

Overseas Adventure Travel[®]

THE LEADER IN PERSONALIZED SMALL GROUP ADVENTURES SINCE 1978

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



Italian Coastal Odyssey: Hidden Italy,
Sicily & Malta

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.

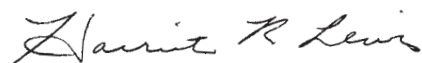
But your personal connections are not limited to your time on land—while onboard, you will enjoy the warm hospitality provided by our friendly, English-speaking crew, as well as the camaraderie of your fellow American travelers. Whether you travel with a partner, sister, friend, or independently, you 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

CONTENTS

ITALIAN COASTAL ODYSSEY: HIDDEN ITALY, SICILY & MALTA

Your Adventure at a Glance:	
Where You're Going, What it Costs, and What's Included	4
Your Detailed Day-To-Day Itinerary	6
Pre-Trip Extension	25
Post-Trip Extension	29
Deck Plans	33

ESSENTIAL TRAVEL INFORMATION

Travel Documents & Entry Requirements ...	35
Rigors, Vaccines & General Health	37
Money Matters: Local Currency & Tipping Guidelines	40
Air, Optional Tours & Staying in Touch	44
Packing: What to Bring & Luggage Limits ...	47
Climate & Average Temperatures	52
Aboard Your Ship: Cabin Features, Dining & Services on Board	55

ABOUT YOUR DESTINATIONS: CULTURE, ETIQUETTE & MORE

Italian and Maltese Culture	60
Shopping: What to Buy, Customs, Shipping & More	69

DEMOGRAPHICS & HISTORY

Italy	72
Sicily	74
Malta	79
Slovenia	81

RESOURCES

Suggested Reading	84
Suggested Films & Videos	87
Useful Websites	90
Useful Apps	91



Trulli houses, Alberobello, Italy

Italian Coastal Odyssey: Hidden Italy, Sicily & Malta Small Ship Adventure

Italy: Rome, Pozzuoli, Sorrento, Salerno, Monopoli, Tremiti Islands, Ravenna, Venice | **Sicily:** Salina, Strait of Messina, Mount Etna, Taormina, Siracusa | **Malta:** Valletta, Hagar Qim, Vittoriosa, Mdina

Small groups of no more than 25 travelers, guaranteed

29 days starting from \$15,795

including international airfare

Single Supplement: **FREE** or \$1,995

For departure dates & prices, visit www.oattravel.com/rvm2025pricing

Colorful fishing villages ... tiny rugged islands ... cozy mountainside hamlets—there's so much more to Italy than its iconic cities. On this itinerary—which we've recently enhanced with additional time in Venice, Siracusa, and the Aeolian Islands—you'll be immersed in the lesser-known gems along three sides of the Italian Peninsula, Sicily, and Malta, all while traveling for 21 nights aboard our privately owned, **50-passenger M/V Athena**.

IT'S INCLUDED

- 27 nights accommodation, including 21 nights aboard our privately owned, 50-passenger M/V Athena
- International airfare, airport transfers, government taxes, fees, and airline fuel surcharges, unless you choose to make your own air arrangements
- 74 meals: 27 breakfasts, 22 lunches, 25 dinners—plus all onboard house beer, wine, and soft drinks
- 26 guided tours (with headsets) and cultural experiences
- Gratuities for local guides and 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.

Italian Coastal Odyssey: Hidden Italy, Sicily & Malta



ITINERARY SUMMARY

DAYS	DESTINATION
1	Depart U.S.
2-4	Venice, Italy
5	Burano • Embark ship
6-13	Eastern Italian Coast
14	Siracusa, Sicily
15-17	Valletta, Malta
18-20	Marina di Riposto, Sicily • Lipari
21-25	Western Italian Coast
26-28	Disembark ship • Rome
29	Return to U.S.

WHAT TO EXPECT

① ② ③ ④ ⑤ Moderately Easy

Pacing: 29 days, with two 3-night hotel stays and 21 nights aboard a 50-passenger small ship

Physical requirements: You must be able to 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/rvm

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, join a local family for a **Home-Hosted Lunch** in Sorrento, and taste fresh-pressed olive oil at a local mill in Alberobello.

