

Sicily

EXTENDED VACATION

Plus optional extensions in

The Amalfi Coast; Malta

SIC 2012

Grand Circle Travel

Sicily

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INTRODUCTION

ABOUT THIS HANDBOOK

We've gathered some general information that may prove helpful before you travel with us on this Grand Circle itinerary. If you expect to embark on much personal exploration, or just want to discover more about the countries you'll visit, we recommend that you consult your choice of the many available travel guidebooks devoted to your destinations for detailed and timely information. You can also refer to our recommended reading list (at the end of the handbook) for other sources of insight.

ABOUT GRAND CIRCLE TRAVEL

Grand Circle Travel, founded in 1958 to serve the American Association for Retired Persons (AARP), is the leader in international travel, adventure and discovery for Americans aged 50 and over. Grand Circle vacations have been recommended by *The New York Times*, *Condé Nast Traveler*, *The Los Angeles Times*, *Travel+Leisure*, *The Wall Street Journal*, *Arthur Frommer's Budget Travel*, and other publications. But our most impressive reviews come from the more than one million people who have traveled with us and from readers of *Condé Nast Traveler* who placed Grand Circle Cruise Lines, the river cruise branch of Grand Circle, in the Top 10 of the World's Best Cruise Lines for six years. Grand Circle has earned a spot on the prestigious *Condé Nast Traveler* Gold List for six consecutive years as well. For 2011 *Condé Nast Traveler* named seven Grand Circle river ships among the 20 best river ships in the world.

YOUR GCT PROGRAM DIRECTOR

During your Grand Circle Extended Vacation, you'll have reliable assistance available at all times from an on-site Grand Circle Travel Program Director. Your Program Director is a resident of Italy who is fluent in English and can give you an inside perspective on your destinations. Your Program Director is supported along the way by local tour guides, who guide you expertly through particular sites and cities.

Many Grand Circle Program Directors are graduates of professional education programs for travel guides. In addition, they receive specialized training directly from Grand Circle, training that is based on what we've learned from thousands of past travelers about how to make the trip most enjoyable. Your Program Director offers both a deep knowledge of the region and a commitment to make this a very pleasant, informative, and rewarding travel experience for you.

Your Program Director will provide sightseeing tips, handle all travel details, reserve optional tours you choose to take, oversee your Discovery Series events, and provide any other assistance you may need. You will be in the company of the Program Director throughout your Extended Vacation. During the optional extensions (if you've chosen to take them), you'll enjoy the services of Grand Circle Hospitality Desk Representatives.

1. PASSPORT, VISAS AND TRAVEL DOCUMENTS



Passport Required

U.S. citizens need a passport for this itinerary.

Note

Your passport should meet these requirements for this itinerary:

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

Recommended number of blank pages:

This recommendation is based on a “worst case” scenario. When you are on this adventure, you might use fewer pages, depending on the whims of the Immigration official on duty that day. Since the consequence of having too few pages can be severe—you could be denied entry into a country—we feel that it’s better to be safe than sorry, and we strongly recommend that you follow these guidelines.

- **Main trip only:** 1 blank “Visa” page.
- **Optional pre-trip extension to Malta:** 1 additional page, for a total of 2.
- **Optional post-trip extension to the Amalfi Coast:** No additional pages needed.
- **Both a pre- and a post-trip extension:** A total of 2 pages.

Please take moment to check if your passport meets all of these requirements. If not, you could be refused entry into a country. And if that happens, you might be required by that country to return to the U.S. immediately, **which would be at your own expense.**

If you need to renew your passport or get extra pages:

Contact the National Passport Information Center (NPIC) at **1-877-487-2778**, or visit their website at www.travel.state.gov for information on obtaining a new passport, renewing your existing passport, or for additional pages. You can renew your passport by mail if it is not damaged, you obtained it within the last fifteen years, and it’s in the name you want on your new passport. Many local post offices carry forms for renewing by mail or obtaining extra pages. Allow several weeks for processing your passport. You may also contact our recommended visa service company, PVS International, at **1-800-556-9990** for help with your passport.

***NOTE:** When updating your passport, it is worthwhile to check the prices on all the different services that might apply to you. For example, it might be less expensive to renew your passport than to have pages added, depending on the number of pages you need.*

Visas not Required

U.S. citizens don't need a visa for this itinerary.

No U.S. Passport?

Non-U.S. citizens or non-U.S. passport holders: If you are **not** a U.S. citizen or if you possess a passport from a country other than the U.S., it is your responsibility to check with your local consulate or embassy about possible visa requirements. Or, you may contact PVS International who can also assist non-U.S. citizens:

PVS International
Passport & Visa Services
1700 N Moore Street
Rosslyn Center, suite 310
Arlington, VA 22209
Telephone: 1-800-556-9990

Backup Photocopies

The smartest security precaution you can take is to make photocopies of your passport's personal information pages, your air tickets, your traveler's check serial numbers (if you're using them), and your credit cards. Also, bring extra passport-sized photos. Make a list of the phone and fax numbers for reporting lost credit cards, your travel protection plan company (if you have an optional travel protection plan) and medical emergency network. Keep these documents separate from the originals, and they can save you immeasurable time, money, and trouble if your originals are lost or stolen as you travel. In addition, scan these photocopies and email them to your email address; you can then print out replacement copies if necessary.

2. YOUR HEALTH



Keep Your Abilities In Mind

Journeys sometimes present the traveler with unaccustomed challenges — this escorted tour, for instance, is an active itinerary and features a fair amount of walking, sometimes following steep, unpaved, or cobblestone pathways. Some of the places you visit have not been improved with elevators, escalators, ramps, railings or other aids that you may be used to. If you have difficulty walking in terms of balance or stamina, or are generally inactive in your daily life consider an exercise program to tone up for your trip. For your comfort and safety, we recommend this program only to individuals in good physical condition. If in doubt, consult your physician describing the length and type of rigors you'll encounter. *Please note that this trip is not wheelchair accessible; nor can Grand Circle Travel accommodate motorized scooters of any kind.*



Health Check and Inoculations

If you have any ongoing medical conditions or concerns about your health, we highly recommend that you schedule a checkup with your personal physician at least six weeks in advance of your departure date. Discuss with your doctor any aspects of your international itinerary that may affect your health and be guided by his or her advice. A loose filling or developing cavity would be difficult to remedy while you are traveling. You may want to have a dental exam before your trip.

If you have a condition that requires special equipment or treatment, you must bring and be responsible for all necessary items related to your condition. If you take medications regularly, be sure to pack an ample supply that will last your entire trip, as obtaining refills of your medication can be difficult during your trip. Pack these medications in your carry-on bag, and keep them in their original, labeled containers. To be prepared for any unforeseen loss of your medications, you should also bring copies of the prescriptions, written using the generic drug name rather than a brand name.

Vaccinations:

Check with the CDC: To ensure you receive any needed vaccinations we suggest that you check the current recommendations of the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) for your destination. You can contact them at:

On-line — if you have access to the Internet, we suggest you visit the CDC's Web site at www.cdc.gov/travel, where you will find comprehensive information about preventing illness while traveling.

By phone—at the CDC's Hotline toll-free at **1-800-232-4636** 24 hours a day. Please note that automated information may be arranged topically by disease, rather than by country or region.

Consult your doctor: After checking the CDC's recommendations we strongly suggest that you consult your family physician (at least 6 weeks prior to departure) concerning any vaccinations or medications that you may need on this trip. At the time of print there were no specific vaccinations required for entry into any of the countries on your itinerary.



Jet Lag Relief

You will feel better on the first days of your trip if, shortly before you leave home, you start to adjust to the different time zone of your destination. Since you will cross several time zones to reach your destination, you may lose many hours of regular sleep. On arrival, your body then will have to suddenly adjust to new sleeping and eating patterns. The result is jet lag. Its symptoms are fatigue—often compounded by insomnia and general restlessness—irritability, and vague disorientation. You cannot totally avoid jet lag; but you can minimize it. Here's how:

- Start your trip well rested. Begin a gradual transition to your new time zone before you leave.
- Switch to your destination time zone when you get on the plane. Attempt to sleep and eat according to the new schedule.
- Try to sleep on overnight flights.
- 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, and make an effort to get up and walk about the cabin a few times to keep your blood circulation normal.
- 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.



3. LUGGAGE REGULATIONS

Size, Number and Weight Restrictions

It may seem early to discuss luggage and packing, but if you know current industry standards for international flights you can start to plan what type of luggage you'll use, how much clothing to bring, etc. The following information can help you in your trip preparations. We'll remind you to confirm your U.S./international luggage limits (and update regional limits, if applicable) in your final documents (arriving about two weeks before your departure).

