

Overseas Adventure Travel[®]

THE LEADER IN PERSONALIZED SMALL GROUP ADVENTURES SINCE 1978

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



Italy's Western Coast & Islands: A Voyage
from Rome to Valletta

2025

Overseas Adventure Travel®

347 Congress Street, Boston, MA 02210

Dear Traveler,

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

When you join us, you will enjoy the thrill of off-the-beaten-path discovery coupled with the convenience of unpacking just once. Aboard our privately owned small ship, you will visit lesser-known ports that larger vessels cannot access—and enjoy intimate interactions with local people in your small group of no more than 25 travelers. You will get to know community leaders and try your hand at local trades during your *A Day in the Life* experience, share traditional fare and lively conversation during a Home-Hosted Visit, discuss the Controversial Topics impacting everyday life, and visit sites supported by Grand Circle Foundation.

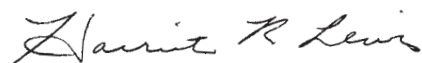
But your personal connections are not limited to your time on land—while onboard, you will enjoy the warm hospitality provided by our friendly, English-speaking crew, as well as the camaraderie of your fellow American travelers. Whether you travel with a partner, sister, friend, or independently, you will feel welcomed and included throughout your journey. And if you do choose to travel solo, you will enjoy an unmatched value, with our FREE or low-cost Single Supplements—just one of the reasons we continue to be the leader in solo travel.

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

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

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

Warm regards,



Harriet R. Lewis

Chair

Overseas Adventure Travel

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Valletta, Malta

Italy's Western Coast & Islands: A Voyage from Rome to Valletta Small Ship Adventure

Italy: Rome, Pozzuoli, Sorrento, Salerno | **Sicily:** Aeolian Islands, Strait of Messina, Mount Etna, Siracusa | **Malta:** Valletta, Hagar Qim, Mdina

Small groups of no more than 25 travelers, guaranteed

17 days starting from \$9,295

including international airfare

Single Supplement: **FREE** or \$1,495

For departure dates & prices, visit www.oattravel.com/rma2025pricing

Savor *la dolce vita* along the Italian peninsula on a journey of discovery featuring 10 nights aboard our privately owned, **50-passenger M/V Artemis or M/V Athena**. Marvel at the treasures on display in the “Eternal City” of Rome ... cruise along the Tyrrhenian Sea from the mainland to tiny lemon- and cypress-tree dotted islands ... see how the locals live in these hidden gems and taste the local flavors. You'll also enjoy **A Day in the Life** experience in the Aeolian islands.

IT'S INCLUDED

- 15 nights accommodation, including 10 nights aboard our privately owned, 50-passenger M/V Artemis or M/V Athena
- International airfare, airport transfers, government taxes, fees, and airline fuel surcharges, unless you choose to make your own air arrangements
- 38 meals: 15 breakfasts, 11 lunches, 12 dinners—including 1 Home-Hosted Lunch—plus all onboard house beer, wine, and soft drinks
- 18 guided tours and cultural experiences
- Gratuities for local guides and motorcoach drivers
- All port charges
- Baggage handling for 1 piece of luggage per person, including tips
- 5% Frequent Traveler Credit toward your next trip

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

Italy's Western Coast & Islands: A Voyage from Rome to Valletta



ITINERARY SUMMARY

DAYS	DESTINATION
1	Depart U.S.
2-4	Rome, Italy
5-10	Rome • Embark ship • Coastal Italy
11-13	Sicily
14-16	Valletta, Malta • Disembark ship
17	Return to U.S.

PERSONALIZE YOUR ADVENTURE

OPTIONAL EXTENSIONS

Tuscany: Florence & Siena

PRE-TRIP: 5 nights from **\$1,695**

Milan, the Lakes & the Piedmont

POST-TRIP: 5 nights from **\$1,895**

ARRIVE EARLY

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

- Arrive early in **Florence** before your Florence & Siena pre-trip extension from **\$320** per room, per night
- Arrive early in **Rome** before your main adventure from **\$470** per room, per night

WHAT TO EXPECT

① ② ③ ④ ⑤ Moderately Easy

Pacing: 16 days, with a 3-night and a 2-night hotel stay and 10 nights aboard a 50-passenger small ship

Physical Requirements: Walk 3-5 miles unassisted and participate in 6-8 hours of physical activities each day, including stairs. Good agility, balance, and strength are needed for boarding motorboats and possible rough seas.

Flight Time: Travel time will be 8-20 hours and will most likely have one connection

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

WESTERN ITALY & MALTA: THE O.A.T. DIFFERENCE

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

People-to-People Experiences: Visit a family-run buffalo mozzarella cheese farm in Campania, and join a local family for a **Home-Hosted Lunch** in Sorrento to learn what it's like to live and work in this seaside locale.

O.A.T. Exclusives: See a side of Italy that's only possible to experience by small ship, as you dock in small ports and villages along the country's western coast. Along the way, engage in **Controversial Topics**, such as a discussion about the Sicilian Mafia with individuals who have in-depth knowledge about the organization. We'll also spend **A Day in the Life** at a family-run caper farm on the island of Salina, where we'll harvest the produce and learn about its production, and savor a home-cooked meal featuring the local delicacy.

Italy's Western Coast & Islands: A Voyage from Rome to Valletta

YOUR DETAILED ITINERARY

BEGIN YOUR ADVENTURE WITH AN OPTIONAL PRE-TRIP EXTENSION

5 nights in *Tuscany: Florence & Siena*

Day 1 Depart U.S.

Day 2 Arrive Florence, Italy

Day 3 Explore Florence

Day 4 Florence • Explore Chianti • Siena

Day 5 Explore Siena

Day 6 Siena • Optional *Spiritual Landscape of Siena* tour

Day 7 Siena • Explore Pienza • Rome • Join main trip

Day 1 Depart U.S.

Depart today on your flight to Rome.

Day 2 Arrive in Rome, Italy

- Destination: Rome
- Accommodations: Hotel Delle Nazioni or similar

Afternoon: Arrive in Rome, where an O.A.T. representative will meet you at the airport and assist you with the transfer to your hotel. If you began your explorations early with our optional *Tuscany: Florence & Siena* pre-trip extension, you will join the main group today.

As your fellow travelers, including those who took our optional *Tuscany: Florence & Siena* pre-trip extension, arrive throughout the day, your Trip Experience Leader will offer an orientation walk of the area to get to know the neighborhood surrounding your hotel.

Dinner: On your own. Perhaps you'll seek out *cacio e pepe*, the classic Roman dish made from thick spaghetti in a cheese-and-black pepper sauce.

Evening: You have the freedom to spend the rest of your evening as you wish—ask your Trip Experience Leader for recommendations. Perhaps you'll stroll through this ancient capital to see some of the city's iconic structures lit up at night.

Day 3 Explore Rome

- Destination: Rome
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Dinner
- Accommodations: Hotel Delle Nazioni or similar

Activity Note: Today's city tour does not include entrance to the Colosseum or the Vatican Museums. If you would like to visit either of these sites, we strongly recommend booking your ticket in advance. Tickets to the

Colosseum are available online for purchase 30 days in advance, and tickets to the Vatican Museums are available online 60 days in advance.

Breakfast: At the hotel.

Morning: We'll join our Trip Experience Leader for a Welcome Briefing. Then, we'll set off to discover the "Eternal City" and the myriad treasures it has amassed over more than two and a half millennia. At varying points throughout its history, Rome has served as the heart of kingdoms, empires, and nations; a religious and cultural touchpoint; an Olympic city; and a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Today it remains a vibrant metropolis of historical and cultural significance—a can't-miss experience for travelers from around the world.

Our morning walking tour will introduce us to many of the city's history-spanning highlights, from the Pantheon, built in the second century CE, to its resplendent Spanish Steps, designed in the 18th century by architects Francesco de Sanctis and Alessandro Specchi. We'll also see the many layers of history on display: Designed by renowned Italian sculptor and architect, Lorenzo Bernini, and one of the most iconic fountains in the world today, the Trevi Fountain was built in 1762 upon the site of an ancient Roman aqueduct. The end of our tour brings you to the Pantheon, giving you the chance to explore inside.

Lunch: On your own. If they are in season, you might like to try out *carciofi alla romana*, Roman-style crispy artichokes.

Afternoon: You'll have the afternoon free for your own discoveries—ask your Trip Experience Leader for recommendations.

Dinner: At a local restaurant.

Evening: You have the freedom to spend the rest of your evening as you wish. Continue exploring Rome on your own, or catch up with your fellow travelers over a nightcap in the hotel bar.

Day 4 Explore Roman Forum

- Destination: Rome
- Included Meals: Breakfast
- Accommodations: Hotel Delle Nazioni or similar

Breakfast: At the hotel.

Morning: We begin exploring the Eternal City with a local guide, who will meet us at the hotel and travel with us to the Roman Forum via public transportation. The ancient Roman Forum was Rome's political and commercial center when the city was at the height of its power. It was constructed over some 900 years with various emperors adding and extending temples, monuments, and buildings. Here, the emperors, Roman senators, and consuls met to plan and pass laws that governed the empire—and it remains one of the most powerful monuments to the grandeur of ancient Rome. We'll walk around the site with our local guide, who will help us imagine what the Forum must have been like when it was the bustling nerve center of the world's most powerful empire.

Lunch: On your own. Pizza and pasta options abound in this culinary capital; your Trip Experience Leader will be happy to recommend restaurant options in the area.

Afternoon: Free for you to make your own discoveries. You might consider a stroll through the Tridente, one of Rome's most lively and picturesque neighborhoods. You can also explore one of Rome's most impressive

squares, Piazza del Popolo, the plaza centered by the 120-foot-tall obelisk brought by Augustus from ancient Egypt.

Later this afternoon, you may choose to join your Trip Experience Leader on an elective walk through some of Rome's charming neighborhoods.

Dinner: On your own, whenever you'd like.

Evening: You have the freedom to spend the rest of your evening as you wish. There's time for one more *gelato* before bed. Not ready to leave Rome? Consider making a visit to the Trevi Fountain—rumor has it that if you throw a coin in the fountain, you are guaranteed to return to the city.

Day 5 Rome • Sicily-Rome American Cemetery and Memorial • Gaeta • Embark ship

- Destination: Rome
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner
- Accommodations: M/V *Artemis* or M/V *Athena*

Breakfast: At the hotel.

Morning: We'll check out of the hotel and begin our overland transfer to Gaeta, where our ship is docked. To break up our drive, we'll stop along the way in the historic town of Nettuno, where we'll visit the Sicily-Rome American Cemetery and Memorial. This former battlefield cemetery is the final resting place for more than 7,000 American soldiers who fought during World War II. We'll learn about its sacred and sad history.

Lunch: At a local restaurant.

Afternoon: We'll continue our drive to Gaeta, arriving in the mid-afternoon. Here, we'll board our home for the next ten nights, a 50-passenger small ship.

After boarding our small ship and settling in, we gather in the lounge for our first Port Talk—nightly sessions during which our Trip Experience Leader will outline the next day's experience.

Dinner: Enjoy a Captain's Welcome Dinner tonight. This sit-down meal often features specialty dishes or a ceremonial cocktail.

Evening: You have the freedom to spend the rest of your evening as you wish. Enjoy a drink with your fellow travelers at the bar, or head up to the ship's deck for star-gazing.

Day 6 Explore Pozzuoli

- Destination: Pozzuoli
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner
- Accommodations: M/V *Artemis* or M/V *Athena*

Activity Note: The Flavian Amphitheater is closed on Tuesdays; when this site is unavailable, we will enjoy an alternate guided tour of the archaeological park of Baia, famous for its thermal baths.

Breakfast: Onboard the ship.

Morning: Our small ship will dock in Pozzuoli—a once important port of the Roman Empire. The city was so influential to the ancient Romans that two amphitheaters were constructed here. We'll explore the greater of the two today, the Flavian Amphitheater.

Upon arrival, we'll take a walking tour of this structure, which is the third largest amphitheater in Italy. The Flavian Amphitheater was likely built by the same architects who constructed the Roman Colosseum. Behold subterranean corridors and underground chambers that once housed gladiators and beasts for a deeper look into the past.

Next, we'll embark on a walking tour of Pozzuoli. Along the way we'll pass the Serapide Temple (which is actually a misnomer for an ancient Roman market) and visit the local fish market.

Lunch: Onboard the ship.

Afternoon: Enjoy some time at leisure for you to discover Pozzuoli on your own or to spend some time relaxing onboard.

Later, reconvene with your fellow travelers for a Port Talk before dinner.

Dinner: Onboard the ship.

Evening: Free for you to spend as you wish. Perhaps you'll enjoy a nightcap at the bar or relax in the lounge. Late this evening, we will set sail for Sorrento.

Day 7 Explore Sorrento • Home-Hosted Lunch

- Destination: Sorrento
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner
- Accommodations: M/V *Artemis* or M/V *Athena*

Breakfast: Onboard the ship.

Morning: We disembark in the cliff-side town of Sorrento, and begin a guided walking tour.

With its romantic location on the cliffs over the Bay of Naples, Sorrento has long served as the subject of songs and legends. It was here that mythical sirens, with the beauty of their sweet singing, were believed to lure sailors to shipwreck on the rocks. Ulysses greatly desired to hear these songs for himself, but knew of the potentially catastrophic results—so he ordered his crew to block their own ears, and then secure him to his ship's mast, so that he could hear without risk to his vessel.

Sorrento is a town made for strolling, with remarkable architecture and commanding ocean views around each bend. Our discovery walk will give us ample opportunity to see the cathedral, Piazza Sant'Antonino, Public Gardens, and the Piazza Tasso main square. But we'll also have time to delight in its quaint little alleys, each lovely and unique.

After free time on your own, we'll reconvene and split up into small groups to experience one of the highlights of our adventure:

a Home-Hosted Lunch.

Lunch: We'll enjoy a behind-the-scenes look at the true spirit of Sorrento when we join a family for lunch in their private home.

Afternoon: This afternoon, we'll begin sailing toward Salerno. Pull up a chair on the Sun Deck to watch the colorful Amalfi Coast pass by, and enjoy the Port Talk later this evening.

Dinner: Onboard the ship.

Evening: Weather permitting, our ship will drop anchor this evening so that we may take in sweeping views of the colorful seaside homes as we enjoy dinner on the Sun Deck.

Day 8 Explore Salerno • Paestum • Buffalo mozzarella farm • World War II conversation

- Destination: Salerno
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner
- Accommodations: M/V *Artemis* or M/V *Athena*

Breakfast: Onboard the ship.

