romana" that brought prosperity and stability.

Pax Romana declined in the 3rd century A.D. thanks to inept and corrupt emperors, and attacks by outside barbarians. Rome eventually embraced Christianity in 313 under Constantine I, who established an eastern capital in Constantinople. But splitting the Rome into western (Roman) and eastern (Byzantine) halves did not halt the empire's demise. The eastern Roman empire fell in 476, and though the Byzantine half survived, it never regained the full might of Rome. In 800, Italy was briefly reunited under Charlemagne, but soon disintegrated into squabbling kingdoms.

Italian culture peaked during the 15th and 16th-century Renaissance. The independent city-states formed a delicate balance of power, with ruling families (such as the Sforzas, Borgias, and the Medicis) funding a golden age of art, invention, and intellectual activity that produced some of the greatest figures of Western civilization—Leonardo da Vinci, Michelangelo, Dante Alighieri, Brunelleschi, Galileo, and others. It did not, however, stop the rival families from fighting.

By the 19th century, many Italians believed that they could function as a single nation, a belief spearheaded by the general Giuseppe Garibaldi. Independence was declared in 1861, and by 1870, the nation was consolidated under King Victor Emmanuel II. Italy was ruled as a monarchy and joined the Allies in World War I. But the 1920s ushered in a dark era as Benito Mussolini organized discontented Italians into the Fascist Party to “rescue Italy from Bolshevism.” What he delivered was a totalitarian state. Mussolini joined with Hitler and fought the Allies during World War II, during which 400,000 people were killed, hundreds of thousands were left homeless, and the economy was ruined. In 1945, Mussolini was captured and killed by partisans.

Italy was again declared a republic in 1946, but remained seriously divided during the postwar era by political extremes. Governments rose and fell, and in the 1970s, a series of terrorist acts by the left-wing Red Brigades threatened stability. By the early 1980s, the terrorists had been suppressed, but public discontent spilled into the 1990s as inflation and ongoing scandals involving public officials and the Mafia altered Italian politics. Parties dissolved, new ones formed, and new alliances emerged. This led to the election of media mogul Silvio Berlusconi as Prime Minister in 1994. But within a year, Berlusconi was forced to resign. He ran again in 2001 and was reelected, setting up a pattern that repeated for more than a decade: Berlusconi has been Prime Minister three separate times between 1994–2011, and continues to remain a political force despite having been convicted of tax fraud.

The previous Prime Minister, independent Giuseppe Conte, was elected in 2018 and heads up a populist coalition. Among his accomplishments have been the introduction of a national guaranteed minimum income, the nationalization of several companies, stricter immigration policies, and the western world’s first national lockdown in response to COVID-19. The current Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni, Italy’s first female Prime Minister, was sworn in on October 22nd, 2022. Meloni is a member of the right-wing, national-conservative party, Brothers of Italy, a party that is considered to be the most ring-wing party in power in Italy since World War II.

RESOURCES

Suggested Reading

Sicily

The Florios of Sicily by Stefania Auci (2020, Historical Fiction) This sweeping epic is based on an entrepreneurial dynasty that dominated Sicily for more than a century. In 1799, after a devastating earthquake forces them to flee Catania, the Florios arrive in Palermo with nothing, and then grow their small spice shop into an international shipping juggernaut. Auci casts a shrewd eye on the lives of the Florio women, who unapologetically demand their place alongside their husbands, fathers, sons and lovers despite the rigid constrictions of class and gender.

Sicily: A Short History, from the Greeks to Cosa Nostra by Julius Norwich (2016, History) A well written introduction to the history of Sicily by a knowledgeable expert who has been studying it since 1961. Norwich says that “The Strait of Messina is only a couple of miles across and the island is politically part of Italy; yet somehow one feels that one has entered a different world,” and then explains why this is so.

Sicily: A Literary Guide for Travellers by Andrew and Suzanne Edwards (2014, History) Part guidebook, part history, and wholly enjoyable, this literary journey begins in Palermo and works its way counter-clockwise around Sicily, village by village. The authors trace the Sicilian paths of famous writers from Pindar to Puzo, sharing passages from their work, practical tips, and anecdotes about illustrious visitors like Oscar Wilde, Cary Grant, Winston Churchill, Truman Capote, Marlene Dietrich and more kings and queens than you can shake a scepter at.