MAIN TRIP LIMITS	
Pieces per person	One checked bag and one carry-on bag per person
Weight restrictions	Varies by airline. The current standard is 50lbs for checked bags and 15 lbs for carry-on bags .
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	A sturdy, fabric-sided suitcase with built-in wheels and lockable zippers is recommended.
TRIP EXTENSION(S) LIMITS	
Both the pre and post extensions have the same luggage restrictions as the main trip.	
REMARKS / SUGGESTIONS	
<p>One suitcase and one carry-on bag per person: Due to the space limitations on bus transfers, you'll be restricted to one suitcase and one carry-on bag per person. This is to ensure that we have room for everyone's luggage. We ask that you abide by this limit to avoid inconveniencing your fellow travelers and prevent additional airlines luggage fees (which are your responsibility). Most airlines now charge to check more than one suitcase per person for flights to Europe and other international flights.</p> <p>Note: Enforcement of published restrictions by countries and airlines is a matter of governmental and corporate policy. Enforcement may include spot checks and may be inconsistently applied. Expect penalties and fines to be imposed immediately, however, when and if enforced. Before you choose to ignore the published restrictions you should ask: <i>Do I feel lucky?</i> And, even if you answer yes, you should make sure that you have the ability to pay the fine.</p>	

Should I confirm luggage restrictions with my U.S./international airline(s) before departure?

Absolutely, confirm current restrictions about a week or so before your departure. You should take this step no matter if your vacation has a lower limit than the average international flight or not, because there may be recent changes, such as new security regulations, or an update to the standard weight/size allowances. For your convenience, we maintain a list of the toll-free numbers for the most common airlines on our webpage in the *FAQ* section.

You should also check with the airlines on luggage fees—many airlines charge to check luggage, even on international flights. Others may charge a fee if you bring a second carry-on item, like a purse or a laptop. **These fees are not included in your trip price;** they are payable directly to the airlines. If you are making a connecting flight, you should also confirm if your luggage can be checked through to your final destination. For more information about air travel, see the “Air Travel” section of your *Important Information* booklet.

Luggage Suggestions

Consider using a daypack or small backpack as your carry-on bag for flights. It can do double duty during excursions and walking trips. A daypack leaves your hands free and distributes the weight of whatever you carry onto your back or hips. Packed with your daily travel needs (sweater, camera, rain/wind jacket, water bottle, etc.), it can compress to fit the snug storage space of foreign motorcoaches, and yet still have space for that impulse buy at a local street market.

Consider a duffel bag or soft-sided suitcase for your main luggage. Porterage at airports and hotels is provided for **one** bag per person. All bags should have luggage tags. Packing is easier if you use inner bags to help organize your gear. Plastic shopping bags, nylon stuff sacks, small zipper duffels, or special mesh bags can separate clothing, gear and dirty laundry inside your suitcase. Isolate liquid toiletries in heavy-duty Ziploc style bags – which are generally quite handy to have when traveling.

Optional: a second, empty lockable bag folded into your main suitcase, with a luggage tag and small lock. Use this to carry souvenirs home (remember that you may incur added luggage fees).

TSA locks

For flights that originate in the U.S.:

To reduce the risk of damage to your luggage, please do not lock your bags when checking in for flights that originate in the U.S. The Transportation Security Administration (TSA) has the responsibility for screening every piece of checked luggage at commercial airports throughout the U.S. According to the TSA, baggage-handling agents may require access to the contents of your luggage and will break locks as required. There are some locks available from retailers that are “accepted and recognized” by TSA. TSA screeners have tools for opening and re-locking bags using those locks, thus avoiding damage to the lock or bag if a physical inspection is required. For a list of TSA-accepted locks, visit their website at www.tsa.gov/public.

For flights outside the U.S.:

On all flights outside of the U.S., we strongly recommend you lock your luggage.

4. WHEN YOU ARRIVE



GCT Air Travelers

U.S. Departure: If you are among a group of ten or more GCT travelers who depart the U.S. from your international gateway city, it is our goal to have a GCT Representative assist you at the U.S. airport with the check-in of your flight. Unless there are extenuating circumstances beyond our control, the Representative will be at the check-in counter three hours before your departure time and at the gate one hour before your departure time (security permitting).

Please note: If you are arriving at your international gateway city via a connecting domestic flight, the Grand Circle Representative will be stationed at the check-in counter for your departing international flight, not at the domestic arrival gate.

Italy Arrival: At the beginning of your base program or your optional pre-trip extension, a GCT Representative will meet you at the airport after you exit customs and assist you with your transfer to the hotel. If you are not met upon arrival, we ask that you immediately call our emergency contact at +39-345-9124-799 for assistance.

Important note: *Airport porters are NOT allowed in the customs hall area. On arrival, you must take your luggage off the baggage carousel and load it onto a cart (in Italian airports you'll need a one- or two-euro coin for the cart), which you will then move through customs. When you exit customs, you'll handle your cart until reaching your motor coach. Your motor coach driver will load your luggage onto your motor coach.*

U.S. Return: At the end of your base trip or optional post-trip extension, you'll be transferred by motor coach to the airport for your return flight to the U.S. If you are among a group of ten or more GCT travelers who return to the same U.S. gateway city, a GCT Representative will meet you as you exit Customs and help you find taxis, buses, hotel accommodations, or connecting flights. Again, it is our goal to have our GCT Representative waiting to assist your group. In rare instances, unforeseen circumstances may prevent this service.

Grand Circle Travel is not responsible for flight delays or cancellations. In the unfortunate circumstance that your flight is delayed or changed, please try to reach the GCT local contact in order to make new arrangements for your transfer. Due to airline regulations our staff are not notified of flight rerouting, and our airport representative won't necessarily be aware of your new arrival time. In these cases you will need to arrange your transfer by taxi to your hotel.

Important Note on Name Tags: *Please remember to wear your Grand Circle Travel name tag when you exit Customs, upon arrival and when you return to the U.S., so that you are readily identifiable as a GCT traveler.*

5. MONEY MATTERS



How to Carry Your Money

Traveler's checks—not recommended: We urge you not to rely on traveler's checks for your personal expenses. They can be difficult to exchange and the commission fee for cashing them is quite high. It's most practical to view any traveler's checks you might bring as a last "cash" resort in the event of a special situation.

U.S. dollars have an advantage. Current bank regulations are very restrictive, and most banks will only change currency for regular clients. The best way to get local currency is to withdraw from a local ATM (*Bancomat* in Italy). Cities like Rome, Florence, and Venice offer currency exchanges via a local box office with favorable rates. Some hotels may not change dollars, or if they do they will apply higher rates to cover the commission they must pay to their banks. If you are arriving on a weekend we suggest you get Euros from your U.S. bank prior to leaving to cover initial expenses.

Debit cards give you a reliable payment method and ready access to local currency. We recommend you use a debit card when you need cash, as it will allow you the flexibility of accessing money at your convenience without relying on bank hours for money exchanges. Please remember to memorize the actual digits of your PIN (Personal Identification Number), as many keypads at foreign ATMs do not include letters on their numeric keys, they only display digits.

Currency

The euro is the official currency of Italy and Malta. Euro banknote and coin denominations are as follows:

- Banknotes: 5, 10, 20, 50, 100, 200, and 500
- Coins: 1, 2, 5, 10, 20, and 50 cents; 1 and 2 euro

There is no need to obtain local currency before your trip, except as noted above. Please note that torn, dirty, or taped bills may not be accepted.

Currency exchange rates fluctuate daily. Your Program Director will advise you of the exchange rate upon your arrival. For current exchange rates, please refer to the our website, or the financial section of your newspaper. On our website select the region and then click on the country you'll be visiting. A link to the currency converter is included in the menu on the page of each individual country.

Banking Hours

Bank hours are usually Monday through Friday, 8:30 am to 1:30 pm and 3 to 4 pm; banks are closed on Saturdays and Sundays. To exchange cash and traveler's checks you will need to have your passport with you. Many banks exchange money only in the morning. In Italy, money can be changed not only at banks, but also at CAMBIOs (Exchange Offices), some travel agencies, and many hotels. Exchange rates will be most favorable at banks, although banks always charge a commission for the transaction.

ATMs

When traveling, typically PLUS, Cirrus, and other bank networks are available throughout large cities and small towns. Always notify your bank before you leave home that you are going abroad so that they may remove any blocks on your account and also ask them about the number of withdrawals you may make abroad. For cash withdrawals, don't forget to memorize the actual digits of your card's 4-digit PIN (Personal Identification Number), as many keypads at foreign ATMs do not include letters on their numeric keys, they only display digits.