Morning: We'll wake up in Salerno this morning, and depart for Paestum, an ancient city in Italy's Campania region, by bus.

While Campania is distinctly Italian today, its history is much more closely aligned with ancient Greece than Rome—which is why we'll

see decidedly Greek touches throughout our exploration here. During our tour of Paestum, we'll witness three beautifully preserved Doric Greek temples, which date back to 600 to 450 BCE, as well as the ruins of ancient homes—all of which we'll discover with an expert guide by your side.

Next, we'll indulge in one of the region's more contemporary delights: its iconic buffalo mozzarella cheese. We'll journey to a local buffalo farm, where we'll explore the family-run facility and discover how this Italian staple is made. We may even have the opportunity to watch the cheese-makers at work.

Lunch: A light lunch made up of cheese and other local products at the farm.

Afternoon: Return to Salerno, and head out for a discovery walk with our Trip Experience Leader, followed by free time. Later, we'll learn even more about this city when an expert from a local association comes aboard to lead a conversation on the Allied landing at Salerno during World War II.

Dinner: Onboard the ship.

Evening: A folk group will come aboard to delight us with a traditional song and dance performance. Our ship remains docked in Salerno tonight.

Day 9 Explore Salerno • Optional Pompeii tour

- Destination: Salerno
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner
- Accommodations: M/V *Artemis* or M/V *Athena*

Breakfast: Onboard the ship.

Morning: Free for your own discoveries—ask your Trip Experience Leader for recommendations. Perhaps you'll stroll along Salerno's palm tree-lined boulevards that stretch out before craggy mountain backdrops, or explore its sun-drenched piazzas.

Or, take an optional tour to one of the world's most famous archaeological sites: Pompeii. There, we'll enjoy a guided walking tour, followed by free time.

Early on an August afternoon in the year 79 CE, Mount Vesuvius erupted in explosive fashion, unleashing a massive debris cloud. In Pompeii, ash began to fall from the sky at a rate of up to six inches an hour. A cloud of gas and debris followed the next day—and the city was buried until it was re-discovered in the 17th century. The World Monuments Fund, to which Grand Circle Foundation has contributed \$150,000 for preservation efforts across Europe, cites Pompeii as one of the world's 100 most-endangered sites.

Lunch: Onboard the ship.

Afternoon: Free to relax onboard as we begin sailing toward the Aeolian Islands.

Dinner: Onboard the ship.

Evening: You have the freedom to spend the rest of your evening as you wish. Perhaps you'll enjoy a nightcap at the bar or relax in the lounge.

Day 10 Explore Lipari

- Destination: Lipari
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner
- Accommodations: M/V *Artemis* or M/V *Athena*

Breakfast: Onboard the ship.

Morning: Our ship drops anchor near the Aeolian islands, a small archipelago off the shores of southern Italy and Sicily.

Lunch: Onboard the ship.

Afternoon: We'll tender to Lipari, where you'll have some free time to explore on your own. If you'd like, join your Trip Experience Leader for an optional walking tour of this beautiful island. We'll explore the narrow streets of the main town and its marina and admire the archaeological area of the island's castle. We'll also stop at a local bar for a tasting of the famous Sicilian cannoli, filled with sweet ricotta cheese.

Dinner: Onboard the ship.

Evening: You have the freedom to spend the rest of your evening as you wish. Perhaps you'll enjoy a nightcap at the bar or relax in the lounge.

Day 11 Explore Lipari • Salina • *A Day in the Life* of a farm on Salina • Strait of Messina

- Destination: Lipari
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner
- Accommodations: M/V *Artemis* or M/V *Athena*

Breakfast: Onboard the ship.

Morning: Our day's discoveries include *A Day in the Life* on a small, family-owned farm on one of these picturesque islands—Salina.

We'll tender to the island of Lipari, and then enjoy a private boat ride to Salina during which we'll take in views of the lush and rugged archipelago. Salina was once home to six highly active volcanoes; however, the last known eruption was more than 13,000 years ago, and today, only two of the ancient peaks are visible. The long history of volcanic activity, however, has earned the island a place on UNESCO's

World Heritage List. And its mineral-rich soil has made it an ideal place for farming. Capers are the most popular crop on Salina—and farms like the one we'll visit today stretch from one sun-drenched corner of the island to the other. Malvasia wine, the so-called "nectar of the Gods" is another symbol of the Aeolian archipelago, and Salina's lush valleys are blanketed in vineyards.

Upon arrival in Salina, we'll take a panoramic drive. Though it's the second-largest island in the Aeolian chain, Salina is relatively undeveloped. We'll witness tranquil hill towns and simple pastel homes nestled between the mountains and the sea before arriving at the farm to begin our *A Day in the Life* experience. Depending on which farm you visit, you'll be greeted by a local resident, who will offer unique insights into the lifestyles and agricultural practices of the island.

Lunch: We'll head to the kitchen to begin making our lunch, which will feature seasonal ingredients straight from the farm. We'll also enjoy a glass of locally-made Malvasia wine. This honey-colored dessert spirit is typically sweet, with notes of apricot and peach.

Afternoon: We'll bid farewell to our hosts and return to the port in Salina, where you'll have a chance to either explore on your own or return to the ship.

Dinner: Onboard the ship.

Evening: Gather on the Sun Deck with your camera for a special scenic cruise through the Strait of Messina, the slip of waterway that separates Italy and Sicily.

Day 12 Hike Mount Etna, Sicily • Italian geology conversation

- Destination: Mount Etna
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner
- Accommodations: M/V *Artemis* or M/V *Athena*

Breakfast: Onboard the ship.

Morning: Our ship docks in Marina di Riposto, and we disembark for our drive to Mount Etna, Europe's largest active volcano and one of the most active on Earth. This UNESCO World Heritage Site has been active for more than 500,000 years—in fact, ancient Greeks attributed this to Typhon, the monster Zeus allegedly kept beneath the mountain.

A popular destination for travelers from around the world, Etna offers incredible views into Sicilian history and culture—and we'll go a step further than many of its other visitors when we trek up its slope for a closer look: Step onto its lava fields and benefit from the insights of a local naturalist expert.

Lunch: At a local restaurant.

Afternoon: Make independent discoveries, or return to the ship. Perhaps you'll visit the 13th-century Basilica di San Pietro or stroll through the Piazza San Pietro in the city's historic center.

Later, we'll be joined aboard the ship by a local expert who will provide context into the day's discoveries during a conversation on Italian geology. Afterwards, take some time at leisure before tonight's Port Talk.

Dinner: Onboard the ship.

Evening: You have the freedom to spend the rest of your evening as you wish. Perhaps you'll enjoy a nightcap at the bar or relax in the lounge.

Day 13 Explore Siracusa • Controversial Topic: The Sicilian Mafia with local expert & the son of former crime boss

- Destination: Siracusa
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner
- Accommodations: M/V *Artemis* or M/V *Athena*

Breakfast: Onboard the ship.

Morning: We discover Siracusa, a Sicilian city with history dating back more than 2,700 years, during a walking tour with a local expert. We'll uncover Ortigia, the city's historical heart, where we'll admire architectural splendors—ancient medieval streets, Baroque structures, and a cathedral fashioned out of an ancient Greek temple. We'll also spend some time at a local market during our tour.

Of all the Greek cities of antiquity that flourished outside of Greece, Siracusa was the Mediterranean's most important—a formidable seafaring power nearly equal to Athens. In the heyday of its power, it dared to take on both Carthage and Rome, and its wealth and size were unmatched by any other city in the ancient world. It is said that Siracusa is the birthplace of comedy in Greek theater, and was the only school of classical drama outside of Athens.

Today this UNESCO World Heritage Site serves as one of Europe's richest historical sites and a photographer's haven, complete with white limestone buildings, narrow winding streets, and rich architectural details.

Lunch: Onboard the ship.

Afternoon: We'll gather in the lounge to discuss the **Controversial Topic** of the Sicilian Mafia (*Cosa Nostra*), the terrorist-like and omnipresent crime syndicate. During this conversation, we'll go deep beyond the headlines, myths, and legends about this

organization and learn about it on a personal level from two people that are intimately familiar with it—an experience made possible only because of O.A.T.’s local connections in Sicily.

The remainder of the afternoon is free to explore on your own. Perhaps you’ll visit remarkable Greek and Roman ruins, including the cave known as “the ear of Dionysius.” More than 200 feet long and shaped like a human ear, the cave has such impeccable acoustics that the ripping of paper can sound like a gunshot. It earned its name thanks to the tyrant Dionysius, who forced his prisoners into the cave at night; it is said that he was able to hear every word they said during this captivity.

Dinner: Onboard the ship.

Evening: You have the freedom to spend the rest of your evening as you wish. Perhaps you’ll enjoy a nightcap at the bar or relax in the lounge.

Day 14 Explore Valletta, Malta • Conversation about the bombshell reporting of late journalist Daphne Caruana Galizia • Captain’s Farewell Dinner

- Destination: Valletta
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner
- Accommodations: M/V *Artemis* or M/V *Athena*

Breakfast: Onboard the ship.

Morning: The third act of your trip begins as you cruise into Valletta, Malta’s walled capital city and a UNESCO World Heritage Site. An included tour will introduce you to the city, with a visit to the serene Barracca Gardens, as well as insights into the city’s mysterious founders: the Sovereign Military Order of Malta. The world’s oldest surviving chivalric order,

these Knights of Malta founded the city more than 500 years ago and continue to serve the community today. Malta’s cultural identity is entwined with that of the Knights: The order originated during the Crusades and, over time, found its way to Malta, where it defended the island from attacks by the Ottoman Empire. Without the protection of the Knights, Malta’s history—and in fact, Europe’s history—would be very different than it is today.

Then, we’ll continue our discoveries of Valletta by visiting St. John’s Co-Cathedral. Built by the order of the Knights of St. John in the 16th century, the cathedral is home to impressive baroque art and architecture, including finer works by Caravaggio, and is still to this day a sacred place of worship. After your visit here wraps up, you’ll have time for personal discoveries.

Lunch: Onboard the ship.

Afternoon: We’ll gather in the ship’s lounge for a discussion about anti-corruption activism in Malta—more specifically, the life of Daphne Caruana Galizia, a former investigative journalist, columnist, blogger, and anti-corruption activist. To facilitate our discussion, we’ll be joined by an individual who was very close with Daphne before her untimely death.

The remainder of the afternoon is on your own—perhaps you’ll visit the Lascaris War Rooms, where Maltese military leaders planned their defense of the island during World War II.

Dinner: Gather with your fellow travelers in the ship’s dining room for the Captain’s Farewell Dinner.

Evening: You have the freedom to spend the rest of your evening as you wish.

Day 15 Disembark ship • Explore Mdina

- Destination: Valletta
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch
- Accommodations: Grand Hotel Excelsior or similar

Breakfast: Onboard the ship.

Morning: We disembark our ship in Valletta and drive to Mdina, known as the “Silent City.” This medieval city is surrounded by thick, imposing walls, and the limited access allowed to traffic gives Mdina its nickname. We’ll stroll along the peaceful winding streets, lined with elegant buildings of Malta’s characteristic yellow limestone; admire palaces now serving as private homes; and see Mdina’s Baroque cathedral anchoring a large square. With a history that can be traced back 4,000 years, an exploration through Mdina is like a voyage through time—with layers of cultural and religious treasures waiting to be discovered.

Next, we’ll stop at a local pastry shop to try *pastizzi*, Malta’s favorite street food. As we enjoy sampling the delightfully flaky pastries, feel free to engage the staff. Perhaps we’ll try to coax some recipes out of these local experts.

After, you’ll have some free time to explore. Perhaps you’ll venture underground to explore St. Paul’s Catacombs—a warren of ancient Roman tombs.

Lunch: At a local restaurant.

Afternoon: Drive to our hotel. After checking in, enjoy time to rest or take a stroll around the neighborhood—ask your Trip Experience Leader for recommendations.

Dinner: On your own—there are many restaurant options just steps from your hotel. Ask your Trip Experience Leader to suggest his or her favorites during your orientation walk. Perhaps you’ll seek out a hearty slice

of *timpana*, a Maltese-style lasagna made with macaroni, tomato sauce, corned beef, and cheese.

Evening: You have the freedom to spend the rest of your evening as you wish.

Day 16 Valletta • Three Cities • Hagar Qim

- Destination: Valletta
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Dinner
- Accommodations: Grand Hotel Excelsior or similar

Breakfast: At the hotel.

Morning: Continue your explorations of Malta in the area known as “The Three Cities,” named for the three historic fortified towns of Cospicua, Senglea, and Vittoriosa. First, we’ll drive to the megalithic temple complex of Hagar Qim. This UNESCO World Heritage Site, whose name means “free-standing boulders,” boasts archaeological remains older than Stonehenge and the Pyramids.

Next, explore Vittoriosa, which dates back to the time of the Phoenicians. This ancient city was where the Knights of St. John made their headquarters before Valletta was built.

Lunch: On your own. Your Trip Experience Leader will be happy to recommend a spot. Perhaps you’ll try *kapunata*, a Maltese style of ratatouille made with stewed vegetables.

Afternoon: You’ll have free time for independent discoveries after your tour. Perhaps you’ll climb to the top of Fort St. Angelo for sweeping views of the bay—and of Valletta just on the other side.

Dinner: At a local restaurant.

Evening: On your own—you are free to return to your room to rest before your return flight home tomorrow, or join fellow travelers in the lobby for a nightcap.

Day 17 Valletta • Return to U.S.

- Included Meals: Breakfast

Breakfast: At the hotel.

Morning: Transfer to the airport for your return home. Or, begin your *Milan, the Lakes & the Piedmont* post-trip extension.

END YOUR ADVENTURE WITH AN OPTIONAL POST-TRIP EXTENSION

5 nights in *Milan, the Lakes & the Piedmont*

Day 1 Malta • Fly to Milan, Italy • Orta

Day 2 Explore Lake Orta • Sacro Monte • San Giulio Island

Day 3 Lake Orta • Explore Santa Maria Maggiore • Optional *Centovalli Train* tour

Day 4 Lake Orta • Explore Stresa • Borromean Islands

Day 5 Lake Orta • Explore Macugnaga village

Day 6 Lake Orta • Milan • Return to U.S.

OPTIONAL TOURS

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

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

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

Pompeii

(Day 9 \$120 per person)

Totally buried by the eruption of Mount Vesuvius in AD 79, and not re-discovered until the 17th century, Pompeii's antiquities offer an unparalleled view of Roman life. Accompanied by an expert guide, you'll explore Pompeii's most significant sites and learn how its people lived, built homes, and conducted business.