O.A.T. Exclusives: O.A.T. is the only travel company to offer a small ship journey that reveals the undiscovered gems of both sides of the Italian peninsula. As you travel, you'll talk with local experts about **Controversial Topics** such as the devastating impacts of the Mafia on Sicilian life, and Venice's costly and scandal-plagued MOSE dam project. You'll also engage in two **A Day in the Life** activities to compare and contrast rural farm life on the Italian mainland versus the islands.

PERSONALIZE YOUR ADVENTURE

OPTIONAL EXTENSIONS

Ljubljana & Trieste: World War II to the Present

PRE-TRIP: 5 nights from **\$1,595**

Tuscany: Florence & Siena

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

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 **Venice** before your main adventure from **\$500** per room, per night
- Arrive early in **Ljubljana** before your

Italian Coastal Odyssey: Hidden Italy, Sicily & Malta

YOUR DETAILED ITINERARY

BEGIN YOUR ADVENTURE WITH AN OPTIONAL PRE-TRIP EXTENSION

5 nights in *Ljubljana & Trieste: World War II to the Present*

Day 1 Depart U.S.

Day 2 Ljubljana, Slovenia

Day 3 Explore Ljubljana & scenic boat ride

Day 4 Visit the Postojna Caves • Trieste, Italy

Day 5 Explore Trieste • *Foibe Massacres* conversation

Day 6 Trieste • Optional *Villages of Istria* tour

Day 7 Trieste • Winery visit • Venice • Join main trip

Day 1 Depart U.S.

Depart today on your flight to Venice, Italy.

Day 2 Arrive Venice, Italy

- Destination: Venice
- Accommodations: Palazzo Barocci or similar

Morning/Afternoon: Upon arrival in Venice, you'll be met at the airport by an O.A.T. representative. You'll then transfer to your hotel aboard a private water taxi. There, you'll meet your Trip Experience Leader, as well as travelers who took the optional *Ljubljana & Trieste: World War II to the Present* pre-trip extension, and enjoy coffee at a local bar.

Dinner: On your own—your Trip Experience Leader can provide recommendations based on your preferences. Perhaps you'll delve into Venice's seafood scene and try *baccala mantecato*, a popular fish-based antipasto.

Evening: You are free to return to your room to rest after your overseas flight, or you may venture out to experience Venice's famous bridges and dramatic architecture illuminated at night.

Day 3 Explore Venice

- Destination: Venice
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Dinner
- Accommodations: Palazzo Barocci or similar

Breakfast: At the hotel.

Morning: Following a Welcome Briefing with your Trip Experience Leader and fellow travelers, you'll make your way to the pier to begin the day's discoveries. The entire city of Venice and its Lagoon are a UNESCO World Heritage Site. A brief ferry ride will bring us to the heart of the city, near one of Venice's most iconic attractions: the Rialto Bridge. It's here that we'll meet our local guide and set off

on our walking tour. Your stroll begins at the nearby Rialto fish market, where we'll have a chance to interact with vendors and shoppers alike. Your tour continues past some of the city's most beloved sites, including the opulent Chiesa San Moise, noted for the elaborate sculptures that adorn its facade, and the Riva degli Schiavoni waterfront promenade. You'll also visit a local glass factory and museum, admiring the delicate creations and discussing the history of glass-making in Venice with the artists. Your walk concludes at the famous Piazza San Marco (St. Mark's Square), the center of Venice. The city's major attractions are centered here—including the Doge's Palace and the soaring *campanile* (bell tower) of St. Mark's Basilica—and it is one of the most photographed squares in all of Europe. You'll explore the gilded, mosaic-filled interior of the basilica as a fitting finale to the morning's tour.

Then, join your Trip Experience Leader for *spritz* and *cicchetti*, or a light and refreshing Italian cocktail and snack, in a popular local café near St. Mark's Square.