Note on ATM use: Many banks have begun imposing a fee ranging from \$1 to \$5 every time you use an ATM in a foreign city. You may want to limit the number of withdrawals that you make. Your Program Director/Hospitality Desk Representative can advise you on locations, but when to exchange money is left to your discretion.

Credit Cards

Though major American credit cards (American Express, Visa, and MasterCard) are accepted abroad, always inquire if your type of credit card is accepted before deciding on your purchase. It is also wise to notify the credit card company that you will be using your cards abroad so that they may remove any security block. When using a major credit card you may receive a different exchange rate than if you pay with cash; inquire about the rate first. Please be aware that credit cards might not be accepted for small purchases or in the markets. Discover credit card does not operate outside the U.S. Keep your receipts in case you have questions about the conversion or exchange rate. Also, keep your receipts as proof of purchase for items to be shipped home.

Please note: Optional tour payments made by credit card may take up to 3 months to process. For this reason we ask that you use a credit card that will not expire until three months following your trip.

Malta

Banking Hours

Maltese bank hours vary according to the season. From June 15 until September 30, banks are typically open 8 am to noon, Monday through Friday, as well as 2:30 pm–4 pm on Tuesday and Friday; hours are 8 am–11:30 am on Saturday. From October 1 to June 14, the hours are 8:30 am to 12:45 pm, Monday through Friday. On Saturday, hours are 8:30 am to noon. Foreign exchange facilities are also selectively available.



Shopping

It is Grand Circle Travel's goal to identify and provide you with shopping opportunities that highlight unique, locally produced products with good value from reliable vendors. For this reason 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. **Grand Circle Travel cannot be responsible for purchases you make on your trip or for the shipment of your purchases.**

Whether it refers to high fashion or Maserati automobiles, “Made in Italy” has become synonymous with style and quality craftsmanship. Among the most popular buys are 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.

Taormina has perhaps the best selection of antiques, ceramics, jewelry, and lace handiwork in all of Sicily. Conveniently, most of the shops are concentrated on the main street, *Corso Umberto I*, which stretches from one end of the old town to the other. The *corso* is off limits to cars, making it ideal for strolls and window-shopping. It is also an unusually beautiful street, with bougainvillea-filled balconies, shady piazzas, outdoor cafés, and inviting pastry shops. Don't be afraid to browse farther afield, such as around the area just below the *corso*, which can provide some interesting finds.

In general, the idea that bargaining is the rule in Italy is mistaken. There is no universal policy, but for the most part, prices are fixed in the better shops. Where you see the sign *prezzi fissi* (price fixed) you can be sure that there is no bargaining to be done.

Local shop hours: Shops are generally open Tuesdays through Saturdays, 9 am to 1 pm; they close for lunch and re-open 4:30 pm to 7:30 pm. Individual stores might vary these hours. Some shops are closed on Sundays and on Monday mornings.

We recommend that wherever possible you carry your purchases home with you, especially if they are valuable or fragile. (Remember to leave some extra space in your luggage when you are packing for your trip, so you can fit in your vacation purchases.)

If you plan a major purchase, we strongly recommend that you research the prices and quality available at home before your trip. Just one visit to an import shop or gold dealer will put you way ahead when you go shopping. This is the only way to know if you are getting a good price.

Malta

Maltese shops range from small, family-run businesses and quaint boutiques to large shopping complexes and chain stores. In nearby Valletta, Republic Street is a major shopping thoroughfare, and Valletta's Sunday market, held below St James Bastion, is one of Malta's top attractions. Among the best Maltese buys are:

Glassware: Mdina decorative glass has earned a reputation for good workmanship and attractive colors.

Jewelry: Finely worked filigree using both gold and silver is to be seen in shops all over the island.

Lace: Malta is renowned for its delicate lace. It has been the traditional craft for generations of the women of Gozo, who work in their own homes.

Shop hours: Stores are generally open 9 am to 1 pm and 4:30 to 7 pm, Monday through Saturday. Prices are fixed on all items; bargaining is not practiced here.

VAT Refunds: Visitors from outside Europe can take advantage of the "cash-back" system on value-added tax (VAT) if purchases total a minimum amount of approximately 230 Euros. The VAT will only be refunded on the purchase of items worth approximately 58 Euros or more.

A cash-back voucher must be filled out by the retailer at the point of sale. Ask the shopkeeper or salesperson about the VAT at time of purchase, or talk to your Program Director about it before you shop. Be sure to save all receipts and VAT forms for Customs, as receipts alone are not enough.

Sorrento

Sorrento is primarily a resort but you can find quality gloves, cameos, embroidered blouses, *tarsia* (intricate boxes with inlaid wood decorations), and Capodimonte ceramics.

U.S. Customs Regulations and Shipping Charges

Exemption Amounts

Articles totaling \$800, at fair retail value where they were acquired, may be imported free of charge if you bring them with you. A flat rate of duty—usually a percentage—will be applied to the next \$1,000 worth (fair retail value) of merchandise. The U.S. Customs Inspector determines the value of your items when you enter, and is not bound by your bill of sale. In almost every case, however, a genuine bill of sale will be honored.

Fees on Items Shipped Home

Items shipped home are *always* subject to duty when received in the U.S. There will also be charges for shipping. Although some shops abroad may offer to include shipping and duties in the price, this typically means shipping to the customs facility closest to you and payment of the *export* duties (the fee to remove an item from its country of origin) not door-to-door shipping or *import* duties (the fee the U.S. government charges to bring an item into the U.S.). All additional duties or shipping charges would be the responsibility of the purchaser—you.

Therefore unless the item is small enough to mail or to be sent by a global parcel service (like FedEx) you should be prepared to pay customs duties and for shipping or pick-up from the nearest customs facility. This is why the U.S. Customs & Border Protection service states: “The most cost-effective thing to do is to take your purchases with you if at all possible.”

Illegal Items

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. For more information on what you may or may not bring back into the United States, you can obtain the publication “Know Before You Go” from the U.S. Bureau of Customs & Border Protection by phone, mail or from their website:

U.S. Bureau of Customs & Border Protection
1300 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20229
Tel. **1-877-272-5511**
www.cbp.gov/xp/cgov/travel/

Problem with a Purchase?

The best way to address a problem with a purchase is to not have one in the first place! So don't forget to examine merchandise before paying for it, check contracts or agreements before signing, and review your receipt before leaving the shop. For major purchases, don't hesitate to ask in advance about the return policy—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.

But what if you do discover an issue with an item later on? In that case, your best recourse is to contact the vendor directly. For this reason we recommend that you keep a copy of all your receipts, invoices, or contracts, along with the shop's contact information. Expect that any resolution will take longer than it would in the U.S. due to delays in communication, the complexities of international shipping/customs duties, and even cultural differences in how business is conducted.



To Tip or Not to Tip

Sometimes *that* is the question. The good news is twofold: we're fresh out of Shakespearean soliloquies, so no thesauri will get hurt here; and the answer to the question “**to tip or not to tip** (and how much to tip if you so choose)” is *always* a personal decision. Tipping is a common practice both at home and abroad and we offer these guidelines to answer requests for appropriate tipping amounts. It can be useful to have this information on site – when the question *must* be answered – and ahead of time for travel budgeting purposes. Tips below are quoted in U.S. dollars; tips can be converted and paid in local currency (usually preferred) or in U.S. dollars (personal/traveler's checks should *never* be used for tips).

GCT Program Director: It is customary at the end of your trip to express a personal “Thank You” to the Grand Circle Program Director or the hotel Hospitality Desk Representative, especially if he or she has provided you with individual assistance. We recommend \$4-\$6 per person, per day. Please note that tips for our Program Directors can only be in the form of cash, and local currency is appreciated.

Airport/Hotel/Pier Porterage & Transfers: While using GCT transfer services, tips to hotel, airport, and pier porters are included in the cost of your trip. Tips to the motor coach driver for your airport/hotel/pier transfers are also paid by GCT.

Included Group Meals: Your Program Director will tip waiters for the included meals when the group dines together.

Local tour guide: \$2 per person for each half-day tour; \$3 per person for each full-day tour.

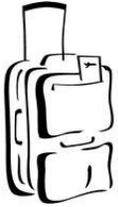
Drivers: \$3-\$4 per person, per day

Time at Leisure: When you eat in one of the Dine-Around restaurants, the tip is not included and a gratuity in appreciation of good service is your responsibility. Also, during the times that you explore independently, you may dine in a local restaurant, take a taxi, or avail yourself of some other service where tipping is customary. In Italy, restaurant checks sometimes include service charges (*servizio incluso*), but you might consider adding another 5% to 10% for the waiter. Taxi drivers expect about 10%. If the doorman calls a cab for you, the tip is generally about 50 euro cents.

