

**Discover Sicily:  
Heart of the  
Mediterranean**

**LAND TOUR**

*Plus optional extensions in  
Amalfi Coast, Italy; Malta*

---

---

**SIC 2013**

---

---



# Grand Circle Travel

## Discover Sicily: Heart of the Mediterranean

### Table of Contents

|   |           |
|---|-----------|
| <b>INTRODUCTION.....</b>                            | <b>5</b>  |
| <b>1. PASSPORT, VISAS AND TRAVEL DOCUMENTS.....</b> | <b>6</b>  |
| Passport Required .....                             | 6         |
| Visas not Required.....                             | 7         |
| No U.S. Passport? .....                             | 7         |
| Backup Photocopies.....                             | 7         |
| <b>2. YOUR HEALTH.....</b>                          | <b>8</b>  |
| Keep Your Abilities In Mind.....                    | 8         |
| Health Check and Inoculations.....                  | 8         |
| Jet Lag Relief.....                                 | 9         |
| <b>3. LUGGAGE REGULATIONS.....</b>                  | <b>10</b> |
| Size, Number and Weight Restrictions.....           | 10        |
| Airport Security/TSA .....                          | 11        |
| <b>4. WHEN YOU ARRIVE .....</b>                     | <b>12</b> |
| GCT Air Travelers.....                              | 12        |
| <b>5. MONEY MATTERS .....</b>                       | <b>13</b> |
| How to Carry Your Money .....                       | 13        |
| Malta .....   | 14        |
| Shopping .....                                      | 14        |
| Malta .....   | 15        |
| Sorrento .....                                      | 15        |
| U.S. Customs Regulations and Shipping Charges.....  | 15        |
| Problem with a Purchase?.....                       | 16        |
| To Tip or Not to Tip .....                          | 17        |
| <b>6. PACKING FOR YOUR TRIP.....</b>                | <b>18</b> |
| In General .....                                    | 18        |
| Luggage Suggestions .....                           | 19        |
| Packing Your Carry-On .....                         | 19        |
| Clothing Options.....                               | 20        |
| Travel Gear Suggestions.....                        | 20        |
| Consider These .....                                | 20        |
| Medicines.....                                      | 21        |
| Other Gear .....                                    | 21        |
| <b>7. REGIONAL CLIMATE INFORMATION.....</b>         | <b>22</b> |
| <b>8. TRAVEL AND TECHNOLOGY .....</b>               | <b>24</b> |
| In General .....                                    | 24        |
| Regional Electricity .....                          | 24        |
| Smartphones .....                                   | 25        |

|   |           |
|---|-----------|
| Cell Phones .....                                       | 25        |
| Phone Calling Cards .....                               | 25        |
| Photo Gear .....  | 26        |
| <b>9. ABOUT YOUR DESTINATIONS .....</b>                 | <b>27</b> |
| Amalfi Coast in Brief—Optional Extension .....          | 28        |
| Malta in Brief—Optional Extension .....                 | 29        |
| <b>10. DEMOGRAPHICS &amp; HISTORICAL OVERVIEW .....</b> | <b>32</b> |
| <b>11. ADDITIONAL RESOURCES .....</b>                   | <b>35</b> |
| Books, Maps, and Movies .....                           | 35        |
| Grand Circle Community & Useful Websites .....          | 39        |
| Tourist Board Addresses .....                           | 40        |

# INTRODUCTION

## ABOUT THIS HANDBOOK

We've gathered some introductory information that may prove helpful for this Grand Circle itinerary. For detailed and timely information, it's wise to visit appropriate websites and confirm luggage regulations, weather conditions and other variable elements of your trip. If you expect to embark on personal exploration, or wish to discover more about the countries you visit, we suggest that you consult your choice of the many in-depth travel guidebooks devoted to your destinations. Refer to our additional resources section (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 Land Tour, 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 Land Tour. 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 the Amalfi Coast:** No additional pages needed.
- **Optional post-trip extension to Malta:** 1 additional page, for a total of 2.
- **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](http://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