PRE-TRIP

Tuscany: Florence & Siena

INCLUDED IN YOUR PRICE

- » 5 nights accommodations
- » 8 meals: 5 breakfasts, 2 lunches, and 1 dinner
- » Guided tours with personal headsets: Florence • Chianti winery visit • Siena • Pienza
- » Services of our local Trip Experience Leader
- » Gratuities for local guides and motorcoach drivers
- » All transfers

PRE-TRIP EXTENSION ITINERARY

Trace history's footsteps back to the birth of the Renaissance, as the world's most influential dreamers—artistic, philosophical, and political—descended upon what we now know as Tuscany. Behold artistic treasures, from the Ponte Vecchio to the Duomo, within iconic Florence, and then discover Siena, Florence's ancient rival to the south and home to some of the most splendid examples of Gothic architecture in all of Italy.

Day 1 Depart U.S.

Depart the U.S. today for Florence, Italy.

Day 2 Arrive Florence, Italy

- Destination: Florence
- Accommodations: Hotel Albani Firenze or similar

Afternoon: You'll be greeted at the airport and assisted to your hotel. Later, we meet our Trip Experience Leader and our fellow travelers for a Welcome Drink and briefing.

Dinner: On your own. Perhaps you'll seek out a taste of *bistecca alla Fiorentina*, a t-bone steak typically grilled with chestnuts and left pink in the middle.

Evening: You are free to indulge in the vibrant nightlife of Florence, which ranges from lively music to quiet elegance. Your Trip Experience Leader can help refine your choices.

Day 3 Explore Florence

- Destination: Florence
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Dinner
- Accommodations: Hotel Albani Firenze or similar

Breakfast: At the hotel.

Morning: We meet our Trip Experience Leader in the lobby for a welcome briefing. Then, we embark on a walking tour of Florence with an expert local guide and marvel at the birthplace of the Renaissance.

A former Roman city, Florence grew in size, significance, and power during medieval times—becoming one of Europe’s most important cities along the way. Between the 14th and 16th centuries, many of Europe’s biggest names—in literature, art, architecture, finance, and more—had ties to Florence, and when that city began to demonstrate renewed interests in the Classical Era, much of Europe followed suit. Today, historians note the Renaissance as the period of transition between the Medieval Era and Early Modern Europe.

Our walking tour will introduce us to some of the highlights of this city, including one of its most recognizable features—the beautiful Cattedrale di Santa Maria del Fiore, known more commonly as the Duomo. When we witness this cathedral’s exterior, we’ll see why it’s regarded as one of the most magnificent structures in the city: Engineer Filippo Brunelleschi crowned the building with the world’s largest brick dome, an architectural marvel still celebrated for its beauty and innovation today.

Our tour continues with a stroll through Piazza Signoria, the busy square that was the ancient center of city life during the days of the Medici. It’s here where Michelangelo’s famous statue of *David* first stood, casting a stern glare toward Rome. While we’ll see a statue here today, note that it’s a replica, placed in 1910—the original sculpture was relocated to an interior location within the Accademia Gallery in 1873.

Lunch: On your own—cafés, *trattorias*, steakhouses, sandwich shops, and more abound in this central part of the city.

Afternoon: Free for your own discoveries—ask your Trip Experience Leader for recommendations. Perhaps you’ll seek out the original *David* to see Michelangelo’s

work firsthand, or walk among Leonardo da Vinci’s inventions and designs in his namesake museum.

Dinner: At a local restaurant.

Evening: You have the freedom to spend the rest of your evening as you wish. Perhaps you’ll enjoy a nighttime stroll along the Ponte Vecchio or savor one of the city’s artisanal *gelato* flavors after dinner.

Day 4 Florence • Explore Chianti • Siena

- Destination: Siena
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch
- Accommodations: NH Siena or similar

Breakfast: At the hotel.

Morning: We’ll drive south to Siena, a journey that takes us through the storied Chianti countryside.

This is Tuscany at its most iconic: rolling, vineyard-carpeted hills, sun-dappled estate buildings, and small villages. Along the way, we’ll make a stop in the town of Greve midmorning to savor the view during a discovery walk and free time. Then, we proceed to a local wine estate for a guided tour of the wine cellars. We’ll also have time to ask the wine-makers any questions we may have about their craft.

Lunch: Enjoy a wine-tasting and light lunch at the estate.

Afternoon: We arrive in Siena this afternoon and check into our hotel. The balance of the day is free for your own discoveries—you might choose to relax in your room, or begin exploring Siena on your own.

Dinner: On your own—ask your Trip Experience Leader for recommendations. The city’s main square, the famous Piazza

del Campo, is lined with a variety of *pizzerias* and *trattorias* that should satisfy any palate.

Evening: Free to make independent discoveries.

Day 5 Explore Siena

- Destination: Siena
- Included Meals: Breakfast
- Accommodations: NH Siena or similar

Breakfast: At the hotel.

Morning: Today we set out to discover Siena on a walking tour of its Old Town, a UNESCO World Heritage Site. A rich and powerful city during the medieval ages, Siena's banking activities and trade in wool and textiles placed it in direct competition with Florence. While Florence continued to thrive, however, Siena's influence decreased after the 16th century, as it spent much of its energies on defense against foreign conquerors.

Today's Siena, however, still retains the air of the Tuscan Middle Ages, with some of the most splendid examples of Gothic architecture in Italy. The 334-foot slender Italianate tower of the Town Hall soars from the rim of the Piazza del Campo, an inclined, central square that is one of the most beautiful in all of Italy. And with automobiles banned from the city center, we'll be free to explore by foot during our morning walking tour.

We'll also tap into timeless cultural traditions here, as we learn about the city's 17 unique *contrade*, or districts. Siena's residents are shaped greatly by the particular *contrada* in which they live, and their fierce pride leads to twice-annual horse race festivals in which *contrade* compete for bragging rights and local glory. We'll learn more about these *Palio di Siena* festivals with a visit to a local museum.

Lunch: On your own. Your Trip Experience Leader will be happy to recommend a spot for lunch

Afternoon: Yours to do as you please.

Dinner: On your own. Perhaps you'll savor a local favorite, *pici all'aglione*, thick strands of pasta tossed with garlic, tomatoes, and white wine.

Evening: Free to make independent discoveries this evening. You may wish to rub elbows with the locals at one of Siena's many wine bars.

Day 6 Siena • Optional *Spiritual Landscape of Siena* tour

- Destination: Siena
- Included Meals: Breakfast
- Accommodations: NH Siena or similar

Breakfast: At the hotel.

Morning: Free for your own discoveries—ask your Trip Experience Leader for recommendations. Perhaps you'll explore some of the lovely palaces, dating from the twelfth to 16th centuries, surrounding Piazza del Campo.

Or, join our optional excursion to the 14th-century Abbey of Monte Oliveto Maggiore, which includes a journey through the Crete region. Behold vast hillsides dotted with cypress trees and farmhouses, as well as *biancane*, distinct clay formations that give bits of Italy a more desert-like feel, before visiting the monastery complex.

Lunch: If you join our optional tour, lunch is included at a local restaurant. Otherwise, lunch is on your own—you may wish to taste the city's signature Siennese soup, made from black cabbage, Tuscan bread, and cannellini beans.

Afternoon: Free for your own discoveries—perhaps you’ll explore the Siena National Gallery or relax in a local coffee shop. Those on the optional tour will return to Siena after lunch.

Dinner: On your own. Ask your Trip Experience Leader for restaurant recommendations.

Evening: Free to make independent discoveries this evening.

Day 7 Siena • Explore Pienza • Rome • Join main trip

- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch

Breakfast: At the hotel.

Morning: We transfer to Rome, where we’ll meet the rest of our group. Along the way, however, we’ll stop in the jewel of Pienza for a walking tour. We’ll learn how Enea Silvio Bartolomeo Piccolomini—known better as Pope Pius II—turned a small village into his idea of a utopian city, as well as a remarkable display of Renaissance-era architecture and charm.

Lunch: At a local restaurant in Pienza.

Afternoon: We’ll continue our drive to Rome, arriving in the late afternoon. Here, we’ll begin our main trip.

OPTIONAL TOUR

Spiritual Landscape of Siena

(Day 6 \$160 per person)

Discover Italy’s Crete region, a landscape of cypress-dotted hills, farm houses, and biancane, distinct clay formations that evoke desert comparisons. Atop one of the Crete’s hills, you’ll find the red-bricked Abbey of Monte Oliveto Maggiore, a 14th-century Benedictine monastery complete with a vast library, working pharmacy, and collection of sculptures and frescoes. Delight in the tranquil and transformative experience here atop the Tuscan hills, before an included lunch at a local restaurant.

POST-TRIP

Milan, the Lakes & the Piedmont

INCLUDED IN YOUR PRICE

- » 5 nights accommodations
- » 8 meals: 5 breakfasts, 1 lunch, and 2 dinners
- » Guided tours (with personal headsets) and cultural experiences: Domodossola • Palazzo Borromeo • Stresa • Macugnaga
- » Services of our local Trip Experience Leader
- » Gratuities for local guides and motorcoach drivers
- » All transfers

POST-TRIP EXTENSION ITINERARY

Make the most of your Italian sojourn by extending your travels to the Piedmont region of Italy, the country's Alpine north. Here, in the famed Lake Orta region, you'll revel in rolling patchwork hills and the snow-capped mountain peaks that stretch into the sky. Cap your discoveries in the quaint mountain village of Macugnaga.

Day 1 Malta • Fly to Milan, Italy • Orta

- Destination: Lake Orta
- Included Meals: Dinner
- Accommodations: San Rocco Hotel or similar

Morning: Transfer to the airport for our flight to Milan.

Lunch: On your own. You might like to grab something at the airport to enjoy during your flight.

Afternoon: Arrive in Milan and drive to your hotel in Orta, arriving in the late afternoon.

Dinner: At a local restaurant.

Evening: You have the freedom to spend the rest of your evening as you wish—ask your Trip Experience Leader for recommendations.

Day 2 Explore Lake Orta • Sacro Monte • San Giulio Island

- Destination: Lake Orta
- Included Meals: Breakfast
- Accommodations: San Rocco Hotel or similar

Breakfast: At the hotel.

Morning: Nietzsche claimed that one visit to Lake Orta changed his life, and we'll discover it for ourselves during today's tour. After a guided walk through the city, we'll pay a visit to the 16th-century Sacro Monte di Orta, one of nine northern Italian churches intended as pilgrimage sites, and a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

Then, we board a boat to San Giulio Island, a place of meditation where a community of cloistered nuns live in a Benedictine monastery. Stroll along pastel-colored buildings—a few of which have endured since the days of fourth-century Saint Julius, for whom the island is named.

Lunch: On your own. Your Trip Experience Leader will be happy to recommend a spot for lunch

Afternoon: Yours to do as you please.

Later, we'll reconvene with our Trip Experience Leader and fellow travelers at a local bar. While there, we'll meet with a local woman who will speak to life as a border patrol worker between Italy and Switzerland.

Dinner: On your own. You may wish to try one of the city's many *pizzerias* or *trattorias*.

Evening: You have the freedom to spend the rest of your evening as you wish—ask your Trip Experience Leader for recommendations.

Day 3 Lake Orta • Explore Santa Maria Maggiore • Optional *Centovalli* Train tour

- Destination: Lake Orta
- Included Meals: Breakfast
- Accommodations: San Rocco Hotel or similar

Breakfast: At the hotel.

Morning: We'll drive to the town of Santa Maria Maggiore for a guided walking tour.

The rest of the morning is free for your own discoveries. Or, join us on an optional *Centovalli* Train tour. Take a train from Santa Maria to Domodossola for spectacular panoramic views of this region's natural beauty before setting out on a discovery walk of the town. Domodossola, a village situated at the foot of the Italian alps, offers stunning mountain views in every direction.

Lunch: On your own. If you choose to take the optional tour, lunch will be included at a local restaurant.

Afternoon: If you opt to remain in Orta this afternoon, enjoy a hike of the “valley of the painters” in Val Vigezzo. This approximately

2-hour hike will take you through sprawling green landscapes peered down on by snow-capped peaks. Those travelers on the optional tour will return to Orta later this afternoon.

Dinner: On your own. Ask your Trip Experience Leader for restaurant recommendations.

Evening: Free to make independent discoveries this evening. In the mood for a sweet treat? Perhaps you'll seek out *gelato* for dessert.

Day 4 Lake Orta • Explore Stresa • Borromean Islands

- Destination: Lake Orta
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch
- Accommodations: San Rocco Hotel or similar

Breakfast: At the hotel.

Morning: A boat ride takes us to the enchanting Isola Bella, a small island almost entirely occupied by a large palace, Palazzo Borromeo, as well ornate Italian gardens and a small fishing village on its coast. We'll take a guided tour of Palazzo Borromeo and have some free time to explore the gardens before setting off to Isola Pescatori.

Lunch: At a local restaurant on the lake shore.

Afternoon: Return to the mainland and visit Stresa, a lively resort town that looks out over Lake Maggiore. Our Trip Experience Leader will take us on a discovery walk, after which we'll have free time to explore more on our own.

Dinner: On your own back in Orta. Ask your Trip Experience Leader for restaurant recommendations.

Evening: Free to make independent discoveries this evening. Perhaps you'll seek out a glass of *vino* at a local bar.

Day 5 Lake Orta • Explore Macugnaga village

- Destination: Lake Orta
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Dinner
- Accommodations: San Rocco Hotel or similar

Breakfast: At the hotel.

Morning: We'll drive to the mountain village of Macugnaga, following a scenic route through picturesque alpine valleys. Our journey take us to the foot of Monte Rosa, the second-largest mountain in all of Europe. Here, Macugnaga is perched along the Valle Anzasca. When we arrive, we'll embark on an approximately 2-hour hike led by our Trip Experience Leader toward Macugnaga's old town. We'll walk along dirt trails flanked by verdant trees, taking in the remnants of centuries-old communities—like the German Walsers, who once inhabited the Alps and the fringes of Italy and Austria.

Lunch: On your own in Macugnaga's old town—ask your Trip Experience Leader for local restaurant recommendations.

Afternoon: Return to Orta in the mid-afternoon, where you'll have some free time to make last-minute discoveries.

Dinner: We enjoy a Farewell Dinner tonight at a local restaurant.

Evening: You have the freedom to spend the rest of your evening as you wish.

Day 6 Lake Orta • Milan • Return to U.S.