Lunch: On your own. Ask your Trip Experience Leader where to find an authentic Italian meal, a taste of home, or whatever cuisine you would like to enjoy. You might seek out *pasta e fagioli* (pasta with beans) and *fegato alla veneziana* (Venetian liver)—the city's most iconic dish.

Afternoon: At leisure. Your Trip Experience Leader will provide you with a ferry ticket that's good for 72 hours, so you're free to explore as you please. You may choose to venture to a different side of the city, visit the shops and cafés that surround St. Mark's Square, or return to your hotel room to relax.

Dinner: Re-convene with your Trip Experience Leader and fellow travelers for a Welcome Dinner this evening.

Evening: On your own. Perhaps you'll conclude your evening with a stroll through the peaceful neighborhoods surrounding the hotel, or take in the views from the waterfront.

Day 4 Venice • Explore Burano • Controversial Topic: The impacts of the MOSE Dam

- Destination: Venice
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Dinner
- Accommodations: Palazzo Barocci

Breakfast: At the hotel.

Morning: This morning you'll venture to the vibrant fishing village of Burano via water taxis. En route, your group may stop at a nearby café, where you'll have a chance to enjoy a leisurely cappuccino or espresso surrounded by locals.

Unlike the center of Venice, which is bustling with visitors from around the world, colorful Burano maintains a more relaxed, local feel. During your discovery walk this morning, which will take you past fishermen's cottages in a kaleidoscope of colors, you'll learn about the island's famed lace-making traditions. You may even spot local ladies weaving lace outside their homes. Your tour will conclude at a local restaurant.

Upon arrival, we'll engage in the **Controversial Topic** of the MOSE Dam project with a couple of local experts. Spearheaded in 2003, the construction of this highly controversial barrier has repeatedly been hindered by delays, budget overruns, and scandals, resulting in a series of missed completion deadlines. Nearly 18 years later, it is finally complete. Activists have been advocating for the long-term preservation of Venice, as well as for local business owners who are suffering as a result of the rising waters. To put this in context, Venice sees nearly 30

million tourists per year, while the permanent population of “The Floating City” is just around 260,000.

As we’ll learn during our conversation, the effects of the MOSE Dam project haven’t been exclusively positive. The development of the dam has been tainted by severe episodes of political corruption, pertaining to the costs (estimated at nearly \$7 billion), construction, management, and maintenance. The ramifications of building this dam are believed by many experts to be harmful and not nearly as effective as alternative systems employed by neighboring European countries like the Netherlands and England, which also contend with similar issues. Furthermore, from an environmental perspective, experts believe that the dam will have an irreversible impact on the lagoon, permanently damaging the seabed.

Lunch: On your own. Since you’re visiting an island, this is another good opportunity to enjoy some of the local seafood, from grilled fish to fresh prawns.

Afternoon: Following lunch, we’ll make our way back to central Venice by water taxi. You’ll have the remainder of the day to explore on your own.

Dinner: On your own. Your Trip Experience Leader will be happy to provide restaurant recommendations.

Evening: Free to do as you’d like. Perhaps you’ll enjoy a bellini at Harry’s Bar, where this famous peach-flavored drink was invented.

Day 5 Venice • Embark ship • Captain’s Welcome Dinner

- Destination: Ravenna
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner
- Accommodations: M/V *Athena*

Activity Note: When embarking your small ship this afternoon, keep in mind that the gangplank may be steep, and elevators are not available onboard. This Small Ship Adventure covers more than 800 miles, and includes long stretches of sailing, where rough sea conditions are possible.

Breakfast: At the hotel.

Morning: After checking out of our hotel, we’ll set out on a discovery walk through a traditional Venetian neighborhood with our Trip Experience Leader. Then, we’ll enjoy what is sure to be one of the highlights of your time in “The Floating City:” a gondola ride. Long, sleek, and manned by stripe-shirted gondoliers, gondolas are an evocative (and romantic) symbol of the city of Venice, when they were residents’ primary mode of transportation. Today, the modern-day *vaporetti* are a faster and more efficient means of getting around the city, but as we’ll see during our ride, there’s nothing quite like seeing Venice by gondola.