You can encounter unaccustomed challenges on even the shortest journey — this land tour, for instance, is an active itinerary and features a **substantial** amount of walking, sometimes following steep, unpaved, or cobblestone pathways. **The Sicilian landscape is far more vertical than horizontal: you'll encounter many steps and slopes, often roughly finished.** Many 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 **prepare** 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](http://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   |   |
|--|---|
| <b>Pieces per person</b>   | One checked bag and one carry-on bag per person   |
| <b>Weight restrictions</b>   | Varies by airline. The current <b>standard</b> is <b>50lbs for checked bags</b> and <b>15 lbs for carry-on bags</b> .   |
| <b>Size restrictions</b>   | Varies by airline. Measured in linear inches ( <i>length+width+depth</i> ). Generally, <b>62 linear inches is the checked bag limit; carry-on limit is 45 linear inches</b> . |
| <b>Luggage Type</b>  | 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><b>One suitcase and one carry-on bag per person:</b> 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><b>Note:</b> 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.

## **Airport Security/TSA**

**Restrictions on what can be included in your carry-on luggage may change.** Consult the Transportation Security Administration website: [www.tsa.gov/public](http://www.tsa.gov/public) to avoid packing restricted items

**Liquids and your carry on:** Follow the **TSA's 3-1-1 rule**. (Note that this rule is often enforced in Europe.)

### **For flights that originate in the U.S:**

Do **not** lock your bags when checking, **or** use a TSA "accepted and recognized" lock that can be opened and relocked by the TSA.

### **For flights originating outside the U.S.:**

We recommend you lock your luggage as a precaution against theft. Have the keys handy, as you may need to open your luggage for a security screening or for customs in the U.S. or Europe.

## 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, however, be aware that they are not always accepted in Italy. Credit cards, with a PIN may be a better choice for money withdrawals in some places. 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. (Having both a debit and a credit card is probably the best solution.)

#### 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, though it would be wise to get some Euros from your U.S. bank if you are arriving on a weekend (when services are limited). 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, not every shop will take every card. Always ask if your type of credit card is accepted, and several different cards can be useful. Notify your credit card company that you will be using your cards abroad to avoid a 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. Note that the Discover credit card is not widely accepted 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. **1-877-227-5511**  
[www.cbp.gov/xp/cgov/travel/](http://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.

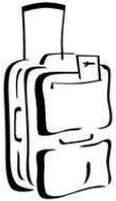
**Drivers:** \$3-\$4 per person, per day

**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.

**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.

## **Luggage Suggestions**

**Consider a duffel bag or soft-sided suitcase for your checked luggage.** Due to space limitations on our motor coaches, you are allowed one piece of checked luggage per person. Porterage at airports and hotels is provided for **one** bag per person. All bags should have luggage tags.

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

**Inner bags:** Packing is easier if you use inner bags to help organize your gear. Use plastic bags, nylon stuff sacks, or packing cubes to organize inside your suitcase. Isolate liquids, store camera gear and important papers in heavy-duty Ziploc style bags.

***Tip:** Bring a second, empty lockable bag folded into your main suitcase, with a luggage tag and small lock. Use this to carry souvenirs home – but remember that you may incur extra luggage fees. If you're traveling with a companion we recommend "cross-packing," i.e., pack 2 outfits of your clothing in your companion's luggage and vice-versa, in case one bag is delayed.*



## **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](http://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](http://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](http://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, and July high temperatures can range from 75 to 95. 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.