- Included Meals: Breakfast

Breakfast: At the hotel.

Morning: Transfer to Milan for your flight home.

OPTIONAL TOUR

Centovalli Train

(Day 3 \$160 per person)

Hop aboard a train on the Domodossola-Locarno railway, otherwise known as the Centovalli train. During this ride, you'll enjoy unparalleled views of the area including sprawling greenery, dramatic valleys, and snow-capped mountain ranges as far as the eye can see.

YOUR MEDITERRANEAN SMALL SHIP

Small Ship Adventures aboard our privately owned, award-winning, 50-passenger small ships

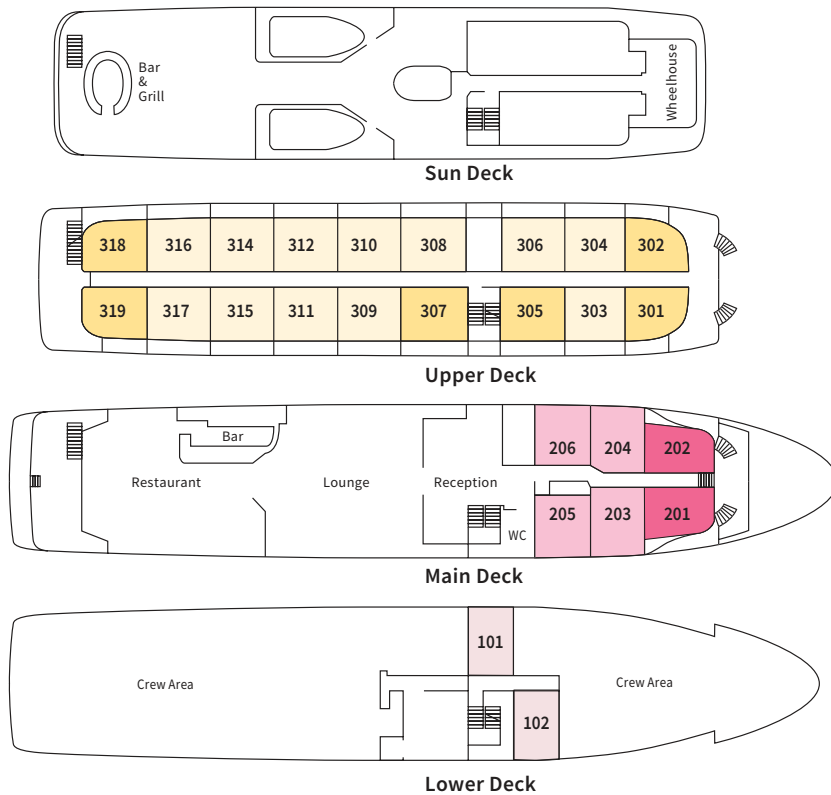
During your travels in the Mediterranean—including the Aegean and Adriatic seas and French and Italian Rivas—you'll be cruising aboard one of our 50-passenger small ships, rated excellent by 96% of travelers. The M/V *Athena*, M/V *Artemis*, and M/V *Arethusa* were designed and built to carry just two groups of 20–25 (average of 22) travelers, each with its own local Trip Experience Leader. These ships are the perfect size to navigate the islands and shores of the Mediterranean—and then slip into the smaller ports and harbors for the night, well away from the larger cruise ships.








SHIPBOARD FEATURES

- **Restaurant with single, open seating:** Savor regionally-inspired dishes or American favorites during all meals.
- **Comfortable lounge:** Relax with old friends and new, and participate in onboard discussions and lectures.
- **Complimentary beverages:** Enjoy house beer and house wine—as well as soft drinks—at any time of day while onboard.
- **Wireless Internet access:** Connect online in cabins and common areas. *Please note: Connectivity may be limited at certain points throughout your cruise.*
- **Outdoor common areas:** Relish coastal views from your seat on the Sun Deck—perhaps with a cocktail from the outdoor bar.
- **English-speaking crew:** Enjoy dedicated attention from our international staff throughout your voyage. Plus, all shipboard announcements are made in English for your convenience.

MEDITERRANEAN SMALL SHIPS



CABIN CATEGORIES	
	A Cabin with private balcony – 150-170 sq. ft.
	B Cabin with private balcony – 150-170 sq. ft.
	C Cabin with portholes – 160 sq. ft.
	D Cabin with portholes – 160 sq. ft.
	S Single cabin with portholes – 140 sq. ft.

Registry: Malta

Length: 193 ft.

Beam: 35 ft.

Draft: 10 ft.

Cabin Size: 150-170 sq. ft., with 2 single cabins of 140 sq. ft.

Number of Cabins: 26

Passenger Capacity: 50

Built: 2007

International crew: 21

Passenger Decks: 3

Group Size: 25 travelers, maximum, with 1 Trip Experience Leader

Stairs, no elevator

This ship complies with the latest international and U.S. Coast Guard safety regulations and is outfitted with the most current navigational and communications technology. It has retractable fin stabilizers to help reduce discomfort during rough seas.

CABIN FEATURES

- 24 double-occupancy cabins from 150-170 sq. ft.; 2 single-occupancy cabins at 140 sq. ft.
- All outside-facing with either portholes or a balcony
- Two single beds (convertible to one full); one single bed in single-occupancy cabins
- Wireless Internet access, closet, bed-side tables with lamps, desk with mirror, flat-screen TV, telephone, safe, mini-refrigerator, individually controlled air-conditioning, and dual electrical outlets
- Private bath with shower, hair dryer, and toiletries



Cabin on the Upper Deck of the M/V Athena

TRAVEL DOCUMENTS & ENTRY REQUIREMENTS

Your Passport

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

Need to Renew Your Passport?

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

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

Recommended Blank Pages

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

- **Main trip only:** You will need 1 blank passport page.
- **Optional extension to Tuscany:** No additional pages needed.
- **Optional extension to Milan, the Lakes, & the Piedmont:** No additional pages needed.

Visa Required

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

- **Europe (Italy, Sicily, Malta):** Starting in 2025, U.S. citizens will be required to fill out an online European Travel Information and Authorization System (ETIAS) visa-waiver to enter countries in the European Union. There is no confirmed start date for the ETIAS at the time of printing. The ETIAS will be valid for 3 years.

Traveling Without a U.S. Passport?

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

Traveling With a Minor?

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

Emergency Photocopies of Key Documents

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

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

Overseas Taxes & Fees

This tour may have taxes and fees that cannot be included in your airline ticket price because you are required to pay them in person onsite. All taxes are subject to change without notice and can be paid in cash (either U.S. or local currency). If applicable, you will receive a list of these fees with your Final Documents.

RIGORS, VACCINES & GENERAL HEALTH

Is This Adventure Right for You?

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

GROUP SIZE

- This adventure has a maximum group size of 25 travelers with a local Trip Experience Leader exclusive to O.A.T.

PACING

- 16 days, with a 3-night and a 2-night hotel stay and 10 nights aboard a 50-passenger small ship

PHYSICAL REQUIREMENTS

- Walk 3-5 miles unassisted and participate in 6-8 hours of physical activities each day, including stairs
- Good agility, balance, and strength needed for boarding motorboats and possible rough seas
- Not accessible for travelers using wheelchairs or scooters
- Travelers using walkers, crutches, or other mobility aids will not be able to board the the *Artemis* or *Athena*
- The *Artemis* and *Athena* do not have an elevator onboard
- We reserve the right for Trip Experience Leaders to restrict participation, or in some circumstances send travelers home, if their limitations impact the group's experience
- You may encounter animals on this trip. We make every effort to keep these encounters safe, however animals may behave unpredictably or dangerously at times. Please use caution when interacting with animals on this trip: Keep a safe distance, stay alert, and respect the animals

TERRAIN & TRANSPORTATION

- Uneven walking surfaces, including unpaved paths, hills, stairs, and cobblestones, which can be slick in wet or colder conditions
- Travel by 50-passenger small ship, 30-seat coach, and local tender

CLIMATE

- Daytime temperatures range from 50-95°F during cruising season

- Swimming is only recommended from June to mid-September
- The *Artemis* and *Athena* do not have snorkling gear on board

Steps to Take Before Your Trip

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

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

No Vaccines Required

Recommended Vaccines

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

Medications for This Trip

When you visit your doctor, we suggest that you get a prescription for an antibiotic medication for gastrointestinal illness. Our staff do not carry prescription medications of any kind, and a written prescription is required to obtain an antibiotic in Europe.

Traveling with Medications

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

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

Staying Healthy on Your Trip

Jet Lag Tips

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

Allergies

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

Water

- Tap water aboard ship and in the countries you visit is perfectly safe for drinking.
- Bottled water is usually for sale in hotels, cafés, food shops, and restaurants.

MONEY MATTERS: LOCAL CURRENCY & TIPPING GUIDELINES

Top Three Tips

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

Local Currency

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

Euro Countries: European Euro (€)

How to Exchange Money

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

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

You can also exchange cash at some hotels, large post offices, and money exchange offices. To exchange cash, you’ll usually need your passport and bills in good condition (not worn, torn, or dirty). New bills (post 2014) are best.

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

ATMs

When using the ATM, keep in mind that it may only accept cards from local banks, and may not allow cash advances on credit cards; you might need to try more than one ATM or more than one card.

Many banks charge a fee of \$1–\$10 each time you use a foreign ATM. Others may charge you a percentage of the amount you withdraw. We recommend that you check with your bank before you depart.

Lastly, don't forget to memorize the actual digits of your card's PIN number (many keypads at foreign ATMs do not include letters on their keys—they only display numbers.)

In most countries, ATMs are widely available in major cities. If you are in a rural location, it will likely be harder to find an ATM.

Credit & Debit Cards

While traveling, most countries and major cities will accept credit cards. Even if you don't plan on using a credit card during your trip, we still suggest that you bring one or two as a backup, especially if you are planning a large purchase (artwork, jewelry). We also suggest that you bring more than one brand of card (i.e. Visa, MasterCard, American Express) if possible, because not every shop will take every card. For example, although Discover and American Express cards are accepted in some countries outside the U.S., they are not widely adopted, so other brands will work at a much larger range of stores, restaurants, etc.

If you are visiting a country that does not commonly accept credit cards, they will be listed below.

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

Malta: Credit and debit cards are widely accepted in Malta, though some smaller shops may still require cash.

Chip Cards

Many countries have adopted credit cards that have an embedded computer chip. These cards are inserted into the reader instead of swiped. The card owner then authorizes the purchase using a PIN instead of signing.

Though this technology is common in the U.S., occasionally there are machines in other countries that can't read U.S. cards or the machine can read the card, but asks for a PIN. This doesn't happen often, and is nothing to worry about. You can usually resolve the situation by asking the cashier to let you sign. (If you don't speak the language, just mime signing on your hand.) If you are not able to sign for a purchase, such as at an automated ticket booth, you can use another form of payment, such as a debit card that has a PIN.

Notify Card Providers of Upcoming Travel

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

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

On Board Ship: Two Separate Bills Will be Issued

- **Shipboard account:** This bill is for any on board purchases (drinks, souvenirs, etc.) and is calculated in Euros. This bill is payable at the front desk by cash or credit/debit card only. For cash, we accept only Euros. For credit/debit cards, we accept MasterCard and Visa. Other forms of payment, such as checks, Discover, and American Express are not accepted.
- **Optional tour account:** This bill is for any optional tours taken during the trip and is calculated in U.S. dollars. This bill is paid with your Trip Experience Leader (they will have you fill out a form) by credit/debit card only; other forms of payments such as cash and checks are not accepted. For more information on optional tours—including which cards we accept for payment—see the “Preparing for Your Trip” chapter.

***Please note:** Payments made by credit card may take up to three months to process. We ask that you use a credit card that will not expire until three months after your trip ends. Because our headquarters are in Boston, the charges may appear to be from Boston or might be labeled as “OPT Boston” (depending on your credit card company).*

Exchange Services

Due to international banking laws, we are not able to exchange money onboard the ship. If you need to obtain local currency, please see the “How to Exchange Money” section for helpful tips and information.

Tipping Guidelines

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

- **O.A.T. Trip Experience Leader:** It is customary to express a personal “thank you” to your Trip Experience Leader at the end of your trip. As a guideline, many travelers give \$10–\$14 USD (or equivalent in local currency) per person for each day their Trip Experience Leader is with them. *Please note that these tips can only be in cash. If you are taking any of the optional extensions, your Trip Experience Leader during the extension(s) may not be the same as the one on your main trip.*
- **Shipboard Crew:** We recommend a flat tip of \$16–\$18 U.S. per traveler, per day. You'll give this tip once—at the end of your cruise—and it will be pooled among the entire crew. **Policy Update:** *Due to international banking laws, we are no longer able to process crew tips on a credit card; crew tips can only be in the form of cash.*
- **Housekeeping Staff at Hotels:** We recommend \$1–\$2 per traveler, per day. (This is for hotels only; on the ship Housekeeping are part of crew, so you don't need to tip them separately.)

- **Included in Your Trip Price:** Gratuities are included for local guides and motorcoach drivers on your main trip, extensions, and all optional tours.

Time at Leisure

When you are exploring on your own, it's useful to know when to tip and how much, because local customs often differ from the U.S. Here are a few helpful guidelines for the most common services a traveler might use:

- **Taxis:** In Italy, tipping is not customary, but many locals will round up the fare and let the driver keep the change. But a 10% tip for helping you with heavy luggage is appreciated
- **Restaurants, cafes, and bars:** In Italy you may see servizio incluso and coperto on the bill which refers to a cover charge for use of the table, not an included tip for the server. It is customary to leave a tip of 5% to 10% for the server, depending on the quality of service. A tip of 5% can be appropriate in a café or a family-run trattoria, while 10% is more suitable at a restaurant. In Malta, a tip of about 10% is customary.
- **Public Restrooms:** Most public restrooms in Europe have attendants that take care of cleaning and supplies. It is customary to leave a small tip for them in local currency—so hold on to those coins! Some restrooms are pay-toilets; you pay the staff at the entrance to the restroom or drop the appropriate coin into the slot on the stall door. Many restaurants, cafes, and shops offer only pay-toilets or reserve their restrooms for patrons only.

AIR, OPTIONAL TOURS & STAYING IN TOUCH

Land Only Travelers & Personalized Air

Quick Definitions

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

Air Inclusive Travelers

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

- **U.S. Departure:** If you are among a group of ten or more travelers who depart the U.S. from your international gateway city, it is our goal to have an O.A.T. 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. If you are flying domestically before your international flight, the representative will be stationed at the check-in counter for your departing international flight, not at the domestic arrival gate.
- **U.S. Return:** If you are among a group of ten or more travelers who return to the same U.S. gateway city, an O.A.T. 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 Representative waiting to assist your group. In rare instances, unforeseen circumstances may prevent this service.