Public Restrooms: Most public restrooms in this region are manned by a local staff that takes care of cleaning and supplies. It is customary to leave a small tip for the staff—about \$.65 per person (in local currencies).

Malta (Optional Extension): Tips for your included meals are included in the cost of your tour, although it is always acceptable to give a little extra for exemplary service or if someone has performed a special service for you. A tip of about 10% is customary in restaurants, cafés, and for room service. It is customary to tip an extra 10% to taxi drivers.

6. PACKING FOR YOUR TRIP



In General

Travel light. A good rule of thumb is to gather together everything you want to bring; then take half of that. Eliminate all but the essentials and start packing a few days before you leave. That way, you'll have time to think—not fret—about what you might be forgetting. To have a varied travel wardrobe, yet keep your luggage light, we recommend you select a color scheme and pack color-coordinated clothing items that can be mixed to create different outfits.

Pack casual clothes. Comfortable, informal apparel is acceptable at each of your destinations. Basic pants, shirts, walking shorts, sportswear, everyday dresses and skirts, supportive shoes, and functional outdoor clothes that are relatively easy to care for are recommended. At dinner, you will not need to don "dressy" clothing; men do not need jackets or ties and women do not need fancy dresses. You may want one or two "smart casual" outfits for the Welcome Reception or Farewell Dinner, but it's completely up to you. Even at the opera, formal wear is definitely the exception rather than the rule. You would only need nicer dress if you plan to dine at a deluxe city restaurant on your own.

Mt. Etna Optional Tour: The year-round volatile weather of the Mt. Etna region calls for warm clothes no matter when you visit. Even if the day starts out warm and dry, it can abruptly shift to cold and rainy. Be prepared by dressing in layers of warm clothes, and bring your rain jacket, hat, and gloves.

Winter: For travel during winter months, include clothes for moderate temperatures, but also take some cold weather gear—warm pants and socks, turtlenecks, fleece top or wool sweater, rainproof jacket (ideally with a zip-out insulation layer), gloves, and hat. The most practical travel wardrobe consists of items that you can wear in layers. Then you can easily add or remove a layer according to any fluctuations in temperatures. Your outer jacket should be roomy enough to comfortably fit over your sweater or fleece top.

Spring/Fall: For travel during the spring or fall, pack an assortment of seasonal garments: light pieces and cotton sweaters for daytime; and slacks, long-sleeve shirts, warmer dresses, and a heavy sweater or fleece jacket for evenings.

Summer: For travel during the summer months, pack an assortment of seasonal garments: short-sleeve shirts and comfortable slacks or shorts for daytime; the evenings, however, can be chilly, so bring along a cotton sweater and a fleece jacket.

Comfortable, supportive walking shoes: These are essential. The country's magnificent archaeological sites, churches, museums, markets, and shops truly invite exploration by foot. But negotiating the cobblestone streets and rather uneven sidewalks can be a challenge—even for the most surefooted traveler.

Rain gear: Regardless of your month of travel, rainfall is certainly a possibility. We suggest you bring a folding umbrella and waterproof shell. Water-resistant walking shoes are advantageous in case heavy downpours pass through.

Proper attire in churches: To satisfy dress codes for Italian churches, men and women are requested to cover their arms and legs. No shorts for men and no shorts or skirts above the knees or sleeveless garments for women. Women wearing sleeveless blouses can cover their bare arms with a scarf. It's no longer necessary for women to cover their heads. Pantsuits are now acceptable in churches. If you are traveling in cooler months, when it's unlikely that you'll want to put on shorts, the church dress code might not be an issue. However, if it's apt to be "shorts weather" when you travel, we suggest you pack a pair of light trousers to wear on days when church visits are featured. Women have the option of slipping on a skirt with an elastic waistband over their shorts.

Malta (Optional Extension)

Be prepared for a variety of weather conditions. The weather in Malta may be quite warm, especially in September and October, but play it safe by including cotton sweaters, heavy knits, and/or light woolens. Rain and strong winds are common occurrences on the island from October to March. While you should pack some clothes for warm weather, definitely also include a waterproof, wind-resistant jacket, warm pants, and a fleece top or sweater.



Packing Your Carry-On

Using a daypack as a carry-on bag for your flights is a smart solution. We **strongly urge** you to pack your carry-on with at least one full change of clothes, your camera gear, medications, changes of socks and underwear, your important travel documents, and other irreplaceable items, in case your checked bags go astray. Store camera gear and important papers in plastic bags to protect them from dirt and moisture. With a daypack you can then remove these items on arrival and load your bag with the gear you'll need on walking tours and excursions.

NOTE: Restrictions on what can be included in your carry-on luggage change frequently. To avoid inadvertently packing any restricted items in your carry-on luggage, we strongly suggest that you consult the Transportation Security Administration website, at www.tsa.gov which keeps a current list of restricted items. From the main website click on *Our Travelers*, then *Air Travel*, and then you will see a link for *Prohibited Items*.



Clothing Options

We've included information below on the weather you can expect for the regions you'll be visiting on your travels. Taking into account the climate you'll encounter and the general suggestions we offer above will enable you to create a flexible wardrobe that's light enough for sophisticated travel and will guarantee comfort in all the conditions you can expect to encounter. The luggage weight and size restrictions imposed by travel realities today have made traveling light an absolute necessity. With modern fabrics – Gore-Tex, Polarfleece, polypropylene, etc. – lightweight packing for comfort and protection through a wide range of weather is easy. A visit to any on-line or local sporting goods/outdoor stores (L.L. Bean, REI, EMS, etc.) will yield a treasure trove of lightweight, specialized, and fashionable clothing and gear that is readily adaptable to your itinerary.



Travel Gear Suggestions

Though it's often fun to do things as the locals do, it can be frustrating when daily necessities or conveniences from home aren't available. To travel wisely these days you must juggle your personal needs and preferences against the physical constraints of your transportation—whether it's an international airplane, a transfer motorcoach, a small ship or a day-long trek on a camel. You'll have to distinguish between what you **must** have, what you'd *like* to have, whether you can zip your suitcase closed, and what you can reasonably expect to wrestle through airport hallways and security checkpoints. Consult the following items to create your personal checklist – ignoring what you don't need and making the tough decisions over borderline cases. Remember that many airlines today will charge you extra for added luggage.

What not to pack: do not pack aerosol cans, as they tend to leak during air travel. Avoid packing glass bottles; use plastic containers instead. Leave at home checkbooks and any credit cards not essential for your trip, valuable jewelry, and anything that you would hate to lose.

Consider These

- Daily essentials: toothbrush, toothpaste, floss, hairbrush or comb, shaving items, deodorant, shampoo/conditioner, shower cap, body soap, etc.
- Spare eyeglasses/contact lenses and your prescription
- Sunglasses with a neck strap
- Sunscreen, SPF 15 or stronger
- Insect repellent with DEET
- Travel money bag or money belt
- Moisturizer, lip balm
- Swimsuit
- Compact umbrella
- Wide-brim sun hat or visor (seasonal)
- Pocket-size tissues
- Moist towelettes (packets) and/or anti-bacterial "water-free" hand cleanser
- Flashlight, extra batteries/bulb
- Photocopies of passport, air ticket, credit cards
- Extra passport-sized photos
- Written prescriptions for medications

Medicines

- Your own prescription medicines
- Vitamins
- Cold remedies: Sudafed, Dristan, etc.
- Pain relief: Ibuprofen/naproxen/aspirin
- Laxatives: Senokot/Ex-Lax
- Stomach upset: Pepto-Bismol/Mylanta
- Anti-diarrheal: Imodium
- Band-Aids
- Moleskin foot pads
- Antibiotics: Neosporin/Bacitracin

Other Gear

- Travel alarm (or request wake-up calls)
- Compact binoculars
- Hanging toiletry bag with pockets
- Hair dryer (this is provided in all hotels)
- Washcloth (not a standard amenity in Italian hotels)
- Basic sewing kit
- Hand-wash laundry soap (Woolite)
clothespins/travel clothesline/stopper
- Electrical transformer & plug adapters — see “Regional Electricity” below
- Travel journal/note pad
- Home address book/email address
- Photos, small gift for home-hosted visit
- Phrase book
- Collapsible walking staff
- Pocket calculator for exchange rates
- Earplugs
- Reading materials



7. REGIONAL CLIMATE INFORMATION

We can't predict what the weather will be during your travels, but you'll find historical averages and general information on the climate of your destinations below. As your departure nears it's a good idea to visit the *My Account* feature of www.gct.com, where you'll find monthly temperature averages for the countries you'll visit as well as a current 10-day forecast of local temperatures and conditions. Or check Internet weather sites (www.wunderground.com is very comprehensive) for those forecasts.