| <b>WHAT'S THE TEMPERATURE?</b>   |            |            |            |            |            |            |            |            |            |            |            |            |
|--|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|
| <i>Average highs (taken at 2 pm) and lows (taken just before sunrise) in °F.</i> |            |            |            |            |            |            |            |            |            |            |            |            |
|  | <b>JAN</b> | <b>FEB</b> | <b>MAR</b> | <b>APR</b> | <b>MAY</b> | <b>JUN</b> | <b>JUL</b> | <b>AUG</b> | <b>SEP</b> | <b>OCT</b> | <b>NOV</b> | <b>DEC</b> |
| <b>Palermo</b>   |            |            |            |            |            |            |            |            |            |            |            |            |
| 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         |
| <b>Catania (for Taormina area)</b>   |            |            |            |            |            |            |            |            |            |            |            |            |
| 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         |
| <b>Sorrento (optional extension)</b>   |            |            |            |            |            |            |            |            |            |            |            |            |
| 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         |
| <b>Malta (optional extension)</b>  |            |            |            |            |            |            |            |            |            |            |            |            |
| 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

Smartphone, tablet, digital camera/camcorder, MP3 player: travel today can involve technology that didn't exist even five years ago. The usefulness of digital devices is enormous: smartphones can keep you connected and offer up-to-the-minute information via your cell plan or a local Wi-Fi connection. With a tablet (or smartphone) you can store multiple country guidebooks, access maps and connect to the internet in a small, lightweight device. (*Tip: you can download **this** document from the Grand Circle Travel website and import it into your tablet or e-reader, many of which can display PDF files.*)

Compact and lightweight, digital camcorders and cameras take high definition movies and still images of the people you meet and places you visit. For robust use a laptop may be effective; for occasional use it's wiser to rely on Internet cafes or a tablet and hotel Internet access rather than shoulder the heft and size of a laptop.

To use these devices you should first consider the services available at your destinations. You'll encounter a range of electrical standards, varied plug configurations to access the local current, erratic availability (electricity and internet access), and differing technological standards.

You'll need to assess your power and data storage needs, and the accessories required to recharge/connect/use these devices. Finally, it's smart to read the owner's manual *before* you depart. Pay particular attention to electrical, power and storage requirements to ensure that you understand exactly what you need. Thorough preparation is the best guarantee that your devices will work up to their potential.



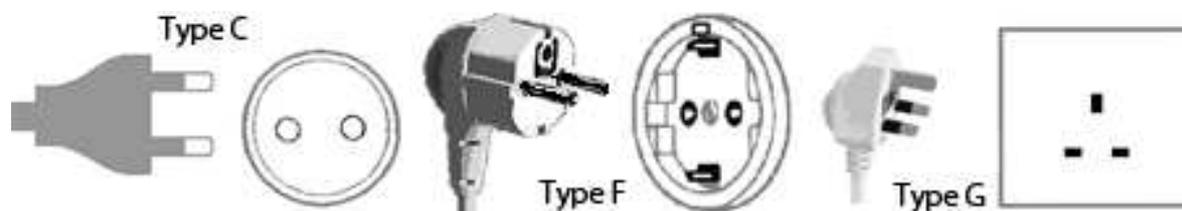
### Regional Electricity

The standard U.S. electrical system — 110V 60Hz current and flat two- or three-pronged polarized plug system — is rare elsewhere. The rest of the world overwhelmingly uses 220-240V and 50/60Hz current with a variety of plug shapes, sizes, and configurations. Some plugs will work with multiple receptacles, while others won't. Europe is largely standardized to the Type C "Europlug."

Plugging a 110V U.S. appliance into 220/240V 50/60Hz service will ruin the motor. We suggest that you choose *dual* voltage appliances (widely available) that work on both 110 and 220/240 voltage. Dual voltage appliances need only plug adapters.

If you bring 110V appliances, such as a hair dryer (note that hotels often supply hairdryers and coffee makers) or a shaver, you'll need a transformer (to halve the 220/240V current) as well as plug adapters. Regional transformer/adaptor kits can be found at hardware or online stores. However, transformers can be unreliable and a broken one will leave you lugging a useless 110V appliance. Battery-operated alternatives are an option, but will need a supply of batteries.

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, MP3 player, etc. – it’s handy to have a travel power strip, perhaps with a surge suppressors and USB port for charging cell phones, MP3 players or e-readers without carrying device-specific plugs.