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

Airport Transfers Can Be Purchased

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

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

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

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

Optional Tours

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

What You Need to Know

- All optional tours are subject to change and availability.
- Optional tours that are reserved with your Trip Experience Leader can be paid for using credit/debit cards only. We accept MasterCard, Visa, and Discover credit cards; we can also take MasterCard or Visa debit cards as long as the card allows you to sign for purchases. (You won't be able to enter a PIN.)

- To ensure that you are charged in U.S. dollars, your payment will be processed by our U.S. headquarters in Boston. This process can take up to three months, so we ask that you only use a card that will still be valid three months after your trip is over. The charge may appear on your credit card statement as being from Boston, MA or may be labeled as “OPT Boston”.
- Your Trip Experience Leader will give you details on the optional tours while you’re on the trip. But if you’d like to look over descriptions of them earlier, you can do so at any time by referring to your Day-to-Day Itinerary (available online by signing into My Planner at www.oattravel.com/myplanner).

Communicating with Home from Abroad

Cell Phones

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

Calling Apps

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

Calling Cards and 1-800 Numbers

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

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

How to Call Overseas

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

Italy: +39

Malta: +356

Sicily: +39

PACKING: WHAT TO BRING & LUGGAGE LIMITS

Luggage Limits

MAIN TRIP LIMITS	
Pieces per person	One checked bag and one carry-on bag per person.
Weight restrictions	Varies by airline. The current standard is 50 lbs for checked bags and 15 lbs for carry-on bags .
Size Restrictions	Varies by airline. Measured in linear inches (length+width+depth). Generally, 62 linear inches is the checked bag limit; carry-on limit is 45 linear inches.
Luggage Type	A sturdy, fabric-sided suitcase with built-in wheels and lockable zippers is recommended.

TRIP EXTENSION(S) LIMITS
Same as the main trip.

REMARKS/SUGGESTIONS
<p>One suitcase and one carry-on bag per person: Due to the space limitations on bus transfers, you'll be restricted to one suitcase and one carry-on bag per person. This is to ensure that we have room for everyone's luggage. We ask that you abide by this limit to avoid inconveniencing your fellow travelers and prevent additional airlines luggage fees (which are your responsibility). Most airlines now charge to check more than one suitcase per person for flights to Europe and other international flights.</p> <p>Luggage rules: Luggage rules and limits are set by governmental and airline policy. Enforcement of the rules may include spot checks or may be inconsistent. However one thing is the same across the board: If you are found to have oversized or overweight luggage, you will be subject to additional fees, to be assessed by—and paid to—the airline in question.</p>

Don't Forget:

- **These luggage limits may change.** If the airline(s) notify us of any changes, we will include an update in your Final Documents booklet.

- It's a good idea to reconfirm baggage restrictions and fees directly with the airline a week or so prior to departure. For your convenience, we maintain a list of the toll-free numbers for the most common airlines on our website in the FAQ section.
- **Baggage fees are not included in your trip price;** they are payable directly to the airlines.

Your Luggage

Checked Luggage

Consider a duffel bag or soft-sided suitcase. Look for one with heavy nylon fabric, wrap-around handles, built-in wheels, and a heavy duty lockable zipper. Due to space limitations on our motorcoaches, 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.

Carry-on Bag

You are allowed one carry-on bag per person. We suggest a tote or small backpack that can be used as both a carry-on bag for your flight and to carry your daily necessities—water bottle, camera, etc—during your daily activities.

Locks

For flights that originate in the U.S., you can either use a TSA-approved lock or leave your luggage unlocked. Outside of the U.S. we strongly recommend locking your luggage as a theft-prevention measure.

Clothing Suggestions: Functional Tips

- **Travel light:** A good rule of thumb is to gather together everything you want to bring; then take half of that. 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.
- **Consider clothing designed for travel, sports, or camping:** With modern fabrics, lightweight packing for comfort and protection through a wide range of weather is easy.
- **Bring 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.
- **Good shoes are critical:** Why? Because you'll be doing a lot of walking on this trip—between 3 to 5 miles a day—on a variety of surfaces: over uneven cobblestones, on rocky Mt Etna, up and down steep village streets, and on a moving ship (to name a few). We strongly recommend bringing at least **2 pairs of comfortable athletic-type shoes with good traction**, such as sneakers, trekking shoes, hiking shoes, or sport sandals (i.e. Tevas, Merrells, Keens, etc.). Trekking shoes are required for the Mt Etna visit as the gravel and loose rock surface can be very slippery; if you have difficulties with balance you may even want to bring a folding trekking pole.

Style Hints

- **Pack casual clothes:** Comfortable, informal apparel is acceptable at each of your destinations. At dinner, you will not need to wear “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.
- **Proper attire in churches:** To satisfy dress codes for Italian churches, men and women are requested to cover their arms and legs. No shorts above the knees or sleeveless garments please. 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.

Suggested Packing Lists

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

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

Recommended Clothing

- Shirts: A mixture of short and long-sleeved shirts to layer
- Trousers, jeans, or skirts
- At least 2 pairs of comfortable athletic-type shoes with good traction, including trekking shoes for Mt. Etna
- Light rain jacket/windbreaker with hood
- Sleepwear
- Socks and undergarments
- A jacket or sweater, depending on the time of year

Essential Items

- 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

- Compact umbrella
- Wide-brim sun hat or visor
- Pocket-size tissues
- Photocopies of passport, air ticket, credit cards
- Rubber or waterproof shoes

Medicines

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

Home-Hosted Visits

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

Electricity Abroad

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

Voltage

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

Aboard the ship, cabins are equipped with both 110-volt and 220-volt outlets.

Plugs

Aboard ship, there are both standard American plugs and Western European Type C plugs.

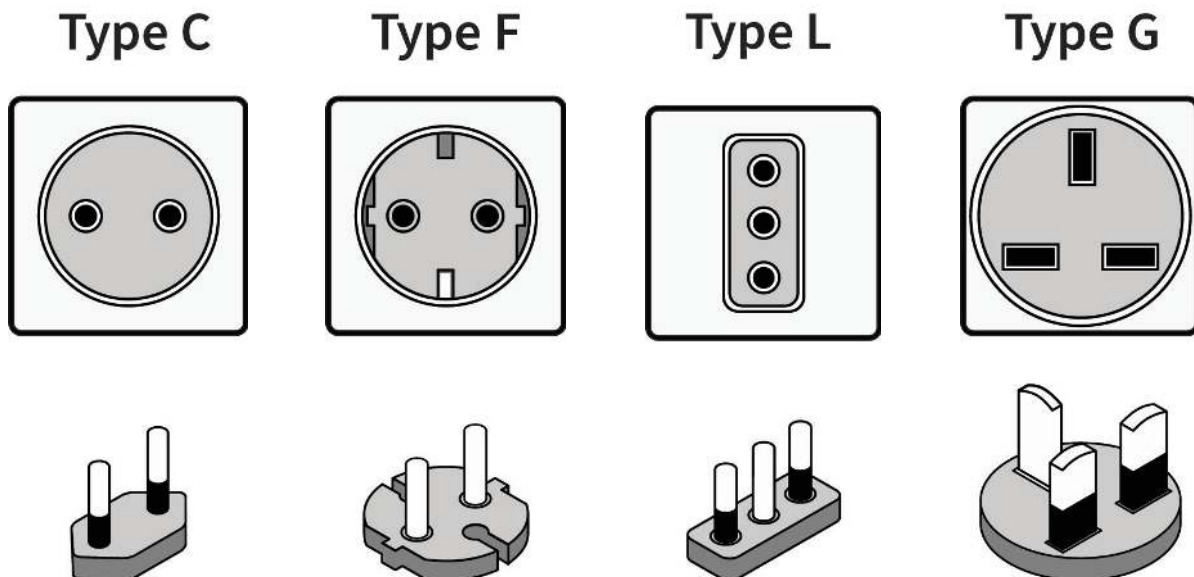
In hotels, the shape of plugs will vary from country to country, and sometimes even within a country depending on when that building was built. To plug something from the U.S. into a local socket you'll need an adapter that fits between the plug and the socket. Because you'll be visiting multiple countries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

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

Italy: C, L, or F

Sicily: C or F

Malta: G



CLIMATE & AVERAGE TEMPERATURES

Rome, Italy: The city of Rome has a climate similar to that of Tuscany, with temperatures averaging in the 40s and 50s during peak winter months, and the 60s and 70s in spring and autumn. Winter rains can be heavy, but periods of sunshine are also common. Summer can be very hot and humid with average temperatures ranging from 65-85 degrees, but potentially reaching into the 90s, especially during July-August.

Malta: 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.

Florence, Italy: In Tuscany, the weather is very unpredictable in autumn and spring, in marked contrast to the settled sunny and hot weather of summer. Winter weather is generally moderate and wet. There are also possible cold spells with snow in December and January.

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.

Climate Averages & Online Forecast

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

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

MONTH	ROME, ITALY			VALLETTA, MALTA		
	Temp. High-Low	% Relative Humidity	Average # of Days with Rainfall	Temp. High-Low	% Relative Humidity (am-pm)	Average # of Days with Rainfall
JAN	69 to 38	76	7	60 to 49	80	17
FEB	73 to 38	72	7	59 to 49	80	13
MAR	80 to 43	71	7	61 to 51	80	11
APR	86 to 48	70	7	68 to 54	75	10
MAY	94 to 55	70	6	75 to 59	75	6
JUN	103 to 62	65	3	83 to 66	70	3
JUL	104 to 67	63	2	88 to 71	65	1
AUG	105 to 68	64	2	88 to 72	70	3
SEP	104 to 61	70	6	83 to 69	75	8
OCT	90 to 54	74	7	76 to 64	80	11
NOV	80 to 47	78	9	69 to 57	80	15
DEC	70 to 41	77	9	62 to 52	80	19

MONTH	FLORENCE, ITALY			SORRENTO, ITALY		
	Temp. High-Low	% Relative Humidity (avg)	Average # of Days with Rainfall	Temp. High-Low	% Relative Humidity	Average # of Days with Rainfall
JAN	49 to 35	76	6	55 to 38	--	14
FEB	53 to 36	75	7	60 to 39	--	13
MAR	60 to 40	72	7	65 to 43	--	14
APR	68 to 46	72	7	75 to 55	--	13
MAY	75 to 53	72	7	80 to 54	--	9
JUN	84 to 58	71	7	85 to 62	--	7
JUL	89 to 63	64	4	90 to 66	--	4
AUG	88 to 62	66	5	90 to 68	--	6
SEP	81 to 58	71	8	80 to 64	--	9
OCT	69 to 51	76	9	75 to 52	--	12
NOV	58 to 42	81	9	62 to 45	--	15
DEC	50 to 37	81	8	55 to 41	--	15

MONTH	SIRACUSA, SICILY		
	Temp. High-Low	% Relative Humidity (am-pm)	Monthly Rainfall (inches)
JAN	60 to 40	89 to 71	3.0
FEB	62 to 40	88 to 66	1.9
MAR	65 to 42	88 to 65	1.6
APR	70 to 46	83 to 62	1.5
MAY	78 to 52	75 to 57	0.9
JUN	86 to 59	67 to 51	0.4
JUL	92 to 65	62 to 46	0.2
AUG	92 to 66	66 to 48	0.6
SEP	87 to 62	77 to 56	1.4
OCT	78 to 56	86 to 65	3.9
NOV	69 to 48	89 to 68	2.2
DEC	62 to 43	90 to 73	3.4

ABOARD YOUR SHIP: CABIN FEATURES, DINING & SERVICES ON BOARD

M/V Athena, M/V Artemis & M/V Arethusa

Owned, operated, and staffed by us, these ships were designed exclusively for our travelers, and each features a similar layout. On the main deck, you'll find our reception area and the ship's library. For relaxation, the lounge/bar features inviting leather couches and soft chairs. Topside, a sun deck has classic wooden deck chairs for admiring the scenery. When it's time for meals, our large dining area at the stern features a single seating policy. While cruising, we'll enjoy daily breakfast and lunch buffets; sit-down dinners feature international and local specialties paired with regional wines.

Included features of your Small Ship

The Ship:

- Restaurant with single open seating
- Open Sun Deck for prime viewing
- Shipboard activities
- Smoke-free environment
- All shipboard announcements made in English
- Ice machine in the lobby
- Water fountains in the lobby

All Cabins:

- All outside cabins
- Layout of 150-163 square feet (24 doubles) and 120-135 square feet (2 singles)
- Private bath with shower, hair dryer
- Color TV with movies, and a bow camera for ship-front views
- Ample closet and dresser space
- Direct-dial telephone

An important word: While our ship features larger-than-usual cabins, please keep in mind that this ship is a coastal vessel, not large ocean cruise ships. Coastal cabins, in comparison, are relatively small, and ship amenities, in general, are comfortable but not lavish.

Cabin Assignments

You will receive confirmation of your deck and/or cabin category upfront in writing; it will be on your invoice and online in My Planner at www.oattravel.com/myplanner. However, your cabin number may not be assigned until you arrive on board the ship. (This is normal procedure for ships in many parts of the world, including Europe.) If there's no cabin number on your invoice or online, you can presume it will be assigned later and communicated to you when you board.

Dining

You'll enjoy fine cuisine and excellent views in your ship's dining room, featuring a warm decor of dark woods, rich carpeting, and white-linen and china table settings. Your ship's daily service includes breakfast and lunch buffets, and a more formal dinner. Our professional chefs will create unique menus for you that feature regional specialties. Included with both lunch and dinner are complimentary drinks; you'll be able to choose from house wine, draft beer, or a selection of soft drinks. In addition, a selection of other fine wines and beer is available for purchase, starting at approximately \$20–30 per wine bottle (prices vary according to vintage). Travelers may also bring a bottle of their own favorite wine to dinner to enjoy at their table. Should you care to avail yourself of this service, there will be a corkage fee of approximately \$10 per bottle, charged to your cabin account.

Please note that if you bring your own alcohol aboard, it can only be consumed in the dining room as described above, or in your cabin. Consumption of alcohol purchased outside the ship is not permitted in the lounge or public areas. We also offer complimentary coffee and tea throughout the day, available in the lounge.

Open-table, single seating for all meals: Each meal is open seating—reservations of any kind are not accepted. Dinner has only one designated time for its open seating, announced each day aboard ship.