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. Your accommodations are in coastal towns, where 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. 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.

Amalfi Coast (optional extension): The weather in Sorrento, along the Amalfi Coast, is a typical Mediterranean climate with temperate winters and hot, dry summers. Spring and fall usher in delightful weather, with plenty of bright skies and pleasantly warm temperatures.

Malta (optional extension): Situated midway between Sicily and North Africa, the Maltese islands have a distinctly Mediterranean climate, similar to that found in southern Italy or southern Greece. The warmth of summer lingers well into the fall, and the mild winter days have sufficient rain to produce grassy patches across the rocky landscape. Wild flowers, too, abound in autumn, winter, and spring—with more than 600 varieties carpeting the valleys, ravines, and ridges of the island with a blaze of color. Malta has a very sunny climate with an average of seven to eight hours of sunshine a day in midwinter and over twelve hours a day in summer. Erratic showers are common in the late fall and winter.

Malta can be windy. Most gusts come from the northwest (this wind is known as the *majjistral* in winter, when it blows strongest), but the northeasterly *grigal* and northerly *tramuntana* can stir up an occasional storm from late summer onwards. Better known is the *sirocco* or *xlokk*, the hot southeasterly wind that blows off the Sahara that sometimes roughens up the sea along the southern shores.

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.

Here is the data from the weather observation stations closest to our destinations.

WHAT'S THE TEMPERATURE?

Average highs (taken at 2 pm) and lows (taken just before sunrise) in °F.

	JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	JUL	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC
Palermo												
High	59	59	61	64	70	77	83	84	80	74	66	61
Low	51	51	52	55	61	68	74	75	72	66	58	54
Catania (for Taormina area)												
High	59	60	63	68	74	82	88	88	84	76	67	61
Low	42	42	44	48	54	61	67	68	64	58	50	44
Sorrento (optional extension)												
High	53	53	57	62	69	77	82	84	78	69	62	55
Low	44	44	46	50	55	62	66	68	64	57	51	46
Malta (optional extension)												
High	59	59	61	65	72	80	86	86	82	75	67	61
Low	49	49	51	54	59	66	71	72	69	64	57	52

Please note: The data cited here reflect *climate* as opposed to *weather* conditions, and serve only as general indicators of what can reasonably be expected. A 60 degree *average* high temperature means that days may be as warm as 80 or as cool as 40 – but it's most likely you'll encounter temperatures in the 50 to 70 degree range.

8. TRAVEL AND TECHNOLOGY



In General

Cell phone, digital camera, camcorder, PDA, MP3 player: travel today can involve technology that didn't even exist as recently as ten years ago. The variety of digital gadgets and their usefulness when you travel – en route or after you arrive – is enormous. An e-book reader allows you to keep guidebooks for uncounted countries at your fingertips and not increase your luggage weight by an ounce. Lightweight digital camcorders and cameras let you bring home high definition movies and still images of the people you meet and places you visit on your travels.

Laptops/netbooks/tablets can keep you connected and promise up-to-the-minute information via Wi-Fi and the Internet, but, as with all gadgets, you'll need to determine if bringing them makes sense. Particularly with laptop computers it's often wiser to rely on Internet cafes or, when available, hotel Internet access than pay the packing weight and space penalty for casual Internet use. And, of course, the more time you spend gazing into electronic gadgetry, the less time you have to relish the local people, sites and sights.

To take advantage of the devices you do bring, you'll need to consider some basic variables—particularly in regard to the services that will be available in the countries you visit. You'll encounter a range of electrical current standards, varied physical plug configurations to access that current, erratic availability (electricity and internet access), and different technological standards (cell phone networks can differ across borders.)

You'll need to coordinate your power and data storage needs, and the accessories required to recharge/connect/use these devices under the different conditions you'll encounter. You'll find some tips below aimed at ensuring that your gadgets achieve their full potential. As a general rule, it's good to familiarize yourself with the device(s) you bring by reading the owner's manual *before* you depart. Pay particular attention to electrical, charging and storage requirements to ensure that you understand exactly what you need under which circumstances. And remember that thorough preparation is the best guarantee that you'll get the most benefit from your devices.



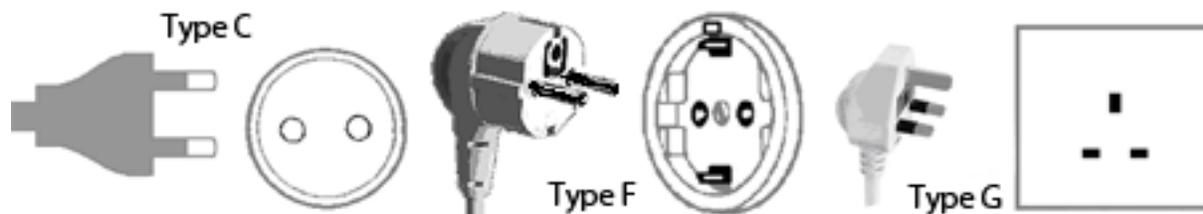
Regional Electricity

Outside the U.S. most countries use electrical systems that differ from the standard U.S. 110 V 60 Hz current and flat two- or three-pronged polarized plug system. The use of 220-240 V and 50/60 Hz current is the overwhelming choice for the rest of the world. Plug shapes, sizes, and configurations vary from country to country and often inside countries as well. In addition, some plugs will work with multiple receptacles and some won't. Europe is largely and conveniently standardized to the Type C "Europlug."

Plugging a 110 V U.S. appliance into 220/240 V 50/60 Hz service will result in a broken appliance, since the motor will burn out as it tries to run twice as fast as it was designed to run. We suggest that you bring dual voltage appliances that will work on both 110 and 220/240 voltage. These are widely available, though you may have to read the fine print to confirm the dual voltage capability. With dual voltage appliances you'll only need to carry whatever plug adapters you need - which are both inexpensive and reliable.

If you do choose to bring 110 V American appliances, such as a hair dryer (note that hotels often supply hairdryers and coffee makers) or shaver, you'll need a current transformer (to cut the 220/240 V in half) as well as the necessary plug adapters. Transformer/adaptor kits can usually be found at your local hardware or at many online stores. Note, however, that transformers are unreliable and tend to burn out - which will render your 110 V appliance useless. Another option is to use battery-operated appliances-which don't need adapters or transformers-just an ample supply of batteries. (Rechargeable batteries are an economical option, but then you'll need a charger.)

Italy uses the Type C “Europlug” and receptacles (Type F & Type L) that accommodate it. Malta uses a Type G plug and receptacle. Both countries use 230 V/50 Hz current.



If you use multiple digital devices—cell phone, digital camera, and MP3 player for instance – it’s handy to have a travel power strip to increase the number of available outlets for charging these devices. Some types include surge suppressors and USB-style plugs capable of charging cell phones and MP3 players without the need for a brand-specific charging block – saving weight and packing space. You’ll have to review the specifications of your device to ensure that it will work with the power strip you choose—and that the power strip will work with the various voltages you may encounter.



Cell Phones

If you want to use a cell phone while traveling overseas, be sure to check whether your own phone will work outside the U.S. or whether you’re better off renting an international phone. The websites www.travelcell.com and www.globalcellularrental.com have good information on rentals. You may also want to consider buying an inexpensive local phone for your stay.

To use your own phone, it’s best to investigate the options and fees your plan offers for international use. Consult your service provider (www.verizon.com, www.t-mobile.com etc.) for details. U.S. service is dominated by the CDMA technology standard, while most of the world uses the incompatible GSM standard. Some U.S. providers do offer GSM, but in either case you may incur high international roaming fees. With GSM, however, you can often choose to have your phone “unlocked” and then add a local SIM card for lower fees. If you can access the Internet as you travel, you can take advantage of email or a Skype Internet telephone (VOIP) account for the best value.

Phone Calling Cards

When calling the U.S. from a foreign country, we advise that you use a prepaid calling card, because the only additional charge you'll normally incur (besides the prepaid long distance charges) is a local fee of a few cents and possibly a connection fee if you are using your card at your hotel. It is best to check with the hotel's reception desk prior to making phone calls to avoid unexpected charges.

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.



Photo Gear

One of the most enjoyable aspects of traveling to new places is the chance to photograph some of the highlights of your experience and bring them home. You can share them with friends and family, relive some of the important moments, and savor them for years to come. Lightweight and compact, digital cameras and camcorders are excellent travel accessories—and you can find models of either cameras or camcorders that will record both movies *and* still images. Camcorders weighing as little as 9 ounces and about the size of your fist can capture high definition movies and high quality still photos; compact still cameras are great for snapshots and can capture casual movie clips. With an ample supply of high-capacity memory cards you can have all you need for your whole trip in a very compact, lightweight package.