## Smartphones

It will require some effort to get the most out of your smartphone when you travel. Even with an international roaming plan, costs can add up quickly – those handy apps often pile up download fees. The simplest solution is to shut down all cell phone functions, automatic data feeds and roaming options, and take advantage of your phone via any available Wi-Fi. With an Internet VOIP app (like Skype) you can make inexpensive calls. If necessary, turn international roaming back on and your phone will work as usual – albeit at added cost. If your phone doesn’t support international roaming (most smartphones do), some carriers offer loaners.

App quality, availability and costs vary – as do platforms (iPhone, Android, Blackberry ...), so again you’ll need to do some legwork. Apps come in all forms: packing lists, currency converters, language translators, maps, journals, Wi-Fi hotspot finders ... one problem is going to be searching through the vast array of available apps to uncover what works best and what you’re likely to use most. Smartphones have a lot to offer, but their small size can be a drawback for some uses (maps, extended reading, etc.)

## Cell Phones

If you want to use a standard cell phone while traveling overseas, be sure to check with your service provider ([www.verizon.com](http://www.verizon.com), [www.t-mobile.com](http://www.t-mobile.com) etc.) to see if your phone will work outside the U.S. or whether you’re better off renting an international phone. The websites [www.travelcell.com](http://www.travelcell.com) and [www.globalcellularrental.com](http://www.globalcellularrental.com) have good information on rentals. Or, consider buying an inexpensive local phone for your stay.

## Phone Calling Cards

If you don’t carry a phone, you can use a prepaid calling card to call the U.S. with minimal additional charges. Besides the prepaid long distance charges, you might have a local fee of a few cents and possibly a connection fee if you are using your card at a hotel. Check with the reception desk prior to using it to avoid unexpected charges.

Calling cards purchased locally are usually less expensive than those purchased in the U.S. and are more likely to work with the local system. Note that dialing a U.S. 1-800 number outside the continental United States will incur costly long distance fees, since 1-800 does not work outside the U.S.



## Photo Gear

For many people, capturing the highlights of their travel experiences in photographs or movies and sharing them is one of the most enjoyable aspects of the journey. Remember, however: some individuals and cultures are less tolerant of photography than others. It's always best to respect local customs. And in some countries you might be charged for photography at specific sites, or banned from taking any photographs at all.

Digital cameras and camcorders are excellent travel companions—and many do dual duty by recording movies *and* still images. Fist sized camcorders can capture HD movies and high quality still photos; cameras the size of a deck of cards are great for snapshots and casual movie clips. With an ample supply of high-capacity memory cards you can record your whole trip with a small, lightweight package.

But you must remember the batteries. Recharging batteries is sometimes impossible, cameras can drain batteries *very* quickly, and replacements may be unavailable. Whether you need standard or proprietary batteries, it's wise to have spares. Be sure your charger will work with the local electrical system, and bring more than enough memory cards—they may be hard or impossible to find. Memory cards are small, thin and light: you can never have too much storage.

Compact cameras are impractical for distant subjects and are often weak in dim light. Some models have a zoom lens of up to 120mm, which is good for middle distances. For distant subjects a *megazoom* (with a zoom lens of at least 300mm) or a single lens reflex (DSLR) camera with up to a 300mm telephoto lens are good choices. With a DSLR you can use multiple lenses, though your gear can quickly get complex, weighty and cumbersome. Cameras or lenses that need a tripod are impractical for travel photography. A single mid-range telephoto lens (18-200mm) coupled with a small, fast prime lens (for low light/no flash situations) is an effective, flexible and compact kit. Consider mirrorless interchangeable lens cameras (MILC), which combine small bodies and multiple, small lenses with high quality for both still and HD movie images.

If you use a DSLR or MILC camera, protect the lenses with a UV filter and bring lens caps, covers, cleaning paper and a waterproof bag (a heavy duty Ziploc-style bag is good) to protect your gear. Be sure your camera has a flash that you can turn off, and if it's detachable, remember to pack it. (At many sites and museums, flashes are *not* permitted.)