Dining times: Dining times for all meals may vary depending on the day's sightseeing and sailing schedule, but in general, meal times are as follows:

- Early riser breakfast: 7:00 –7:30 am
- Breakfast: 7:30–8:30 am
- Lunch: 1:00–2:00 pm
- Dinner: 7:00 pm

Special diets & celebrations: Special diets, such as low-cholesterol, vegetarian, or gluten-free, can be accommodated, as well as the recognition of an anniversary or birthday. Please call us to submit your request no later than 45 days prior to departure. Religious dietary regimens, such as kosher or halal meals, cannot be prepared aboard ship.

Dress code: The dining-room dress code is casual, though most travelers dress nicely for the Captain's Welcome Reception and Farewell Dinner.

Non-smoking policy: The entire dining room is non-smoking at all times.

Embarkation/Disembarkation

On the day of disembarkation, your cabin will no longer be available after breakfast. You may sit in the ship's lounge or on the Sun Deck until disembarkation.

Headsets

During your trip, complimentary headsets (often called "whisper receivers") will be provided on all of your included and optional tours, so that you can hear better over ambient noise. If you use a hearing aid or have a strong preference for a particular type of headphones, we highly encourage you to bring your own headphones/ear buds with you. The plug size is usually the same as that used by smartphones, computer jacks, etc. Headsets will also be available during the pre- and post-trip extensions, but not on the transfer day to/from the main trip.

Wireless Internet Access

Limited complimentary Wireless Internet service is available on board the ship. If you want to use the Wireless Internet connection you'll need to bring your own device (laptop/tablet/netbook) — ships do not rent or loan these devices. Shipboard access is subject to the challenges of travel: ship location, signal availability, and usage volume on board will affect connectivity and speed. The ship's Internet connection demands a strong cell phone signal, which is unavailable in many of the areas we visit, and connectivity can be limited. You can expect disruptions of both long and short duration. You may be able to take advantage of available shoreside Internet cafes, or hotel access if available.

Laundry and Linen Service

Laundry service is available for a fee. Please note that neither self-service laundry facilities nor dry cleaning services are available. Towels are changed daily, but only at your request. (We use the international signal that most green hotels have adopted — if you want a towel changed, leave it on the floor or in the shower. A towel on the rack or hung up indicates you'll reuse it.) Bed linens are not changed daily. Fresh bed linens are supplied at the start of every cruise, and if the cruise is longer than two weeks they will be changed every 14 days. For cruises less than two weeks long, you'll keep same the same bed linens for the duration.

Medical Care

Our entire fleet adheres to stringent European safety standards. Ships feature fully staffed reception desks for most of the day (from 7:00 AM to 10 PM) and each cabin is equipped with an emergency call button available to alert the Captain.

On Board Activities

During your cruise you'll enjoy exclusive Discovery Series events, including group activities that relate to the region, theme dinners, organized discussions, and talks on upcoming ports of call.

Recreational Facilities

These include a sun deck, lounge, library, bar and dance floor. The bar is open from 9:30 am to 11 pm, and features both complimentary drinks (soft drinks, house beer, house wine, and non-alcoholic cocktails/beer) and drinks for purchase (spirits, alcoholic cocktails, bottled beers, and a selection of wines). Prices are in Euros.

Bicycles

We're pleased to offer complimentary bicycle rentals onboard your ship for use during free time, including all of the necessary safety gear, such as a helmet, brightly-colored safety vest, and a lock. Because there is a limited supply of bicycles available, they will be offered on a first-come first-served basis. For more information or if you are interested in using one of the bicycles, please speak to the Front Desk staff or Hotel Manager onboard your ship.

Telephone Services

To make telephone calls from the ship, you will be charged on your shipboard account on the last day of the cruise. Phone calls are directly from your cabin and through satellite, and are charged per minute without regard to whether or not it is a local, international or Calling Card based call. We advise you to use it only for an emergency, as this is a satellite connection and a very expensive service (for example, calls will cost about \$10.00 per minute).

Smoking/Non-Smoking Policy

All cabins are non-smoking. Smoking is permitted only outside on the sun deck. Smoking is not allowed anywhere else on the ship.

Shore Excursions

Included during your cruise are many sightseeing tours. Other optional tours are available for purchase. We will provide information on these optional excursions on your arrival. Please note that optional tours can only be purchased with a credit card or a debit card that doesn't require a pin.

Lost & Found

Any lost or forgotten items found on board the ship will be held for 90 days from disembarkation. After 90 days, all unclaimed items will be discarded or donated.

Ship Specifications

M/V Artemis

- **History:** Built in 2008
- **Size:** 193x35 ft
- **Capacity:** 50 passengers, 21 crew members

- **Layout:** 26 cabins, 3 decks; Elevator-no

M/V Athena

- **History:** Built in 2007
- **Size:** 193x35 ft
- **Capacity:** 50 passengers, 21 crew members
- **Layout:** 26 cabins, 3 decks; Elevator-no

M/V Arethusa

- **History:** Built in 2008
- **Size:** 193x35 ft
- **Capacity:** 50 passengers, 21 crew members
- **Layout:** 26 cabins, 3 decks; Elevator-no

ABOUT YOUR DESTINATIONS: CULTURE, ETIQUETTE & MORE

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

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

Italian and Maltese Culture

Encompassing landscapes as varied as the snow-capped of the Alps to the sunbaked vineyards of Sicily, it stands to reason that Italian culture would vary by region. But there are also many cultural influences shared by Italians everywhere, of course. And two of them are food and family. Italians place a great importance on *la famiglia*, and extended family members gather regularly for meals and celebrations. Lots of businesses in Italy are both family owned and family run, especially the numerous *trattorias* and *enotecas* (wine bars). And never underestimate an Italian's love of food. Many recipes are passed down through generations and they are deeply proud of their cuisine.

The region of Italy where the cultural variances are most noticeable—from language to customs and cuisine—is Sicily. Considering that Italy did not even exist as a unified nation until 1861 explains some of it (and might also help explain why Sicilians consider themselves Sicilian first, Italian second). But the real cultural differences have to do with geography. Due to its enviable position as the largest island in the Mediterranean, for thousands of years Sicily was subject to a succession of invaders—Greeks, Romans, Byzantines, and many others, each of whom left behind traces of their culture. While many of these influences made their way to other regions of Italy, the cultural pastiche that developed in Sicily included one key influence that never made it to the mainland—the Arabs.

Arab invaders conquered Sicily in the Middle Ages. Also known by Europeans as “Muslims,” “Saracens,” “Moors,” “Turks,” and probably a few more—Arabs ruled over the island for most of the 10th and 11th centuries. In the grand sweep of history, that's not a long time (Arab rule in Spain was twice as long). So how did Arab culture become so ingrained in Sicilian life, even to the present day? Most credit the Normans, because when they conquered Sicily in the 11th century to end Arab rule, they recognized the achievements of the Arabs—including many new crops and innovative agricultural methods. Unlike the Christian reconquest centuries later in Spain, which moved quickly to eradicate all traces of Moorish rule, a level of multicultural tolerance existed in the Normans' kingdom in Sicily. While Arab power was long gone, their cultural influences continued to flourish over the next century and half, time enough to gain a permanent foothold in many aspects of Sicilian culture. And it's alive and well in contemporary Sicilian music, dance, architecture, language, food, and more.

Arab influences remain just as strong in Malta. Like Sicily, the small neighboring island was equally vulnerable to foreign invaders throughout its history—including the Arabs, whose cultural legacy endures in elements of Maltese cuisine, language, artistic expression, and more.

Another cultural touchstone that distinguishes Sicilians from their mainland counterparts is the language. It's actually a very complex issue, but one can correctly say that Sicilians speak an entirely different language than the language spoken in mainland Italy. While some say that Sicilian is just a dialect of the Italian language, the consensus is that the vast differences in syntax, vocabulary, and grammar make Sicilian its own, unique language. It's also interesting to note that while most Italians cannot understand spoken Sicilian, most Sicilians can also speak Italian—although only a heavily accented version of it. Language plays an important role in Maltese culture too. Helping to instill a unified sense of identity to the people of Malta is their linguistically unique language. While the native Maltese language (or Malti) is spoken by the entire population of Malta, about 90% of Maltese also speak English, Malta's second official language. More than half of the people of Malta also speak Italian.

Religion also figures prominently in Italian and Maltese culture. While officially a secular state, Italy is deeply rooted in Roman Catholic traditions. About 80% of Italians are practicing Catholics, and Roman Catholic traditions are also reflected in numerous national holidays based on religious feast days, along with regional festivals dedicated to local saints. And in Malta, while many smaller religious denominations are represented on the islands, 95% of Maltese are also Roman Catholic.

Meeting new people while uncovering customs, traditions, and ways of life that differ from our own are the reasons why we travel, of course. During your interactions with the locals, there are no serious cautions to be aware of, but visitors to Italy may wish to avoid jokes about the Mafia, the Catholic Church, and the pope (especially in the presence of elderly Italians). And while you often hear Italians openly complain about their country or their politicians, that doesn't mean you should too. Italians are still very proud of their *patria* (homeland) and Italy's cultural contributions to the world. Due to Sicily and Malta's proximity to Africa, the refugee crisis and immigration are particularly sensitive issues. But in Malta, there is one topic to avoid, it's politics, something they take quite seriously. How serious? When election time rolls around, many Maltese establishments will put up signs forbidding any talk of politics inside.

One more thing you may notice while engaging with locals in Malta is how they tend to naturally talk loudly. And just like their Italian neighbors, the Maltese often talk with their hands and gesticulate wildly—even while driving. But it's not aggressive at all. People from Italy, Sicily, and Malta are just very passionate.

Hotel Courtesy in Italy

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

Taking Photographs

The etiquette of photographing people in most countries is about the same as it would be on the streets of your hometown. You need permission to take a close-up, but not for a crowd scene. Be especially polite if you want to photograph children or older women. If you want to shoot a great portrait, show interest in your subject and try to have a bit of social interaction first. Then use sign language to inquire if a picture is OK.

Please do not take photographs of military personnel, military compounds, or other official institutions/personnel (such as police). This may result in the confiscation of your camera.

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

Safety & Security

As you travel, exercise the same caution and awareness that you would in a large American city. Don't be overly nervous or suspicious, but keep your eyes open. If you are venturing out after dark, go with one or two other people.

Carry a one-day supply of cash, and your passport, in a travel pouch. Don't leave valuables unattended in your hotel room. Most hotels will offer use of a hotel safe at the front desk or an electronic in-room safe (for which you can set your own personal number). Please utilize this.

Pickpockets may create a sudden distraction. In any sort of puzzling street situation, try to keep one hand on your wallet or money belt. If an encounter with a local turns out to be long and complicated and involves money or your valuables, be very careful.

Italian Cuisine

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

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

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

- **Caprese Salad:** Thick slices of tomato and mozzarella flavored with fresh basil leaves, olive oil.

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

- **Tagliatelle al Tartufo:** Long ribbons of delicate tagliatelle pasta, swirled with warm melted butter, garlic, and decadently topped with black truffle shavings and parmesan cheese
- **Ribollita:** A bean and kale soup served with toasted bread. On the second day, the soup is cooked again in a pan with olive oil, hence the meaning “boiled twice”.
- **Gnocchi alla Sorrentina:** Potato gnocchi baked in a rich and delicious tomato sauce with bubbling mozzarella cheese and fresh basil.

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

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

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

- **Tiramisu:** A layered confection of sponge cake, mascarpone cheese, coffee and liqueur.
- **Delizia al Limone:** Sponge cakes filled and coated with lemon custard from Amalfi Coast
- **Buccellato:** A dessert made of a sweet and soft pasty with lots of raisins and aniseed. It can be shaped like a donut or oval, per the original recipe from Lucca

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

Sicilian Cuisine

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

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

Maltese Cuisine

Malta's mixed cultural heritage (with the influences of the Levant, North Africa, Greece, Italy, Britain, Turkey, and France), plus a steady influx of visitors from around the world, means that you will never lack for dining options here. But when it comes to traditional Maltese fare, here are some classics.

- **Stuffatt tal-fenek:** The national dish of Malta. It is a rabbit stew cooked with red wine, tomatoes, olive oil, onions, and bay leaves.
- **Torta tal-lampuka:** A Mediterranean fish pie with tomatoes, cauliflower, onions, garlic and parsley.
- **Bragioli:** The Maltese version of Italian braciola, thin, rolled beef steaks filled with ground meat, bacon, bread crumbs, and herbs.
- **Soppa tal-armla:** Widow's soup—made with fresh vegetables and garnished with **ġbejna**, a sheep's milk cheese.
- **Kapunata:** A stew similar to ratatouille with eggplant, zucchini, capers, and peppers.
- **Pastizzi:** A diamond-shaped pastry filled with ricotta cheese and perhaps a choice of peas, spinach, tuna, rabbit, or (around Easter) spinach and anchovy.
- **Imqaret:** A rectangular-shaped sweet made with pastry and date filing.

Rome in Brief

City Layout and Details

Via del Corso is Rome's principal street. It runs north to south with easy-to-remember landmarks at its end points. At the north is piazza del Popolo, with a central obelisk and trio of churches. East of piazza del Popolo (and north of piazza di Spagna) is Villa Borghese, the city's principal park.

Off of Via del Corso, about two-thirds of the way between piazza del Popolo and piazza Venezia, is Via Condotti, which runs east to piazza di Spagna—the Spanish Steps area. This is the city's chic shopping area. The southern extremity of Via del Corso is piazza Venezia. You cannot miss it because it is dominated by the massive Vittorio Emanuele Monument, referred to by locals as “the wedding cake” or “the typewriter.” Southeast of piazza Venezia are the Roman Forum and the Palatine Hill (the centermost of the seven hills of ancient Rome) and, more distant, the Colosseum.

To the west of piazza Venezia and stretching toward the river lies Old Rome, an area of narrow winding streets, aging buildings and, generally, excellent restaurants and charming cafés. Corso Vittorio Emanuele is the main boulevard in this neighborhood. Across the Tiber (Tevere) River is Vatican City and farther south is the mellow Trastevere district—for many people the most interesting and colorful corner of the city.

Evening Entertainment

As mentioned before, the International Herald Tribune is now printed in Rome and is available at most newsstands; it often lists major events in Rome, as well as the rest of Italy, in its Saturday “Weekend” section. Issues are usually one day behind the Tribune's original publication date.

In addition, the monthly Carnet di Roma, available at EPT tourist offices, is free and has an exhaustive listing of scheduled events and shows. The bi-weekly pamphlet Un Ospite a Roma, free from your hotel concierge if available, is another source of information, as is Wanted in Rome, available at newsstands.