On Persephone’s Island: A Sicilian Journal by Mary Taylor Simeti (1995, Memoir) An American expert on Sicilian medieval and culinary history describes her life as an expatriate who splits her time between Palermo and managing her family’s working farm in the Sicilian countryside. The book is filled with insights into Sicilian food, cooking, and customs; the corrosive influence of the Mafia; and the titular Greek goddess whose dual existence parallels Simeti’s own life, and that of Sicily itself.

Sicilian Carousel by Lawrence Durrell (1977, Travel Writing) The esteemed author departs from his usual style of writing (and traveling) in this tale about his bus tour around Sicily with a mixed bag of companions. Along the way he shares his growing understanding of Sicilian (and Mediterranean) culture, hilarious anecdotes, previously unpublished poems, and a selection of evocative engravings. Sicily comes alive with wit and affection.

Italy

Princes of the Renaissance by Mary Hollingsworth (2021, History) An exploration of the lives and times of the aristocratic elite whose patronage sparked the art and architecture of the Renaissance in fifteenth and sixteenth century Italy.

Absolute Monarchs: A History of the Papacy by John Julius Norwich (2011, History) A deeper look into the most significant popes in history and what they meant politically, culturally, and socially to Rome and the rest of the world.

La Bella Figura: A Field Guide to the Italian Mind by Beppe Severgnini (2007, Nonfiction/Humor) An Italian columnist and best-selling author journeys through his homeland while providing hilarious observations at the beautiful face Italy shows to the world, and the chaotic, garrulous, and often contradictory impulses that lie behind it.

The Monster of Florence by Douglas Preston and Mario Spezi (2008, Non Fiction) A remarkable true story by best-selling author Douglas Preston who, with Italian investigative journalist Mario Spezi, try to track down the identity of a serial killer known as the Monster of Florence.

History by Elsa Morante (1974, Fiction) A half-Jewish, Roman mother tries to survive in WWII Rome with her two sons. Though the main characters are fictional, each chapter opens with an factual account of real events that happened when the action takes place.

Suggested Films & Videos

Sicily

The Mafia Kills Only in the Summer (2013, Comedy/Drama). Aspiring journalist, Arturo Giammarresi, grows up in Palermo during the rise of the Antimafia movement in the 1970s to the 1990s. Arturo watches life around him change as the long-hidden mafia falls into the public eye while also vying for the attention of his long-time crush, Flora.

Cinema Paradiso (1989, Drama/Comedy) The Oscar-winning Best Foreign Film of 1989. A famous director flashes back to his childhood in Sicily upon the death of his mentor, a projectionist at the local cinema who inspired his love of film and gave him the courage to leave home to follow his dream. The film was shot in several Sicilian locales, including Cefalù and the hometown of director Giuseppe Tornatore, Bagheria. A sentimental and funny coming of age story that beautifully evokes the charm of Sicilian village life. Italian with English subtitles.

L'Avventura (1976, Drama) If you want to take a cinematic road trip through Sicily, this moody classic (directed by Michelangelo Antonioni) will transport you to Palermo, Messina, Syracuse, the Aeolian Islands, Mount Etna and beyond. Along the way, you'll be engrossed in the mystery of Anna, a young woman who disappears during a Mediterranean yacht cruise. Her wealthy lover and her best friend set out to solve the mystery and begin their own liaison—which is not exactly a romance, but an attempt to dispel the ennui of their lives. Italian with English subtitles.

The Godfather Trilogy (1972, 1974, 1990) All three parts of Francis Ford Coppola's masterwork had substantial scenes set in Sicily, where key events in the fictional Corleone family's life unfold—including the saga's grandly operatic climax filmed on the steps of Palermo's Teatro Massimo. The actual village of Corleone was too modern to evoke the 1940s feel Coppola was after, so Forza d'Agro, just outside Taormina, was used as a stand-in. Other scenes were filmed in Taormina, Messina, and Fiumefreddo in Catania.

The Leopard (Il Gattopardo) (1963, Drama) Based on the bestselling novel of the same name by Giuseppe di Lampedusa, this early Luchino Visconti film is a poignant and powerful meditation on change, loyalty and love set in 1860 Sicily. Burt Lancaster stars as the aging Sicilian prince Salina, who struggles to preserve his family's dignity and wellbeing as Garibaldi's republican troops press to unify Italy and change Sicilian life forever. The all-star cast includes Alain Delon, Terence Hill, and a stunning Claudia Cardinale in her debut role. Italian with English subtitles.