Consider disposable cameras, as well. They are inexpensive and capable of acceptable photos as long as the light is not too dim or bright. X-rays do not damage the data of digital cameras (in any media format), and so pose 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 Land Tour. 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.



### 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 *passaggiata*, 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, *Sorrentum*.

## 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                           |
| 03/31 | Easter Day                         |
| 04/01 | Easter Monday                      |
| 04/25 | Liberation Day                     |
| 05/01 | Labor Day                          |
| 05/20 | Whit Monday                        |
| 06/02 | Founding of the Republic           |
| 08/15 | Assumption Day                     |
| 11/01 | All Saints                         |
| 12/08 | Feast of the 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. ADDITIONAL RESOURCES



### **Books, Maps, and Movies**

***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.

### **Guidebooks:**

Your Program Director will be happy to provide recommendations and suggestions during the trip, so a guidebook is not a necessity. But a good one can be invaluable as a one-stop reference, so for those travelers who have asked for suggestions, we offer these guidelines. Since different guidebook series each have their own target audience and structure, it is well worth your time to browse your local library or bookstore to find the one(s) you like best. To get you started, here is some general information on the most popular series:

***Culture Smart!*** – Focuses on local customs and etiquette instead of sights, dining, etc.

***DK Eyewitness*** – Innovative visuals make these books easy to use and a nice souvenir once the trip is over. The focus is primarily on the sights and activities.

***Fodor's*** – A classic guidebook with strong information on activities, shopping, and dining. Good mix of upscale recommendations and budget suggestions.

***Frommer's*** – A comprehensive guide series that is known for its restaurant recommendations.

***Insight*** – Offers more information on history and culture than usual, nice visuals, good maps.

***Lonely Planet*** – Practical guides geared towards a more adventurous traveler on a budget.

***National Geographic*** – From the same company that publishes the magazine. Excellent photographs, good information on history, nature, and culture.

***Rough Guides*** – For the independent traveler on a budget. Particularly known for their maps.

### **Maps:**

Most hotels will provide maps free of charge at the reception desk or in your room. These maps are usually sufficient for our travelers, but if you plan on any independent exploration, you may wish to consider purchasing a map before your departure. This can be especially useful in a country that doesn't use the Roman alphabet as the hotel maps may only be printed in the local language.

Some recommended map series include: Rand McNally international maps (especially the StreetWise series), Insight's FlexiMaps, and Rough Guide's destination maps. We suggest that you visit your local bookstore or library to get a better sense of which type of map is best for your needs before making a purchase.

### **Suggested Movies**

Here are few of our favorite movies that are about, or set in, or from the region you'll be traveling. Most are available at movie rental stores and websites—or even your public library. Sometimes films produced outside of the US may be hard to find, but they are usually available online. Lists are highly subjective – and choosing the best of Italy's films in under fifty pages is a fool's errand. If your favorites are missing, start a chat with fellow travelers and you'll likely find even more treasured movies to share.

### **Italy**

***La Strada*** (Federico Fellini, 1954) starring Guilietta Masina, Anthony Quinn

Masina was tiny and had an almost clown-like face, like a female Charlie Chaplin. The plot is about a pair of circus performers who travel all over Italy, juggling in the street. Quinn's character is oblivious to the importance of his partner — in both life and work – until too late. One of great tragic love stories it's a lovely film that seems to define the magic of cinema.

***La Dolce Vita, "The Sweet Life"*** (Federico Fellini, 1961) Starring: Marcello Mastroianni, Anita Ekberg

An engrossing social commentary, and one of Federico Fellini's masterpieces (though the competition is keen). It's a detailed panorama of Rome's modern decadence and sophisticated immorality, held tightly in focus by the detached, wandering protagonist through whom we see it all. (Other important Fellini films include *City of Women* and *8 ½*.)