If you want to go to the opera, ballet, or to a concert, it's best to go online in advance or ask your hotel concierge to get tickets for you. (The concierge is best if tickets are on sale at box offices only.) Here's a brief preview of entertainment possibilities:

Opera: The Teatro dell'Opera is on Via del Viminale.

Film: There are two English-language movie theaters in Rome. One is the Pasquino (Vicolo del Piede, just off Piazza Santa Maria in Trastevere). The other is the Quirinetta (Via M. Minghetti, 4—Centro storico). The daily film program at each theater is listed in Rome's daily newspapers.

Concerts: The new Concert Hall complex opened in 2002. It is called simply New Auditorium—Nuovo Auditorium (Viale Pietro de Coubertin).

Night Clubs: The best source for an up-to-date list is the weekly entertainment guide “Trova Roma,” published in the Italian daily La Repubblica.

Local Transportation

Perhaps the best way to sightsee on your own is to pick a part of the city or a specific sight that you especially want to see, go to it on the bus or Metro, then explore the area on foot. Remember: Many Roman pathways are cobblestone. Before setting out, be sure to don good walking shoes, preferably with thick rubber soles that will cushion your feet. Transportation route maps are sold at newsstands and ATAC information and ticket booths.

Metro: Rome's subway is called the Metropolitana, or Metro for short, and provides the fastest and easiest means of transportation in the city. The Metro begins operating at 5:30 am, and the last train leaves each terminal at 11:30 pm. (Fridays and Saturdays it closes at 1:30 am). A big letter M indicates the entrance to the subway. Tickets, which are good on buses as well, are available from vending machines at all stations. But you can avoid standing in line at stations if you buy single tickets or books of five or ten ahead of time at newsstands and tobacco shops.

The Metro has two underground lines: Line A—distinctive color RED—goes from the Battistini Station to the Anagnina Station. Important stops on this line are the Cipro Station near St. Peter's and the Vatican Museums, the Spagna Station (the Spanish Steps), the Termini Station, and the San Giovanni Station (the Basilica of St. John the Lateran). Line B—distinctive color BLUE—connects to Laurentina, stopping at piazza Bologna, Stazione Termini, via Cavour, the Colosseum, Circus Maximus, the Pyramid of C. Cestius, St. Paul's Outside the Walls, and E.U.R. The A Line intersects with the B Line at the Termini Station, which is also Rome's central train station.

Bus: Silver/orange, silver/green ATAC city buses (and several streetcar lines) run from about 6 am to midnight, with intermittent *notturmo* services on main lines throughout the night. Tickets are sold singly or in books of five or ten at tobacco shops and newsstands. When boarding a bus, remember to enter at the rear and exit at the middle.

Make sure you stamp your bus ticket: When you step onto the bus, you must stamp your ticket in the ticket machine. Any passenger whose ticket is not stamped faces a hefty fine!

Taxis: As in most cities, this is the most expensive way to get around. You can hire a taxi at a taxi stand or arrange for one over the telephone. The concierge can reserve a taxi for you, however you should be aware that the taxi's meter will begin running the minute the driver accepts the call. Use only the official white cabs, and be very sure to check the meter. There are supplements for service after 10 pm, and on Sundays and holidays.

Malta in Brief

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.

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.

Florence in Brief

Capital of Tuscany

From the Etruscans to the Romans to the Renaissance, the region of Tuscany is possibly the world's greatest repository of art, ranging from extraordinary paintings and sculpture to frescoes and architectural masterpieces. The region is a blend of rugged hills, fertile valleys,

and long stretches of sandy beaches that arc along the west coast of central Italy and fringe the pine-forested coastal plain of the Maremma. Visitors come in search of fine art, to explore the extraordinary countryside, to savor the simple yet tasty cuisine and wine, or enjoy the seacoast and islands. The cities and towns of Tuscany house a centuries-old heritage of culture and art that produced magnificent medieval cathedrals and the marvels of the Renaissance period. Florence is the most popular city, but many other cities are popular as well: Siena, Pisa, Arezzo, Cortona, San Gimignano and Lucca, and Volterra come immediately to mind.

City Layout and Details

Sitting astride the Arno River, Florence is a small city, best seen on foot. Most sights are within a brief walk, with about a half hour stroll separating those furthest apart. Restaurants are plentiful in the compact centro storico (historic center), a tangle of medieval streets and squares. The bulk of Florence, including the most popular sights are north of the Arno, with the Oltrarno, an old artisans neighborhood, on the south side.

In Florence (in the center and older sections of town only) private homes, some offices, and hotels are numbered in black (or blue), while businesses, shops, and restaurants are numbered in red. Numbers are sequential, but you'll need to pay attention to the colors as well, since 1(red) can be right after 6(black) and vice-versa. Newer sections of the city use the international system.

Created by tearing down the medieval city walls, the Viale is a traffic ring of wide boulevards that circle the city center. Roughly in the center is the Piazza del Duomo, and the Duomo itself. To the south you'll find the Piazza Santa Maria Novella, the train station, and by following the Via dei Calzaiuoli, the Piazza della Signoria near the river, where you'll find the Palazzo Vecchio and the Uffizi Galleries.

Or take the Via Roma, through cafe-lined Piazza della Repubblica, and continue down Via Calimala and Via Por Santa Maria to the Ponte Vecchio, the Arno's oldest bridge. To the east of Piazza della Repubblica you'll find Florence's main shopping street, the Via de' Tornabuoni.

North from the Duomo, Via dei Servi leads to the pretty Piazza Santissima Annunziata, while the Via Ricasoli leads to the Piazza san Marco, passing the Accademia Gallery (with Michelangelo's David) on the way.

Cross the Arno via the Ponte Vecchio, and continue along the shop-lined Via Guicciardini that runs toward Piazza dei Pitti and its museum-filled Pitti Palace.

Local Transportation

Walking: You can leisurely stroll between the two top sights, the Duomo and the Uffizi, in about 10 minutes. The hike from the most northerly sights, San Marco with its Fra' Angelico frescoes and the Accademia with Michelangelo's David, to the most southerly, the Pitti Palace across the Arno, should take no more than 30 to 45 minutes. From Santa Maria Novella across town to Santa Croce is an easy 20- to 30-minute walk.

Most of the streets, however, were designed to handle the moderate pedestrian traffic and occasional horse-drawn cart of a medieval city. Much of the historic center is closed to traffic, but taxis, residents with parking permits, and Vespas are exempt and crowd the streets. In July and August the cars, pollution, pedestrian traffic and heat can be difficult. Note also that the streets are mainly cobbled or flagstone, as are the few sidewalks, and they can be rough on soles, feet, and joints after a while. Florence may be a city of high fashion shoes, but a sensible pair of quality walking shoes or sneakers is highly recommended.

Bus: Florence's efficient bus system is readily accessible, but within the city center it isn't of much use. If you're interested in the suburbs it's a viable option, but for the central city walking is the best option. Tickets are 1.50€ (about \$1.70) and are good for 90 minutes, and a 24-hour pass is 4.50€ (about \$6.00). Buses make runs only on principal streets and the historic center is closed to traffic.

Tram: There are two new tram lines departing from the main train station. T1 runs from the Station to the outer neighborhood of Scandicci and T2 runs from the Station to to the Florence airport. Tickets are 1.50€.

Taxi: Taxis are expensive, and the city's one-way system forces drivers to use convoluted routes – making this the least economical way to get about town. The standard rate is .80€ per kilometer (a bit more than a half-mile; for a mile expect about \$2.00), with a whopping minimum fare of 2.40€ (\$3.00) to start the meter (and nearly double that at night and on Sun), plus a baggage fee of about \$.75 per bag.

Cuisine

Tuscan cuisine is known for its “noble simplicity.” A quick look into any neighborhood trattoria at mealtime, as they serve fresh, hearty fare to the locals, will prove that statement.

Much of the simplicity of Tuscan cuisine was born of necessity: the emphasis on fresh, local ingredients was a response to life's necessities for the common man. Wild herbs and greens were used in simple soups and no part of an animal went to waste. Tuscan bread, a rustic sourdough, did without expensive salt. As a result it went stale quickly— and *ribollita*, the vegetable soup that is thickened with bread, was born. *Panzanella* is a summer salad made from stale bread cubes (similar to French croutons), fresh tomatoes, basil and olive oil. Tuscans created dishes like *castagnaccio*, a cake made with chestnut flour (to avoid using pricy wheat flour), raisins, pine nuts, orange zest and olive oil.

Hardier stock was found in the hills around Florence: game, including wild boar (used in locally-made salamis and air-dried hams), duck and rabbit served grilled, roasted or in a rich pasta sauce, and fish from the lakes as well as seafood from the coast were staples in their season. Porcini, wild mushrooms, are another favorite, served in the fall after foragers have combed the woods around the city. You should not fail to add a glass of the local Chianti to any meal – it originated in those hills, as well.

Some of Florence's best-known dishes include:

- **Bistecca alla fiorentina:** a large steak from the Chianina region or Maremmana cattle. Grilled quickly over a hot, wood fire, it is served rare with a drizzle of Tuscan olive oil.
- **Porchetta:** suckling pig, stuffed with garlic and herbs, and brushed with a rosemary branch as it roasts.
- **Trippa all fiorentina:** tripe cooked in wine, tomatoes and herbs. Find it in the city's central market, called *lampredotto* and garnished with Parmigiano cheese.

Shopping: What to Buy, Customs, Shipping & More

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

Returns

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

Crafts & Souvenirs

Italy

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

Sicily

Among the most popular Sicilian crafts and gift items are ceramics, wine and food. You can find wonderful items in the street markets and groceries of Palermo, Catania, Syracuse and Taormina—capers, pistachios, olive oil, Marsala wine, Etna honey, and candied fruits and marzipan in a myriad of shapes and colors. Other popular souvenirs include brightly colored Caltagirone pottery, handmade jewelry and decorative items made from lava stone, old-fashioned lace, or hand-painted miniature Sicilian carts and puppets. Sicily is not a high-fashion

destination like Italy, though you will find some designer shops in Palermo and Taormina. A more iconic clothing item would be the traditional flat *coppola*, a hat similar to what we call a newsboy cap that is simple—but very stylish.

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

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 Mdina decorative glass, which has earned a reputation for good workmanship and attractive colors, finely worked filigree jewelry, and delicate lace, which has been the traditional craft for generations of the women of Gozo, who work in their own homes.

U.S. Customs Regulations & Shipping Charges

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

The top three points to know are:

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

DEMOGRAPHICS & HISTORY

Italy

Facts, Figures & National Holidays

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

National Holidays: Italy

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

01/01 New Year's Day

01/06 Epiphany

04/25 Liberation Day

05/01 Labor Day

06/02 Republic Day

08/15 Assumption of Mary

11/01 All Saints' Day

12/08 Feast of the Immaculate Conception

12/25 Christmas Day

12/26 St. Stephen's Day

Italy: A Brief History

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Sicily

Facts, Figures & National Holidays

- **Area:** 9,927 square miles
- **Capital:** Palermo
- **Languages:** Most people in Sicily speak both Italian (the official language) and Sicilian, a distinct historical Romance language.
- **Ethnicity:** Mostly Italian, with smaller groups of Romanians, Tunisians, and Moroccans
- **Location:** Italy is bordered by France, Slovenia, Austria, Switzerland and the Ligurian, Tyrrhenian, Ionian, Adriatic and Mediterranean seas.
- **Geography:** Sicily is the largest island in the Mediterranean Sea, located just off the “toe” of Italy. Sicily enjoys mountains in the north and east, a vast central plateau, and a fertile coastline dotted with sea-level resort towns.

- **Population:** 4,969,147 (estimate)
- **Religions:** Christian 80% (overwhelming Roman Catholic), Atheists and Agnostics 20%, Muslims estimated at less than 2%
- **Time Zone:** Italy is on Central European Time, six hours ahead of U.S. EST. When it is 6am in Washington D.C., it is noon in Rome. Daylight Saving Time begins the last weekend in March and ends the last weekend in October.

National Holidays: Sicily

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

01/01 New Year's Day

01/06 Epiphany

04/25 Liberation Day

05/01 Labor Day

06/02 Republic Day

08/15 Assumption of Mary

11/01 All Saints' Day

12/08 Feast of the Immaculate Conception

12/25 Christmas Day

12/26 St. Stephen's Day

Sicily: A Brief History

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

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

Attracted by the island's strategic location, the Greeks arrived in 750 BC and established colonies in Syracuse, Agrigento, Segesta, Selinute and beyond. Hellenic culture thrived, but the island became a battleground as the Carthaginians rose against the Greek interlopers. Beaten but not broken, the Carthaginians remained until the Romans drove them out in 211 BC. Rome made Sicily its first province, but never realized its dream of making it Rome's granary, as the empire was increasingly beset by corruption and war. In 965 AD, the Arabs arrived, bringing advances in agriculture, irrigation, art, architecture and land reform. Palermo was made the capital, boasting more than 100 mosques.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Events that Shaped the 20th Century

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

Italy fought with the Allies during the First World War, so why did they switch sides in World War II? When World War I broke out, Italy took a position of neutrality. In 1915, however, lured by expectations of territorial gains for the winning side (and a secret treaty they had signed), Italy’s leaders joined the Allies against the Central Powers. The decision to go to war was highly unpopular with Italians, especially since most of Italy’s troops were peasants forced to fight for a cause they didn’t even understand. And with some 600,000 killed and almost a million wounded,

they paid dearly. To make matters worse, any spoils of victory Italy assumed would be coming its way never materialized. During the peace settlement at Versailles, in fact, the Italian delegation was all but ignored by the “Big Three” (U.S., Britain, and France).

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

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

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

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

Mussolini’s support began to wane in 1935, with Italy’s invasion of the East African nation of Ethiopia. Since Italy had been denied territorial gains after the “betrayal by the Allies” at Versailles (like Germany’s “stab in the back,” Italians called it a “mutilated victory”), now he would just take it. Mussolini’s support took another hit when he provided aid to fascist forces in Spain’s civil war. As other European leaders abandoned him, Mussolini drew closer to another rising dictator, Adolf Hitler. And in 1939, Italy and Germany signed the Pact of Steel, an alliance that precipitated Italy’s disastrous involvement in World War II. Mussolini thought his power

and dreams of “empire building” would be strengthened by an alliance with Nazi Germany. Meanwhile, it was the Mafia in the United States—who still retained their strong ties to Sicily—who were the ones gaining power.