Be sure to bring enough batteries. Recharging batteries is not always possible, due to a lack of outlets, electrical shortages or outages—and some cameras go through batteries *very* quickly. Whether your camera uses standard-size (double or triple A) rechargeables or proprietary batteries, it's handy to have backup for extended shooting or for an emergency. Be sure your battery charger will work with the local electrical current. You'll need to bring enough memory cards—these can be hard to find and, if found, will often be pricier than in the U.S. Whatever the storage format (usually Compact Flash or Secure Digital) memory cards are small, light and thin and, as with being thin, there's probably no such thing as too much storage. MiniDVD discs are compact to pack, as well.

Compact cameras, however, are impractical for capturing distant subjects (such as wildlife in Africa or architectural details on Europe's taller buildings), as their lenses rarely reach long distances. Some compact models have a zoom lens of up to 120mm, which is acceptable for moderate distances. For photographing distant subjects a *megazoom* compact (physically larger than a compact – and built for lenses that telescope to 500+mm) or a single lens reflex (35mm film SLR—or DSLR for the digital variety) camera with a telephoto lens of 200mm to 300mm is ideal. With a DSLR you can also consider wide-angle lenses, which are valuable for panoramic shots. As your photographic gear gets more complex, however, you'll need to consider luggage weight and size constraints. Professional quality equipment weighs more, is larger in size, and multiple lenses add size and weight. A single megazoom lens for your DSLR may be the best option for a walk-around travel lens. Large lenses that need tripod support, or double reflex cameras are impractical for casual travel photography. If you use a SLR camera, protect your lens with a UV filter and remember to bring lens caps and covers. When traveling it is easy to get dirt or moisture on the front of your lens, which could permanently damage it. A screw-in filter can protect the lens and if the filter is damaged, it is much less expensive to replace than a lens; caps and covers are common sense.

Bring lens paper for cleaning the lens and a waterproof bag to protect your camera—a heavy duty Ziploc style bag is a good choice. If your camera's flash is detachable, remember to pack it. Be sure to bring a camera with a flash that can be turned off, and learn how to turn it off when it's not needed. (At some sites, and in many museums, flashes are not permitted; in other situations flashes can frighten wary wildlife.) It's good to note that in some countries you may be charged for photography at specific sites; and that some cultures and individuals are less receptive to photography than others. It's always best to respect local customs.

Disposable cameras are also an option. They are inexpensive and capable of perfectly acceptable photos in light that is not too dim *or* bright. A panoramic disposable can add a particularly interesting perspective when compared to standard photo formats—and may suggest inventive ways of seeing your subjects. If you use film, availability is very limited everywhere: whatever you bring may be all you'll have on your travels. Extra film should go in your carry-on bag—with the stringent security at airports these days some x-ray machines may fog or damage film. You can ask that the film be hand inspected, but it then must be removed from the canister—Ziploc style plastic bags come in handy here. X-rays do not damage the data of digital cameras (in any media format), and so poses no problems for travelers using digital cameras.

9. ABOUT YOUR DESTINATIONS

We're including some handy practical details and a brief introduction to the places you'll visit on your Extended Vacation. If you expect to explore in depth on your own, we recommend that you consult one of the many available book-length guides to your destinations. If you have one or two specific sites, museums or features that you're interested in, an internet search is the ideal way to get-up-to-date information and details. And of course your Grand Circle Travel Program Director or Hospitality Desk Representative will be able to assist you with suggestions and arrangements of activities you wish to participate in during your stay.



Cuisine

Sicily: Given the abundance of Sicilian fruits and vegetables and the flavorful local meat and fish, it is not surprising that the pleasures of the palate play such an important role in Sicilian life. Though Americans tend to confuse it with the garlic and tomato sauces of Naples, Sicilian cuisine stands apart from other Italian food in the noticeable Arab influence left by centuries of Saracen domination. The sweet-and-sour contrasts that are minimal in most other Italian cooking are essential to Sicilian cooks, who frequently use raisins and pine nuts or almonds, and who liberally spice their desserts with cinnamon, sesame, almond, and pumpkin.

Mainland Italy: The ancient Romans were the originators of the first fully developed cuisine of the Western world. Drawing on an abundance of fine, natural ingredients from the fertile Roman countryside and influenced by Greece and Asia Minor, they evolved a gastronomic tradition still felt in kitchens the world over. Traditional Italian cooking is quite like the Italian people themselves—robust and hearty.

Popular ingredients include any combination of tomatoes, garlic, olive oil, onions, celery, parsley, seafood, parmesan cheese, mozzarella cheese, chicken, and, of course, every type of pasta, from spaghetti and fettuccine to penne and ravioli. Seasonal vegetables include yellow, red, and green sweet peppers; eggplant; mushrooms; green and broad beans; zucchini; asparagus; and artichokes.

Dine-Around coupons: As part of your included meals, you'll receive 2 Dine-Around coupons per person, redeemable for dinners from a selection of restaurants (your Program Director will provide a list of your choices) for you to use on the 2 nights of your choosing. Each Dine-Around coupon includes one glass of local beer, wine, or soft drink.



Drinking Water

The water in Sicily and Malta is safe to drink, but it can have a stronger than usual taste due to chlorination. Many prefer bottled mineral water which is sold everywhere in 33 centiliter and 1½-liter clear-plastic bottles. Other choices for water include mineral water and mineral soda (carbonated mineral water). If you're out of bottled water, hotel tap water is okay to drink, but it may taste unpleasant because of heavy chlorination.

Hotel Courtesy

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.



Laundry Service

Your Program Director or concierge can assist you with making arrangements for this service.

Newspapers & Magazines



Newspapers published in Palermo, *Giornale di Sicilia* and *L'Ora*, are good sources of local information. In Taormina, you can also consult *Best of Taormina*, a free monthly magazine in Italian and English published by the regional tourism office and available at Palazzo Corvaja. The *International Herald Tribune*, now also printed in Rome, is available at most newsstands. Issues are usually one day behind the *Tribune's* original publication date.

Amalfi Coast in Brief—Optional Extension



City Layout and Details

The gateway to the Amalfi Coast, Sorrento, located on the southern side of the Bay of Naples, is a resort town famed for its great location and mild climate. Built high on a cliff that sweeps down to the ocean, Sorrento is a port city with a charming old quarter, lush gardens, nearby Roman ruins, and a long history that extends from before the Roman Empire through World War II when it was occupied by Allied forces.

The main street, *Corso Italia*, runs from the train station through the town center and out to the cape where it is renamed Via Capo. The town center, called *Piazza Tasso* (named after a 15th-century Italian poet), is close to the train station and intersects with the town's major streets. At night you will see throngs of locals taking their evening stroll in and around the town center.

The gardens of the *Villa Comunale* offer some breathtaking views out to sea. The 13th-century church of *San Francesco* is a quiet cloister that offers a peaceful haven away from the hustle and bustle of town. If you are interested in Roman ruins, visit the Villa di Pollio—a charming park with several ancient structures scattered about.

The best beach is the small sandy *Marina Piccola lido*, right below the Villa Comunale gardens. During the summer months, many visitors rent a pedal-boat to view the beach away from the busy shore.

The *Soggiorno e Turismo* (Tourist Information) is close by the *Piazza Tasso* and offers maps, bus and boat schedules, and listings of upcoming events. Be aware—there are several travel agencies in the vicinity that pose as the tourist information center in an attempt to sell tours. Inquire to be sure you have the official Sorrento Tourist Information center.

The Museobottega is described as “a new model of museum, a multifunctional structure designed to re-qualify those sectors of the decorative arts which have not only a past worthy of being recorded but also a productivity which needs to be sustained and helped to renew its contents.” Within its series of small rooms it offers modern items of marquetry, on display and also for sale. The Museobottega is located in the 17th-century Palace Pomarici-Santomasi in via S. Nicola.

The local museum, the *Museo Correale di Terranova*, is located in a former palace (the *Via Correale*) and offers an excellent spot behind the main building for viewing Sorrento's legendary sunsets. It is a museum of nature and art that was set up from private foundations by the Correale brothers Alfredo and Pompeo (who were the Counts of Terranova), the last descendants of an old Sorrentine family. The art collection is outstanding and houses many treasures.



Evening Entertainment

The best nightlife in Sorrento is to be found in the city center. With many markets, restaurants, and pizzerias nearby, a relaxing and casual dinner is easily arranged.

A favorite pastime in Sorrento is the evening *passeggiata*, when many locals and visitors dress up for a promenade or stroll through the town center, window-shopping and people-viewing along the way.

Marina Grande is the local fishing village and harbor—a delightful place for a stroll or a fish lunch.