***The Bicycle Thief*** (Vittorio De Sica, 1949) Starring: Lamberto Maggiorani, Enzo Staiola

As it follows a man desperate to retrieve the stolen bicycle that is crucial to his family's survival, De Sica's film subtly examines the human condition, society, family, justice, and anguish in the poverty of post World War II Italy. It won an Honorary Academy Award for Best Foreign Language film in 1949. (De Sica's other important films include *Umberto D.*, *The Garden of the Finzi-Continis*, and *Two Women*.)

***1900*** (Bernardo Bertolucci, 1977) Starring Robert de Niro, Gerard Depardieu

Bernardo Bertolucci's epic history follows the lives of two friends (one a peasant, the other a land owner) born on the same day in Italy. Their lives unfold with vivid cinematography and lush imagery of the beautiful countryside. The movie jumps forward, to the end of World War 1, and follows their story until 1945. At 5 ½ hours long, it rewards patience.

***The Conformist*** (Bernardo Bertolucci, 1970) Starring Jean-Louis Trintignant, Stefania Sandrelli

The story of a weak man persuaded by Fascist secret police to assassinate his former university professor, a leading anti-Fascist. The film explores how a totalitarian state manipulates people and how people allow themselves to be manipulated. Technically, aesthetically, and visually, this is a rich film.

***Open City*** (Roberto Rossellini, 1954) Starring Anna Magnani, Aldo Fabrizi

Filmed on bits and pieces of scavenged film, Rossellini started this movie as the Allies drove the Nazis out of Rome. The film looks improvised, but actors and screenwriters (including Federico Fellini) were pros. A classic war tale, its semi-documentary camera style and use of actual locations gives the film a very real feeling. The plot involves attempts by the Italian underground to smuggle money out of Nazi-occupied Rome to partisan fighters in the mountains.

***L'Avventura*** (Michelangelo Antonioni, 1960) Starring Gabriele Ferzetti, Monica Vitti

One of the early experimental films in modern Italian cinema, this is one of the first thrillers where what happens is never revealed: a woman disappears on a Mediterranean island and is never seen again. Antonioni uses this as metaphor to imply the absence/disappearance of meaning in the lives of the surrounding characters.

***Ossessione*** (Luchino Visconti, 1943) Starring Clara Calamai, Massimo Girotti

The first film based on the book *The Postman Always Rings Twice*. Set in rural Italy, it is an earthy exploration of human desire. The plot is the tale of a wandering tramp who has an affair with the wife of a restaurant owner. The two then conspire to murder her husband and attempt to live happily ever after. Often considered one of the first films of the Neo-Realism movement.

***Pane, amore e fantasia*** (Luigi Comencini, 1953) Starring Gina Lollobrigida, Vittorio De Sica

A wonderfully innocent, sexy comedy set in central Italy in a backward and rural village. The plot is simple: a young woman is courted by a lot of admirers, including a local police chief, but the movie embodies the resilient Italian spirit, and plays to the clichés — spaghetti, sun, the cult of love, and feisty women — as it suggests the honest basis for those truisms.

***Life Is Beautiful*** (Roberto Benigni, 1997) Starring Roberto Benigni, Nicoletta Braschi

The Jewish country boy Guido, a romantic in Mussolini's Italy raises a son in the shadow of fascism. He is determined to shelter his son from the evils around them, maintaining a ruse with comic ingenuity, even as the horrors escalate. Despite being a over the top in many instances, this is a moving and poignant tale of a father's sacrifice to save not just his young son's life but his innocence in the face of evil acts.

***Summertime*** (David Lean, 1955) Starring Katharine Hepburn, Rossano Brazzi

A lovely Venetian travelogue-cum-love story with a plot that has Hepburn's spinster character falling out of character and in love with a married man. A deceptively simple romance, Hepburn brings her skills to the fore in a poignant characterization. It doesn't hurt that she's surrounded by the architecture, art, Italian conversation, music, and fine cuisine of Venice.