Italy

The Life Ahead (2020, Drama) At 86, Sophia Loren makes her first screen appearance in ten years in this Netflix original, filmed in Puglia. And it's a stunner. She plays Madame Rosa, a Holocaust survivor who takes in the children of local sex workers. A neighbor asks her to care for Momo, a Senegalese refugee whose delinquency may be too much for Rosa, whose own tormented past is catching up to her.

The Tourist (2010, Thriller) Beautiful Elise (Angelina Jolie) has a mysterious off-screen lover, Pearce, who has fled England and is wanted by both Scotland Yard and the mob. He tells Elise to entrap an unwitting tourist (Johnny Depp), who will be mistaken for Pearce (who is rumored to have altered his appearance), and arrested in his place. This convoluted caper plays out beautifully in Venice's mysterious alleys, romantic canals, and opulent palaces.

Rome (2005-07, Television Series) This multiple Emmy-winner from HBO deftly weaves the stories of fictional and real characters (Julius Caesar, Octavian, Marc Antony, Cleopatra, etc.) during Rome's 1st century BC transition from a republic to an empire. Outstanding production values and a stellar cast.

The Merchant of Venice (2004, Drama) Al Pacino gives us one of the most masterful portrayals on stage or screen of Shakespeare's tragic moneylender, Shylock. He receives strong support from Jeremy Irons and Joseph Fiennes, and Venice itself, where much of the production was filmed. The city looks so enticing, it's a wonder that Pacino did not chew up the scenery.

Life Is Beautiful (1997) Roberto Benigni is the lead actor and director of this heart-wrenching comedy/drama about a Jewish Italian bookshop owner in Mussolini's Italy who tries to shield his son from the horrors of a Nazi concentration camp. Italian with English subtitles.

Useful Websites

Grand Circle Frequently Asked Questions

www.gct.com/faq

International Health Information/CDC (Centers for Disease Control)

www.cdc.gov/travel

Foreign Exchange Rates

www.xe.com/currencyconverter

Basic Travel Phrases (80 languages)

www.travlang.com/languages

Packing Tips

www.travelite.org

Useful Apps

Flight Stats

Track departures, arrivals, and flight status

LoungeBuddy

Get access to premium airport lounges around the world

Timeshifter

Personalized tips for avoiding jetlag, based on neuroscience and your own data

GoogleMaps or Apple Maps

Maps and directions anywhere in the world

Triposo

City guides, walking maps, and more – and it works offline

Rome2rio

Where to go, what to see, and what to do in more than 160 countries

Flush or Sit or Squat

Find a clean toilet anywhere

Uber or Bolt or Lyft

Ride sharing around the world

Visa Plus and Mastercard Cirrus

ATM locations

Shows the location of the nearest ATM in your network

TunnelBear

Provides a secure VPN (virtual private network) that will encrypt your browsing data when you use a public WiFi network

What's App

WiFi calling anywhere in the world

Duolingo, FLuentU, or Babbel

Learn dozens of foreign languages

Google Translate

Fast and simple translations

XE

Currency conversions

SizeGuide

Clothing and shoe sizes in all countries

Best Units Converter

Converts currency, mileage, weights, and many other units of measurement

Happy Cow

Locate vegan and vegetarian eateries in 195 countries

Eatwith

Dine with locals all over the world

Meetup

Connects you with locals who share your interests

Skyview

Identifies constellations and heavenly bodies

Travello

Find travel friends on the road

TripWhistle

Maps your location and provides emergency numbers for police, medics, and more

GeoSure

Safely navigate neighborhoods around the world

Tourlina

For women only, it connects you with other female travelers

ALIX for One

Created by and for women, it identifies solo-friendly dining spots in major international cities

Chirpey

For women only, connect with other women, find out what's safe, meet up, and more more



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Submitted by Joy & Don Janke,
13-time travelers from Stevensville, MI



Submitted by Julia Schneider,
6-time traveler from Pinellas Park, FL



Submitted by Martin Schwartzman,
32-time traveler from Woodbury, NY



Submitted by Paul Stark, 17-time traveler
from Edina, MN



Submitted by David Fong, 19-time traveler
from Foster City, CA



Submitted by Steven dos Remedios,
31-time traveler from Oakland, CA



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