Local Transportation

Bus: Local orange busses leave from the *Piazza Tasso* on a regular schedule for the port (Punta del Capo) and other sections of the city. Blue or green and white buses depart frequently from the Circumvesuviana station for nearby cities and towns and even Rome.

Ferries: There are several good ferry and hydrofoil services. Inquire about times and locations.

On foot: Many of the major sights are easily accessible by foot, and this is the recommended mode of travel whenever possible.

Trains: The Circumvesuviana is the train station located in the center of town with service to Naples and other major cities and towns.



Newspapers & Magazines

Naples is nearby, and the Neapolitans' daily newspaper is *Il Mattino* (also read in Sorrento). The Sorrento tourist office puts out a free monthly, local magazine, *Surrentum*.

Malta in Brief—Optional Extension



City Layout and Details

Situated between St Julian's and Valletta, Sliema is part of Malta's main coastal resort area. It's a residential area, having developed from beginnings as a small fishing port into a summer resort for wealthy residents of Valletta. You'll find their villas and town houses on the quiet inner streets, creating a quiet charm. More recently, it has become a major commercial and residential area with several of Malta's burgeoning hotel developments.

Sliema (with St. Julian's) is a center for the island's shopping, dining, and café life. Tower Road, the seaside promenade that runs north to St. Julian's offers shops, restaurants, Internet cafes, and day cruise boats – as well as plenty of seats and lovely views over the open sea. The coastline is studded with two towers: a 17th century watch tower and a British built neo-gothic tower from the 1880s.

Both St. Julian's (you can walk there via the promenade) and Valletta (by bus) are easily explored from Sliema.



Cuisine

Typical Maltese cuisine features many types of seafood specialties, Mediterranean-style dishes, Italian-influenced pasta entrees, local wines, and sweet desserts. International restaurants also abound, including Chinese, Indian, Japanese, French, and even Turkish. Common Maltese dishes that are offered in a wide range of restaurants include:

Soup (*minestra*): A hearty vegetable soup that is similar to minestrone.

Pasta (*timpana*): Baked flaky pastry filled with a mixture of ingredients—such as ricotta cheese, macaroni, minced meat, eggplant, onions, and tomato sauce.

Fish (*torta tal-lampuka*): The *lampuka* is a Mediterranean fish. In this dish, it is baked with tomatoes, cauliflower, spinach, onions, olives, and parsley.

Meat (*bragioli*): Minced meat, bacon, eggs, onions, and breadcrumbs wrapped in thin slices of steak and deep fried.

Dessert (*kwarezimal*): Toasted almonds are ground and mixed with flour, sugar, and the rinds of lemon, orange, and tangerine. After baking, it is served warm and often topped with honey and sliced almonds.

Cheese (*gbejna*): A popular local cheese made from goat's milk.

Fruit: Malta grows oranges from December to March; strawberries, tangerines, melons, grapes, mulberries, and pomegranates are available at various times of the year.

Wine: Local labels include Lachryma Vitis, Marsovin Special Reserve, Verdala, and La Valette. Gozo produces a potent wine, and you can also buy French, Italian, and German wines.

Beer: Popular local brands include Hop Leaf, Cisk Lager, and Blue Label.



Entertainment & Recreational Activities

Golf: There is a par-68 course at the Royal Malta Golf Club, spread across 5,567 yards of ground.

Tennis, squash, mini-golf, billiards, and swimming in a freshwater pool are offered at the extensive Marsa Sports Club complex. Visitors may obtain weekly or daily memberships.

Tenpin bowling: Available at the computerized Eden Super Bowl in St George's Bay.

Trotting: Trotting is Malta's most popular spectator sport and regularly attracts crowds of up to 4,000. Often the races are held on Sunday afternoons at Marsa Race Track. The circuit has been there since 1869. Immediately outside the arena, some of the 700 trotters registered with the Malta Racing Club are stabled. Races are usually held from October through March.



Local Transportation

Taxis: Traveling by taxi is not cheap, and fares increase sharply after midnight. Taxis are white (usually Mercedes) with distinctive red number plates. The taxis have no meters but operate on fixed prices; therefore, we suggest you agree on the fare in advance.

Taxis are readily available in the main resort areas, but note that they do not cruise the streets in the hope of picking up a fare. They are available at taxi stands and on request at hotels.

Buses: Malta's new bus lines have standardized, modernized travel on the island – while making the charming old yellow buses a thing of the past. The buses operate more frequently, with more routes and stops than before and is inexpensive. A 24 hour pass costs about \$3.25 and a full week pass about \$15. Buses run along the seafront on either side of Sliema. Routes radiate from the Sliema and Valletta bus terminals to nearly every town, village, and sandy beach on the island.

Karrozzin: The Maltese horse-drawn victoria—the Karrozzin—was introduced in 1856 and is still in use in the larger towns. It is advisable to negotiate the cost before the ride starts. Horse cabs can be found in Sliema on the Promenade.



Newspapers & Magazines

Newspapers from the UK are available in Malta on the day of publication, in the morning or afternoon, depending on flight schedules from London. Continental newspapers may also be bought, but their arrival in Malta is irregular. Newspapers in English published in Malta are *The Times*, published daily, and two weekly newspapers, *The Sunday Times* and *The Malta Independent*.

10. DEMOGRAPHICS & HISTORICAL OVERVIEW

Italy

Area: 116,305 square miles

Capital: Rome

Languages: In addition to Italian, many of Italy's natives speak French and English.

Location: Italy lies in southern Europe, bordering France in the northwest, the Ligurian Sea and the Tyrrhenian Sea in the west, the Ionian Sea in the south, the Adriatic Sea in the east, Slovenia in the northeast, and Austria and Switzerland in the north. The country includes the Mediterranean islands of Sicily and Sardinia and several other small islands.

Geography: Campania (the region of Naples, Sorrento, and the Amalfi coast) has 220 miles of coastline and is on the southwestern side of the Italian peninsula. Its two famous gulfs, the Bay of Naples and Gulf of Salerno, are enclosed by picturesque promontories, including the Sorrento Peninsula. The town of Sorrento, about 32 miles south of Naples, spreads out along the crest of its fabled cliffs, which offer spectacular views of the Bay of Naples.

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. The cities and towns of Tuscany house the centuries-old heritage of culture and art that produced magnificent medieval cathedrals and the marvels of the Renaissance.

Population (2011 estimate): 60,576,547

Religion: Roman Catholic 98%, Other 2%

Time zone: All of Italy is on Central European Time, one hour ahead of Greenwich Mean Time (six hours ahead of Eastern Time). Summer hours operate from the last weekend in March until the last weekend in September.

Holidays:

01/01 New Year's Day
01/06 Epiphany
04/09 Easter Monday
04/25 Liberation Day
05/01 Labor Day
06/02 Anniversary of the Republic
08/15 Assumption
11/01 All Saints' Day
12/08 Immaculate Conception
12/25 Christmas Day
12/26 St Stephen's Day

ITALY HAS A LONG AND COMPLICATED HISTORY. Its earliest recorded civilization dates back to around 2000 B.C., when the peninsula was settled by fair-complexioned Ligurians, ancestors of the Latins. Sometime near the 9th century B.C., boatloads of Greeks landed on Italian shores, and Italy became the site for the myth of Ulysses and other famous legends. The Greeks inhabited southern Italy and Sicily during the 8th century B.C., forming colonies of city-states called Magna Graecia. The Greek civilization prospered in the 6th and 5th centuries B.C., but waned in the 4th century B.C. While the Greeks were busy settling the south, the Etruscans, a highly artistic populace from Asia Minor, built strong communities in central Italy.

The Etruscans ruled until the Roman revolt around 510 B.C. By 250 B.C., the Romans had conquered Italy and established Rome as the seat of their empire. Julius Caesar reigned throughout the 1st century B.C., and his defeat of France made Rome the ruler of the entire Mediterranean world. Under Caesar, Roman culture flourished. Its unprecedented splendor was further enriched by Greek architectural and artistic influences. Caesar was assassinated in 44 B.C. and succeeded by his nephew Octavian, later known as Augustus, who instituted the Pax Romana, two centuries of peace during which the Roman Empire was as mighty as it would ever be. At the end of the 2nd century A.D., the Roman bishop was made head of the new Christian religion—a position that granted him enormous power in the political arena.

Rome's glory during the 200-year-long Pax Romana began to decline in the 3rd century A.D., when a succession of inept and corrupt emperors weakened the city. By the 4th century A.D., Rome had become very divided politically, and new administrative capitals were founded in such cities as Milan and Trier, Germany. In A.D. 395, Constantine moved the Roman capital to Constantinople (Istanbul), which left the city of Rome very vulnerable. During the 400s, it was repeatedly attacked by barbarians and in 475 completely fell to a barbarian chief, who soon after opened regions of Italy to Teutonic settlement.