***A Room with a View*** (James Ivory, 1986) Starring Maggie Smith, Helena Bonham Carter

From Merchant/Ivory and screenwriter Ruth Prawer Jhabvala, this adaptation of E.M. Forster's novel is a comedy of the heart, a passionate romance and a study of the repressions of Britain's manners and mores. The fascination here is with how Lucy (Carter) finally frees herself from those repressions. The film received eight Academy Award nominations, and won the Oscar for Best Adapted Screenplay, Art Direction, and Costume Design.

***The Wings of the Dove*** (Iain Softly, 1997) Starring Helena Bonham Carter, Linus Roache

Another Helena Bonham Carter vehicle, based on the Henry James's novel of the same name. Set in London and Venice, it's a tale of passion, temptation and greed. Carter is Kate, a beautiful society woman whose desire for a lowly journalist offers an impossible decision: leave him, or marry — him and a life of poverty. Events take a twist when Kate befriends a lonely young heiress and discovers a secret that offers a tempting, but dangerous, solution.

***Roman Holiday*** (William Wyler 1957) Starring Gregory Peck, Audrey Hepburn

The film that brought Audrey Hepburn to prominence in her first starring role. She's a European princess on an official tour of Rome who slips her handlers and goes on a spree, aided by Peck as a tough reporter. The locations are irresistible, and Hepburn establishes a chic style that would rule through the fifties. She won an Oscar, as did veteran costume designer Edith Head.

***Ciao, Professore!*** (Lina Wertmulla, 1994) Starring Paolo Villaggio, Isa Danieli

A comedy from Lina Wertmulla, this is the tale of an upper-class teacher from conservative Northern Italy who finds himself teaching third-grade truants at a ramshackle school in the south. Along the way, the earnest "professor" becomes the student as he starts to see things through the fresh, vibrant eyes of his scrappy young students.

***Tea with Mussolini*** (Franco Zeffirelli, 1999) Starring Judi Dench, Maggie Smith, Cher

A semi-autobiographical account of Zeffirelli's life in World War II Italy. Luca, Zeffirelli's character, is raised in Florence by his absent father's secretary among a group of British and American women, who must deal with the rise of fascism, the dangers of resistance, and weather dictatorial custody and betrayal.



## 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](http://www.gct.com/community)

### **Government websites:**

**International health information: CDC (Centers for Disease Control)**

[www.cdc.gov/travel](http://www.cdc.gov/travel)

**U.S. Customs & Border Protection: traveler information**

[www.cbp.gov/xp/cgov/travel](http://www.cbp.gov/xp/cgov/travel)

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

[www.tsa.gov/public](http://www.tsa.gov/public)

**National Passport Information Center (NPIC): for passport information**

[www.travel.state.gov](http://www.travel.state.gov)

### **General travel information websites:**

#### **Travel books**

[www.amazon.com](http://www.amazon.com)

[www.barnesandnoble.com](http://www.barnesandnoble.com)

#### **World weather**

[www.intellicast.com](http://www.intellicast.com)

[www.weather.com](http://www.weather.com)

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

[www.travlang.com/languages](http://www.travlang.com/languages)

**Travel tips: packing light, choosing luggage, etc.**

[www.travelite.org](http://www.travelite.org)

**Net café guide: 100s of locations around the globe**

[www.cybercafes.com](http://www.cybercafes.com)

**Electric current and plug types**

[www.kropla.com/electric2.htm](http://www.kropla.com/electric2.htm)

**Foreign exchange rates**

[www.oanda.com/converter/classic](http://www.oanda.com/converter/classic)

#### **ATM locators**

[www.mastercard.com/atm](http://www.mastercard.com/atm) for **Cirrus ATMs**

[www.visa.com/pd/atm](http://www.visa.com/pd/atm) for **PLUS ATMs**

### **Country information:**

[www.bestofsicily.com/Sicily](http://www.bestofsicily.com/Sicily)

[www.italiantourism.com](http://www.italiantourism.com) **Italy**

[www.visiteurope.com/](http://www.visiteurope.com/) **Links to countries**

[www.inyourpocket.com/free-instant-city-guides.html](http://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