Our gondola ride will end at the Mercato di Rialto, a popular local market selling produce and fresh seafood.

Lunch: At a local restaurant.

Afternoon: Enjoy some free time to make any final discoveries in Venice. Then, we’ll make our way to the cruise terminal on Venice’s main island to board our small ship, where you’ll stay for the next 21 nights. The ship is staffed by a friendly, English-speaking crew who will be eager to welcome you aboard and show you to your room. After getting settled, you’re free to

explore the ship's common areas. The lounge is equipped with leather couches and chairs and a topside Sun Deck features ample wooden deck chairs for admiring the scenery.

Your Captain will conduct a safety briefing and an introduction to the ship's staff later this afternoon. At the conclusion of the briefing, your Trip Experience Leader will conduct the first in a series of nightly Port Talks. These informative discussions will give you an overview of the following day's itinerary and prepare you for the destination ahead.

Dinner: All dinners onboard will be served in the ship's dining room. This evening, we'll enjoy a Captain's Welcome Dinner to celebrate the discoveries ahead. As with all the dinners during your cruise, you are free to sit at whichever table you please. While the dress code at mealtimes is always relaxed and smart casual, some travelers opt to wear a day dress or slacks to the Captain's Welcome Dinner.

Evening: Your small ship will set sail for Ravenna tonight, weather permitting. You may choose to relax in the lounge, watch from the Sun Deck as Venice retreats into the distance, or retire to your cabin.

Day 6 Explore Ravenna

- Destination: Ravenna
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner
- Accommodations: M/V *Athena*

Breakfast: Onboard in the ship's dining room.

Morning: Your ship will dock in the industrial port of Porto Corsini this morning. From there, you'll transfer to Ravenna, whose monuments are a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Throughout most of the Renaissance and Middle Ages, Ravenna was a papal city, and its architecture and expansive mosaic work reflect that early Christian influence. You'll discover some of that mosaic finery when you arrive at the

1,400-year-old Basilica di San Vitale and the Mausoleo Galla Placida. After your visit concludes, you'll make your way to the city center on foot to embark on a walking tour with a local guide, during which you'll witness the city's highlights, including the tomb of writer Dante.

Lunch: At a local restaurant.

Afternoon: After lunch, a shuttle bus will be available for travelers who wish to return to the ship. Or, you may choose to spend the afternoon exploring Ravenna at your own pace. Strolling along the unassuming city streets, you'll encounter open shops, intimate cafés tucked into alleyways, and locals zipping past on bicycles. If the morning has whetted your appetite for more mosaics, seek out the collection at Battistero degli Ariani. You can also examine an array of artistic achievements spanning the centuries at the Mar, the city's fine arts museum. The last shuttle bus departs Ravenna for the ship late this afternoon.

Prior to dinner, you'll reconvene with your fellow travelers and Trip Experience Leader in the ship's lounge for a Port Talk about Pesaro.

Dinner: Onboard in the ship's dining room.

Evening: After dinner, you are invited to the lounge, where a local performance group will treat you to traditional *balera* music. Your ship sets sail for Pesaro late tonight.

Day 7 Pesaro • Republic of San Marino

- Destination: Pesaro
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner
- Accommodations: M/V *Athena*

Breakfast: Onboard in the ship's dining room.

Morning: Our ship will dock in Pesaro. This Italian seaside town that gave us Rossini and shaped the history of opera is a UNESCO World

Heritage Site. We'll then travel to the Republic of San Marino by bus. Make sure to bring your passport—you can even get a stamp from this tiny independent republic for a small fee. In one of the world's smallest states, our tour begins with a discovery walk along the cobbled, sloping streets of the Old Town, another UNESCO World Heritage Site. Explore the labyrinth of ancient lanes and discover the small shops woven throughout the city.

Lunch: At a local restaurant.

Afternoon: Free for your own discoveries—ask your Trip Experience Leader for recommendations. Late this afternoon, join your Trip Experience Leader in the ship's lounge for your Port Talk.

Dinner: Onboard in the ship's dining room.