Italy was briefly reunited in 800, when Charlemagne was crowned Holy Roman Emperor by Pope Leo III. But over the next century, the country disintegrated into contentious kingdoms at constant battle for control of provincial lands. Italy's turmoil continued for an astounding length of time, as different city-states waged war after war up to the early 19th century, when Napoleon took over Italy.

Despite this internal dissension and strife, Italian society and culture reached its peak during the Renaissance in the 15th and 16th centuries. The independent city-states formed a delicate balance of power, and affluent patrons such as the Medici family of Florence greatly supported the arts. This golden age of human endeavor and artistic creation spawned some of the greatest painters, sculptors, and inventors of Western civilization—Leonardo da Vinci, a genius in many vocations, the epitome of the Renaissance man (1452-1519); Michelangelo (1475-1564); Raphael (1483-1564); and the architect Brunelleschi (1377-1466).

After Napoleon's series of invasions, the Italian people sought to squelch foreign domination, which gave birth to the movement for political unity in Italy, known as the *Risorgimento* (Resurrection). Italian nationalism gathered broad support under the popular leader Giuseppe Garibaldi, and Italy was finally united under King Victor Emmanuel II in 1870.

The country was ruled as a monarchy and joined the Allies in World War I. Benito Mussolini rose to power during the early 1920s and ushered in one of the darkest periods in Italy's history. Mussolini ("Il Duce") organized discontented Italians into the Fascist Party to "rescue Italy from Bolshevism,"—but what he actually delivered was a totalitarian state controlled by the militia. Mussolini formed an alliance with Hitler and fought against the Allies during World War II. The Italian Resistance Movement fought Mussolini and the Nazis, but their reprisals took a heavy toll: 400,000 people were killed, hundreds of thousands were left homeless, and the economy was sharply disrupted. In 1945, Mussolini was captured in Milan by Partisans and executed.

Italy was declared a republic in 1946, but during the postwar era it was seriously divided by extreme political differences. Dozens of governments rose and fell. The leading parties were the diametrically opposed Centrist Christian Democrats and the Italian Communist Party. In the 1970s, a prolonged outbreak of terrorist acts by the left-wing Red Brigades threatened domestic stability, but by the early 1980s, the terrorist groups had been suppressed.

In the early 1990s, public discontent with the government intensified due to a soaring inflation rate and disillusioning scandals that involved the Mafia and many government leaders. In 1996, Italians elected a new government dominated by a center-left coalition for the first time since the proclamation of the Italian Republic. Italy adopted the euro as its currency in January, 1999. The new bills and coins started circulating in 2002. Treasury secretary Carlo Ciampi, who is credited with the economic reforms that permitted Italy to enter the European Monetary Union, was elected president in May 1999.

11. REFERENCE MATERIALS



Recommended Reading

Atlas of the Roman World by Tim Cornell and John Matthews (History)

A compact yet thorough illustrated history of the rise, zenith, and decline of the Roman Empire.

Desiring Italy edited by Susan Neunzig Cahill (Travel Account)

A collection of writings penned by 31 renowned women authors, each inspired by her experiences in Italy. Edith Wharton writes on Rome, George Eliot on Florence, Shirley Hazzard on Naples.

History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire by Edward Gibbon (History)

A landmark scholarly work ever since it was written in the 18th century. Coverage extends from the 2nd century A.D. to the fall of Constantinople in 1453.

Italian Backgrounds by Edith Wharton (Travel Account)

Originally published in 1906, Wharton's travel diary still rings true in its depiction of the Italian people and culture.

Italian Days by Barbara G. Harrison (Travel Account)

An absorbing travel journal that reads more like literature and offers witty insights into Italy's history, politics, food, architecture, and art.

The Italians by Luigi Barzini (Culture)

Barzini's classic book offers readers a refreshingly frank discussion of the history and culture of his homeland, past and present.

Midnight in Sicily by Peter Robb (Historical Fiction)

"Peter Robb presents a labyrinthine tale that brilliantly juxtaposes essays on food and art with historical accounts...and offers an understanding of Mafia culture..."—*The New York Times Book Review*

Naples: A Traveller's Companion by Desmond Seward (Travel Account)

A compilation of excerpts from works of fiction, letters, memoirs, and journals, which collectively capture the spirit and history of Naples.

On Persephone's Island: A Sicilian Journal by Mary Taylor Simeti (Memoir)

The American wife of a Sicilian professor recounts her experiences while living in Palermo during 1983. Full of perceptive insights into the Sicilian people and social customs.

The Seasons of Rome: A Journal by Paul Hoffman (Memoir)

A former New York Times bureau chief who lives in Rome fondly discusses such topics as the city's weather, politics, cafés, mail delivery, police, and opera.

A Short History of Italy by H. Hearder (History)

A concise chronology of Italian history from the Ice Age to the present.

Sicilian Carousel by Lawrence Durrell (Travel Writing)

Lighthearted and humorous tour of Sicily on a carousel bus.

Under the Tuscan Sun: At Home in Italy by Frances Mayes (Memoir)

The best-selling memoir of a California-based poet who leaves it all behind to start over in Tuscany. *Bella Tuscany: The Sweet Life in Italy* is the recently published sequel.



Grand Circle Community & Useful Websites

If you have access to the Internet, the following sites offer a wealth of information:

Visit the Grand Circle Community website for a world of travel news and information:

www.gct.com/community

Government websites:

International health information: CDC (Centers for Disease Control)

www.cdc.gov/travel

U.S. Customs & Border Protection: traveler information

www.cbp.gov/xp/cgov/travel

Transportation Security Administration (TSA): agency responsible for screening luggage in U.S.

www.tsa.gov/public

National Passport Information Center (NPIC): for passport information

www.travel.state.gov

General travel information websites:

Travel books

www.amazon.com

www.barnesandnoble.com

World weather

www.intellicast.com

www.weather.com

Foreign languages for travelers: basic terms in more than 80 languages

www.travlang.com/languages

Travel tips: packing light, choosing luggage, etc.

www.travelite.org

Net café guide: 100s of locations around the globe

www.cybercafes.com

Electric current and plug types

www.kropla.com/electric2.htm

Foreign exchange rates

www.oanda.com/converter/classic

ATM locators

www.mastercard.com/atm for **Cirrus ATMs**

www.visa.com/pd/atm for **PLUS ATMs**

Country information:

www.bestofsicily.com/Sicily

www.italiantourism.com **Italy**

www.visiteurope.com/ **Links to countries**

www.inyourpocket.com/free-instant-city-guides.html



Tourist Board Addresses

Tourist offices offer free brochures, maps, and pamphlets with information that pertains to many of your destinations. If these materials would enhance your vacation planning, you can write or call the following tourist board offices:

Italian National Tourist Office

630 Fifth Avenue
Suite 1565
New York, NY 10111
Telephone: 1-212-245-4822 or -5618

Italian National Tourist Office

401 N. Michigan Ave.
Suite 3030
Chicago, IL 60611
Telephone: 1-312-644-0990 or -0996

Italian National Tourist Office

12400 Wilshire Blvd.
Suite 550
Los Angeles, CA 90025
Telephone: 1-310-820-0098 or -1898

Measurement & Temperature Conversions

Conversion Chart			
U.S. Standard to Metric		Metric to U.S. Standard	
1 inch	= 2.54 centimeters	1 centimeter	= 0.4 inch
1 foot	= 30 centimeters	1 meter	= 3 feet 3 inches
1 mile	= 1.6 kilometers	1 kilometer	= 0.6 mile
1 ounce	= 28 grams	1 gram	= 0.04 ounce
1 pound	= 454 grams	1 kilogram	= 2.2 pounds
1 U.S. gallon	= 3.8 liters	1 liter	= 1.1 U.S. quarts

To convert Kilometers to Miles:

Multiply the first digit by 6. A 40-kilometer drive is about 24 miles (6×4). For a one-digit figure, use .6. For a three-digit number, multiply the first two digits by 6; thus, 150 kilometers equals about 90 miles ($15 \times 6 = 90$).

To convert Celsius to Fahrenheit:

Double the Celsius temperature, then add 30 degrees.

For example, if the temperature is 20°C , that's about 70°F : ($2 \times 20 = 40$; $40 + 30 = 70$).

For Celsius temperatures below zero, ignore the minus sign, double the number, and subtract it from 32.

Thus, -10°C equals 12°F ($2 \times 10 = 20$; $32 - 20 = 12$).

To convert hectares to acres:

Multiply the hectares by 2.471. For example, a 3-hectare area is equal to 7.413 acres: ($3 \times 2.471 = 7.413$).