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

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

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

The mob/navy collaboration started off well, but New York’s waterfront covers a wide swath, and Lanza didn’t control it all. “Socks” informed the navy there was only one man capable of “snapping the whip in the entire underworld”—the imprisoned “boss of bosses” Charles “Lucky” Luciano. Even after six years behind bars, Sicilian-born Luciano still wielded absolute power on the docks. Using Meyer Lansky as an intermediary, the Navy contacted Luciano and they struck a deal—Luciano guaranteed the full cooperation of his organization in providing intelligence to the Navy for the duration of the war, and in return, the State of New York would commute Luciano’s sentence.

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

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

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

Planning is critical for a difficult operation like an amphibious landing, so U.S. Naval Intelligence once again turned to Lucky Luciano. From his jail cell, Luciano used his Sicilian contacts to see that the navy was provided with maps of the island’s harbors, photographs of the coastline,

and the names of trusted contacts in the Sicilian Mafia—who wanted nothing more than to see Mussolini crushed. Luciano even asked if he could personally join the fight in Sicily—his request for this potential public relations nightmare was quickly denied.

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

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

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

The U.S. government, sympathetic to the plight of Sicilians, encouraged the new Italian government to grant the island the autonomy they had long desired, which they did in 1945. As thanks for their help in the liberation of Sicily—and as a bulwark against any future communist leanings in Sicily—the U.S. army appointed local *mafiosi* mayors throughout the island and provided them with financial and other assistance. The Sicilian Mafia was soon restored to power in the post-Mussolini Italian Republic. They also kept their promise to Lucky Luciano.

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

Malta

Facts, Figures & National Holidays

- **Area:** 121 square miles
- **Capital:** Valletta
- **Languages:** Maltese and English are the official languages.

- **Location:** Malta is an archipelago surrounded by the Mediterranean Sea.
- **Geography:** Located about 60 miles south of the Italian island of Sicily across the Malta Channel, Malta's three largest islands—Malta, Gozo, and Comino—are the only ones inhabited. Numerous bays along the indented coastline of the islands make excellent harbors. The islands' landscape consists of low hills with terraced fields. The highest point in Malta is Ta' Dmejrek, at 253 m (830 ft). Although there are some small rivers at times of high rainfall, there are no permanent rivers or lakes on Malta.
- **Population:** 502,653 (estimate)
- **Religion:** Roman Catholic 98%, Other 2%
- **Time Zone:** Malta is on Central European Time, six hours ahead of U.S. EST. When it is 6am in Washington D.C., it is noon in Valetta.

National Holidays: Malta

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

01/01 New Year's Day

02/10 Feast of St. Paul's Shipwreck

03/31 Freedom Day

05/01 Labor Day / May Day

06/07 Sette Giugno

08/15 Assumption Day

09/21 Independence Day

12/08 Feast of the Immaculate Conception

12/13 Republic Day

12/25 Christmas Day

Malta: A Brief History

Maltese history dates back more than 8,000 years to Neolithic times. Around 5200 B.C., farmers arrived from Sicily. During the Megalithic era they built great temples from 3600 B.C. to 2500 B.C., many of which still stand. During the Bronze Age, another group arrived from Sicily and their villages, temples, and other structures differed greatly from those of the original settlers.

In the 8th century B.C., Phoenicians occupied Malta. Mdina is thought to be one of their main urban centers based on the discovery of Phoenician tombs there. During the 6th century B.C., Malta was annexed by the Carthaginian Empire, becoming an important trading post between Italy and North Africa. It fell to Rome in 255 B.C. Malta thrived under Rome. A close relationship was formed with Sicily, Latin became the official language, and Roman religion was introduced.

The island continued to prosper until the 6th century A.D., when it was incorporated into the Byzantine Empire. The Byzantines fortified Malta's defenses due to Muslim conquests in the region. But by 870 A.D., Muslims from North Africa invaded and after a weeks-long siege, they killed all the inhabitants of the Byzantine city of Melite. The Muslims who settled here during

the mid-11th century rebuilt much of the city. Under Arab rule, new irrigation techniques were introduced, locals were allowed to practice non-Muslim faiths (by paying a tax), the gastronomy expanded, and Arabic words entered the lexicon. The Arabic influence left a lasting impact.

In the late 11th century, Normans drove the Arabs from Malta and ruled the island as part of the Kingdom of Sicily. During this period, many people from southern Italy and Sicily migrated to Malta. After being bought and sold multiple times, Malta was joined with Spain. As the Ottoman Empire continued its expansion in the early 16th century, the Holy Roman Emperor Charles V (of Spain) feared a Turkish takeover of Europe. As a bulwark against this, he gave Malta to the Knights of St. John. During their 400-year reign, the Knights made Italian the official language and developed the island by building palaces, churches, and fortifications. They repelled the Turks in the epic Siege of Malta in 1565, despite being severely outnumbered. Following the Great Siege, the Knights founded Valletta, which remains the capital of Malta to this day.

With the Ottoman threat removed, the Knights grew powerful and rich, using their military skill to expand into surrounding areas, often using outright piracy. The Knights controlled Malta until 1798, when Napoleon kicked them out. But the French were quickly defeated by Britain, who invited the Knights back in 1802. In 1814, Malta became a British colony.

In 1921, the British granted Malta legislative control over local affairs, but held control over foreign and military issues. In the early days of World War II, Britain underestimated the strategic importance of Malta and left it undefended until June 11, 1940, when Italian bombers attacked Grand Harbour. With only three biplanes, Malta mounted a heroic defense. Soon, the island became “Fortress Malta,” a major haven for Allied aircraft and submarines. The Maltese people showed great courage and earned Malta the George Cross of Britain for heroism.

Malta finally gained independence in 1964 and in 1974, Malta became a republic. Malta was under the power of the Nationalist Party from 1962 to 1971, at which time the Labour Party took control of the government. The government has gone back and forth between the two parties and in 2004, Malta was accepted into the European Union. Malta’s economy expanded rapidly when Malta became part of the Eurozone in 2008.

Labour’s Joseph Muscat became Prime Minister in 2012, but his government was rocked by scandals including money laundering and a citizenship-for-investment scheme. It was reported by journalist Daphne Caruana Galizia. After her 2017 assassination, members of Muscat’s government were arrested and Muscat resigned. A January 2020 special election elected Robert Abela Prime Minister.

RESOURCES

Suggested Reading

Campania

Pompeii by Robert Harris (2003, Literature) A thrilling tale about a young man who discovers a problem with an aqueduct which threatens the water supply to Pompeii. He seeks to organize an expedition to repair the aqueduct near Mount Vesuvius, but faces challenges as he learns about the imminent eruption of the volcano.

Italian Days by Barbara Grizzuti Harrison (1989, Travel Narrative) Come along for one woman's journey from Milan to Calabria and discover Italian culture and what it means to live the "dulce vita," the sweet life.

Naples '44: A World War II Diary of Occupied Italy by Norman Lewis (1978, History) Norman Lewis describes the lives of those living in Italy under the occupation and the great lengths to which they went to survive. Despite the desperate circumstances, Lewis captures the true spirit of the people and the dignity with which they lived.

Tuscany

A Culinary Traveller in Tuscany: Exploring and Eating off the Beaten Track by Beth Elon (2006, Food) Combining travel and food, this book is half guidebook (where to eat in small towns throughout Tuscany) and half cookbook (recipes from those small towns).

Under the Tuscan Sun: At Home in Italy by Frances Mayes (1996, Memoir/Travel Narrative) The true-life story of a wealthy American who falls in love with a dilapidated farmhouse in Tuscany and vows to restore it. Unlike the movie, the book focuses a lot on daily life and the renovations process, rather than romance.

The City of Florence: Historical Vistas and Personal Sightings by R.W.B. Lewis (1995, Culture) A historic portrait with insight into the city's influence on modern Western Culture and its civil legacy from the Middle Ages. Includes commentary on the Arno, Duomo, Ponte Vecchio, Santa Croce, and other landmarks.

Within Tuscany: Reflections on a Time and Place by Matthew Spender (1992, Travel Narrative) Sculptor Matthew Spender, whose work was featured in the movie *Stealing Beauty*, captures the essence of the Tuscan people, art, and culture in this delightful travel narrative.

The House of Medici: Its Rise and Fall by Christopher Hibbert (1974, History) Portrays the Medici's personal lives and political squabbles, and captures the workings of Renaissance city-state politics.

Italy

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

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

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

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

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

Sicily

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

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

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

On Persephone’s Island: A Sicilian Journal by Mary Taylor Simeti (1995, Memoir) An American expert on Sicilian medieval and culinary history describes her life as an expatriate who splits her time between Palermo and managing her family’s working farm in the Sicilian countryside. The

book is filled with insights into Sicilian food, cooking, and customs; the corrosive influence of the Mafia; and the titular Greek goddess whose dual existence parallels Simeti's own life, and that of Sicily itself.

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

Malta

Return to Malta by Anne Fiorentino Pflug (2018, Travel Memoir) The author, a native Maltese, visits several locations that prompt personal memories, as well as the fresh impressions of foreign friends who are discovering her home for the first time.

The Knights Hospitaller: A Military History of the Knights of St John by John Car (2017, History) Traces the roots of this powerful and prestigious order from its humble origins as innkeepers and health caregivers for pilgrims to the Holy Land; to its consolidation as one of the wealthiest Christian military orders; to its present disintegration into numerous chivalric and charitable groups.

Empires of the Sea: The Siege of Malta, the Battle of Lepanto, and the Contest for the Center of the World by Roger Crowley (2008, History) In this New York Times bestseller, the author explores important moments in the decades-long battle between Christendom and Islam in Malta and the surrounding areas of Europe. Crowley, a respected narrative historian, delivers a gripping account of the brutal struggle for supremacy in the Mediterranean that reads more like a page-turning thriller.

The Religion by Tim Willocks (2007, Historical Fiction) This sprawling epic based on the Siege of Malta in 1565 vividly brings to life the clash between Islam and Christianity with Suleiman the Magnificent pitted against the Knights of Saint John the Baptist in their Christian stronghold on the island of Malta. Packed with graphic violence, intrigue, and romance, the book holds its own in the pantheon of great historical fiction.

Death in Malta by Rosanne Dingli (2005, Mystery) This story follows a novelist as he flees to Malta to avoid his crumbling marriage and seek inspiration for his next novel. He finds it when he discovers that a child has gone missing from his new village.

Suggested Films & Videos

Italy

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

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

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

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

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

Sicily

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

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

L'Avventura (1976, Drama) If you want to take a cinematic road trip through Sicily, this moody classic (directed by Michelangelo Antonioni) will transport you to Palermo, Messina, Syracuse, the Aeolian Islands, Mount Etna and beyond. Along the way, you'll be engrossed in the mystery

of Anna, a young woman who disappears during a Mediterranean yacht cruise. Her wealthy lover and her best friend set out to solve the mystery and begin their own liaison—which is not exactly a romance, but an attempt to dispel the ennui of their lives. Italian with English subtitles.

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

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

Malta

Simshar (2013, Drama) based on true events, this story follows parallel plot lines about a Maltese family on a boating vacation, and would-be North African migrants caught in the political crossfire between Italy and Malta as to who will take them in. Both parties become stranded at sea, with heartbreaking results. An Oscar nominee for Best Foreign Film.

The Battle for Malta (2013, Documentary) This highly acclaimed 60-minute documentary presented by British historian James Holland for BBC Two depicts the horrors Malta faced during WWII when more bombs were dropped on the tiny island than all of Britain during the Blitz. Available on YouTube

The Malta Story (1953, War/Romance). Pretty decent British war flick detailing the story of Malta coming under siege during the Second World War when both Allied and Axis forces realize how vital the island is to their supply lines—with RAF reconnaissance pilot (played by Alec Guinness) playing a crucial role in defending it from the advancing enemy forces.

The Maltese Falcon (1941, Mystery). We know that this great Humphrey Bogart mystery drama was entirely shot in America and doesn't have much to do with Malta, but it never gets old. Watch it again and consider its whole premise—a hunt for the jewel-encrusted Golden Falcon given to Charles V of Spain by the Knight Templars of Malta as a tribute for the islands.

Useful Websites

Overseas Adventure Travel

www.oattravel.com

Overseas Adventure Travel Frequently Asked Questions

www.oattravel.com/faq

International Health Information/CDC (Centers for Disease Control)

www.cdc.gov/travel

Electricity & Plugs

www.worldstandards.eu/electricity/plugs-and-sockets

Foreign Exchange Rates

www.xe.com/currencyconverter
www.oanda.com/converter/classic

ATM Locators

www.mastercard.com/atm
www.visa.com/atmlocator

World Weather

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

Basic Travel Phrases (80 languages)

www.travlang.com/languages

Packing Tips

www.travelite.org

U.S. Customs & Border Protection

www.cbp.gov/travel

Transportation Security Administration (TSA)

www.tsa.gov

National Passport Information Center

www.travel.state.gov

Holidays Worldwide

www.timeanddate.com/holidays

History & Culture

en.wikipedia.org

Useful Apps

Flight Stats

Track departures, arrivals, and flight status

LoungeBuddy

Get access to premium airport lounges around the world

Timeshifter

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

GoogleMaps

Maps and directions anywhere in the world

Triposo

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

Rome2rio

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

Flush or Sit or Squat

Find a clean toilet anywhere

Uber

Ride sharing around the world

Visa Plus and Mastercard Cirrus

ATM locations

Shows the location of the nearest ATM in your network

TunnelBear

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

What's App, Skype, or Signal

WiFi calling anywhere in the world

Duolingo, FLuentU, or Babbel

Learn dozens of foreign languages

Google Translate

Fast and simple translations

XE

Currency conversions

SizeGuide

Clothing and shoe sizes in all countries

Best Units Converter

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

Tourlina

For women only, it connects you with other female travelers

Happy Cow

Locate vegan and vegetarian eateries in 195 countries

Eatwith

Dine with locals all over the world

Meetup

Connects you with locals who share your interests

Skyview

Identifies constellations and heavenly bodies

Travello

Find travel friends on the road

ALIX for One

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

TripWhistle

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







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 Optional Extension  
 Cruise Route 
 Motor Route 

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 L. Maggiore
 Borromeo Islands
 Stresa
 L. Orta
 Orta San Giulio
 I T A L Y
 To/from Milan

TUSCANY EXTENSION

Florence
 Greve
 Siena
 Crete (Optional Tour)
 Pienza
 I T A L Y
 Tyrrhenian Sea
 Rome

MALTA

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from Edina, MN



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