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 8 Pesaro • Explore Urbino

- Destination: Pesaro
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner
- Accommodations: M/V *Athena*

Breakfast: Onboard in the ship's dining room.

Morning: Following breakfast, you'll drive to the university city of Urbino. Once a thriving hub for artists in the 15th century, Urbino was a direct rival of Florence during the Renaissance and still retains much of the architectural splendor of the period today. Its historic center, encircled by an expansive city wall of sandstone and brick, was named a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 1998. We'll enjoy a guided tour, including a visit to the Ducal Palace, which has one of the most impressive collections of Renaissance paintings in Italy on display.

Lunch: Enjoy local specialties at a farmhouse.

Afternoon: Return to the ship and prepare to sail to your next destination. Your Trip Experience Leader will conduct a Port Talk prior to dinner to preview the discoveries that await.

Dinner: Onboard in the ship's dining room.

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 9 Explore Ortona • Ortona in World War II conversation • A Day in the Life of an Ortona farmstead

- Destination: Ortona
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner
- Accommodations: M/V *Athena*

Breakfast: Onboard in the ship's dining room.

Morning: Our ship docks in the fishing village of Ortona. During World War II, the deep harbor here was of significant strategic importance—and we'll learn about the fierce battle that was waged over it during a conversation with our Trip Experience Leader. A walking tour will reveal a town reborn, dominated by the 15th-century *Castello Aragonese* (Aragon Castle) and the twelfth-century *Duomo d'Ortona* (Ortona Cathedral) and bordered by white-sand beaches busy with Italian vacationers.

Next, we'll experience **A Day in the Life** of a local farmstead. Below is a description of one of the three family-owned farms you may visit today.

When we arrive, the owner will be waiting to welcome us to their family's dairy farm. We'll accompany them during a typical day: touring the property and perhaps helping out with the chores. Later, we'll help prepare lunch with some of the fresh vegetables grown at the farm.

Lunch: We'll dine with our host and their family at the farm.

Afternoon: Following lunch, we'll help the family clean up before continuing with our tour of the facilities and getting to know our gracious hosts. Then, we'll thank our hosts and transfer back to our ship. After a couple hours of free time, your Trip Experience Leader will deliver a Port Talk.

Dinner: Onboard in the ship's dining room.

Evening: You may spend the night enjoying the amenities of the ship at your leisure.

Day 10 Explore the Tremiti Islands

- Destination: Tremiti Islands
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner
- Accommodations: M/V *Athena*

Activity Note: The Tremiti Islands visit will last approximately ten hours. Travelers will need to embark and disembark shuttle boats without the use of gangplanks or handrails. The tours include a mile and a half of walking over uneven, hilly terrain. Hats, walking sticks and walking shoes, and sunscreen are advised.

Breakfast: Onboard in the ship's dining room.

Morning: Our ship will dock in San Nicola, the historical heart of this archipelago, for a walking tour. A brief walk up the island's slopes, along its ancient fortifications, will lead to the hilltop abbey of Saint Mary of the Sea, where we'll enjoy sweeping views of the Adriatic.

A scenic boat ride from San Nicola will bring us to San Domino, one of the Tremiti Islands just 30 miles off the Italian mainland. Here, we'll embark on a short hike to our lunch destination.

Lunch: At a local restaurant, where we'll try our hand at pizza making.

Afternoon: Free for your own discoveries—ask your Trip Experience Leader for recommendations. Perhaps you'll spend the afternoon taking in stunning coastal views at one of the island's scenic beaches.

Late this afternoon, you'll join your fellow travelers and Trip Experience Leader for your nightly Port Talk.

Dinner: Onboard in the ship's dining room.

Evening: Enjoy a free night to enjoy the ship's amenities at your leisure.

Day 11 Explore Alberobello • Home-Hosted Lunch • Monopoli

- Destination: Monopoli
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner
- Accommodations: M/V *Athena*

Breakfast: Onboard in the ship's dining room.

Morning: Your small ship docks in Monopoli this morning. After breakfast, you and your small group will drive to Alberobello, where you'll begin the day's discoveries on a walking tour of the area. During our explorations, we'll witness the conical-roofed homes, or *trulli*, that line the hilly streets of this UNESCO World Heritage Site.

Then, we'll meet with a *Mastro Trullaro* or "Master of *Trulli*," a high-ranking community figure who carries on the knowledge of the distinctive construction of *trulli* huts. Historically, these structures were built using dry stone masonry, meaning without the adhesive power of mortar or cement. Maintenance on the huts is, therefore, highly specialized, requiring skilled carpentry that is passed down through generations. This technique cannot be learned in trade schools—the method is purely preserved in the mind of the *Mastro Trullaro* and his or her apprentices.

You'll have about some free time to explore more of Alberobello on your own before we return to Monopoli.

Lunch: We'll break up into smaller groups for a **Home-Hosted Lunch**. Whatever questions you have about life in eastern Italy, this is your opportunity to ask. Italians are known for their conviviality, and your hosts will be eager to share their culture with you.

At times, however, you may find yourself distracted from the lively conversation by another Italian specialty: food, which will be in no short supply as you share a home-cooked meal with your hosts.

Afternoon: Return to the ship. Enjoy time to relax and reflect on your cultural interaction today, or take advantage of the shuttle bus to and from Monopoli throughout the afternoon if you'd like to explore further. Your Trip Experience Leader will deliver a Port Talk before dinner.

Dinner: Onboard in the ship's dining room.

Evening: Enjoy a performance of traditional Italian dance and music onboard following dinner.

Day 12 Monopoli • Controversial Topic: The environmental issues of Puglia • Optional *Matera Troglodyte City* tour

- Destination: Monopoli
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner
- Accommodations: M/V *Athena*

Activity Note: Today's optional tour includes a 3.5-hour round-trip bus ride. Matera includes many pathways lined with cobblestones and up to 200 uneven stairs; this is the most physically demanding day of the trip and agility and balance are required.

Breakfast: Onboard in the ship's dining room.

Morning: Enjoy a day at leisure in the port of Monopoli. Perhaps you'll head toward the *Piazza XX Settembre* and explore the nearby local street market—a lively open-air hive of color and cacophony.

Or, join our optional *Matera Troglodyte City* tour to discover the ancient cave dwellings of Sassi di Matera—a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Located in the southern Italian region of Basilicata, Matera was awarded the 2019 European Capital of Culture title, an honor bestowed on a different city each year by the European Union to bring the continent's diverse cultures closer together.

Take a walk along Churches Road, so called for the stretch of the ancient stone houses of worship you'll discover. Then explore a path from the city to one of two original Sassi districts in the valley. Go back in time as you walk past quarries, ravines, and sculptured gardens, toward a network of small cave churches, crypts, and fortifications. During your tour, you may see the churches of San Pietro Barisino, Sant'Agostino, and Santa Maria de Idris, which overlooks scenic Sasso Caveoso valley. You'll want to keep an eye out for medieval paintings executed in fresco on many of the church walls.

Lunch: Onboard for travelers who have opted to remain in Monopoli. Travelers who joined our optional tour will dine at a local restaurant.

Afternoon: After enjoying a free afternoon or returning from your optional tour, we'll gather in the ship's lounge late this afternoon to learn about a **Controversial Topic:** The environmental issues impacting the region—especially its ancient olive groves. Italy plays a key role in Europe's production of locally grown food, alternative agriculture systems, and landscape preservation—a role that has recently come under threat. During conversation, we'll learn how the spread of

the deadly bacterial plant disease, Xylella, has impacted life in the Mediterranean—and share how residents of Puglia are working to combat it.

Later, enjoy our nightly Port Talk before heading to dinner.

Dinner: Onboard in the ship’s dining room.

Evening: Yours to do as you please. The ship begins cruising toward Otranto late this evening.

Day 13 Explore Otranto • Immigration in the Mediterranean conversation

- Destination: Otranto
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner
- Accommodations: M/V *Athena*

Activity Note: Setting sail this afternoon, your ship will pass by Italy’s easternmost point, where the Adriatic and Ionian seas converge. Out on the open waters, your ship will slip between Italy and Greece bound for Sicily—the southernmost destination on the Italian portion of your adventure. You’ll likely feel the ship roll as it completes its 150-mile course tonight.

Breakfast: Onboard in the ship’s dining room.

Morning: Awake in the pretty port city of Otranto in the far eastern corner of Italy’s boot heel. Once a strategic port during Roman times, today Otranto is known for its white, sandy beaches, famed Aragonese Castle, and eleventh-century Romanesque cathedral. We’ll pass by the castle today during a walking tour among the town’s highlights. Then we’ll visit the Constantine association, which is dedicated to helping marginalized women by providing them with work. Their mission is to improve the “knowledge and competency” of women in the community by teaching them to weave and create handmade textiles. You’ll have a chance to talk with the program leader about the work

she does and why she believes it’s important, and you’ll be able to meet the women participating in the program who are mostly marginalized due to financial circumstances. You’ll also see some of the instruments used for weaving including “jaw harps” and “double flutes,” and learn how they are used.

Lunch: Onboard in the ship’s dining room.

Afternoon: Our ship sets sail for Siracusa just after lunch, so we’ll enjoy an afternoon at leisure onboard. You may opt to relax in the lounge with a book, or take in the sea views from the Sun Deck.

Prior to dinner, take part in an exclusive conversation to discover how immigration is impacting Mediterranean countries. Your Trip Experience Leader will talk about the everyday realities of immigration in Italy, including the reasons refugees (often from Syria) flee their home countries, the dangerous path they take to get to Italy, and the mixed attitudes from native Italians.

Prior to dinner, you’ll reconvene with your fellow travelers and Trip Experience Leader in the ship’s lounge for a Port Talk.

Dinner: Onboard in the ship’s dining room.

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 Siracusa

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

Breakfast: Onboard in the ship’s dining room.

Morning: At sea as we approach the UNESCO World Heritage city of Siracusa, our next port of call. Perhaps you'll choose to relax in the window-lined lounge as Sicily comes into view. Our ship will dock just prior to our lunch.

Lunch: Onboard in the ship's dining room.

Afternoon: We'll disembark for a tour of Ortigia, Siracusa's Old Town. From white-washed ruins to cafés alongside bustling piazzas, modern life effortlessly blends with the timeless charm of southern Italy here, along the Ionian Sea. After our tour, you'll have time on your own to pursue your own interests before setting sail for our next port of call. Perhaps you will visit the Greek Theater, built in 470 B.C., or the Necropolis, dating back to 1270 B.C.

After returning to the ship late this afternoon, we'll gather in the lounge for our nightly Port Talk in anticipation of tomorrow's discoveries.

Dinner: Onboard in the ship's dining room.

Evening: Enjoy a Sicilian folk music performance.

Day 15 Explore Valletta, Malta

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

Activity Note: St. John's Co-Cathedral is closed on Sundays and may be closed on other days of the week due to holy events or public holidays.

Breakfast: Onboard the ship.

Morning: Today, we'll discover 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: Onboard the ship.

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

Day 16 Valletta • Explore Hagar Qim • Three Cities

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

Breakfast: Onboard in the ship's dining room.

Morning: Depart for 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. After exploring this remarkable site, we continue our explorations of Malta in the area known as “The Three Cities,” for the three historic fortified towns of Cospicua, Senglea, and Vittoriosa. On a walking tour, we'll 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: At a local restaurant.

Afternoon: Free for your own discoveries—ask your Trip Experience Leader for recommendations.

After returning to your ship late this afternoon, join your Trip Experience Leader in the lounge for your nightly Port Talk.

Dinner: Onboard in the ship's dining room.

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 17 Valletta • Explore Mdina

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

Breakfast: Onboard in the ship's dining room.

Morning: Today we'll discover 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. 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. During our tour, we'll also have the opportunity to sample pastizzi, Malta's most popular street food, at a local café. As we bite into these pastries, which consist of flaky dough pockets filled with cheese or peas, we'll likely spot locals doing the same.

Lunch: Onboard in the ship's dining room.

Afternoon: After lunch, relax onboard as we begin sailing to Marina di Riposto. Prior to dinner, you'll reconvene with your fellow travelers and Trip Experience Leader in the ship's lounge for a Port Talk.

Dinner: Onboard in the ship's dining room.

Evening: Free to do as you'd like.

Day 18 Marina di Riposto, Sicily • Explore Taormina • Controversial Topic: The Sicilian Mafia with a local expert & the son of a former crime boss

- Destination: Marina di Riposto
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner
- Accommodations: M/V *Athena*

Breakfast: Onboard in the ship's dining room.

Morning: Our ship docks in Marina di Riposto among sailboats and small fishing vessels. After breakfast, depart by bus for the resort town of Taormina where we'll enjoy a tour. Picturesque

ocean views, ancient ruins, and winding medieval streets come together in this Sicilian setting perched above the Ionian Sea.

Lunch: At a local restaurant.

Afternoon: Following lunch, we'll have about an hour of free time to explore independently before we return to the ship for our afternoon activity. We'll be joined in the lounge by two locals with intimate knowledge of Sicily's infamous crime syndicate. For the next hour, they'll discuss the **Controversial Topic** of the Sicilian Mafia (*Cosa Nostra*). 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.

We'll return to the ship late this afternoon, where we'll hear our nightly Port Talk prior to dinner.

Dinner: Onboard in the ship's dining room.

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 19 Marina di Riposto • Visit Mount Etna • Italian geology conversation

- Destination: Marina di Riposto
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner
- Accommodations: M/V *Athena*

Breakfast: Onboard in the ship's dining room.

Morning: Our ship remains docked in Marina di Riposto. After breakfast, disembark for our transfer to 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 insights into Sicilian history and culture—and we'll go a step further than many of its other visitors. We'll arrive at Monti Sartorius, a collection of craters formed during an 1865 casting, and embark on a scenic hike to behold views that open up to streams and valleys below.

Lunch: At a local restaurant in the countryside.

Afternoon: After returning to the ship in Marina di Riposto this afternoon, we'll be joined by a local expert who will provide context to the day's discoveries during an exclusive conversation on Italian geology.

After the conversation concludes, our Trip Experience Leader will conduct a Port Talk to prepare us for tomorrow's discoveries.

Dinner: Onboard in the ship's dining room.

Evening: Spend the night onboard according to your own agenda.

Day 20 Explore Lipari, Aeolian Islands • Salina • A Day in the Life of a farm on Salina • Strait of Messina

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

Breakfast: Onboard in the ship's dining room.

Morning: Discover the quaint charm of the Aeolian Islands, a small archipelago off the shores of southern Italy and Sicily. We'll tender to Salina by way of Lipari, the largest island in the Aeolian chain. 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 board a bus for 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 one of the local residents of the island.

We'll enjoy an immersive, hands-on experience that begins with a tour of our host's estate and garden, where we'll witness rows of shrubby caper bushes. While they may look like berries, capers are actually the buds of a delicate white-pink flower. They've been a staple in the Mediterranean for thousands of years; references to capers can be found in the writings of Aristotle, Hippocrates, and Pliny the Elder. They even make several appearances in the Bible.

Harvest season runs from May to August, and collection is done entirely by hand every eight to ten days. While farmers typically begin collecting capers before sun-up, we'll have the chance to pick a few of our own. If your visit does not coincide with harvest season, you'll pick other seasonal produce or plant crops for the coming year.

Lunch: We'll help our hosts prepare lunch today and then share a meal together. As we dine, feel free to ask any questions you have about their lives in Salina. You might also ask your hosts for other recipes so that you may indulge in traditional Aeolian cuisine when you return home.

Afternoon: Our agricultural education continues after lunch, when we'll head to the production facility to learn how to turn freshly-picked capers into the briny treats we enjoyed with our meal. After harvesting, capers are dried in a cool place to prevent them from blossoming. Once dried, the capers are sorted by size, then placed in barrels and heavily salted. This curing process lasts about a month, after which time the capers are ready to be consumed (or stored for up to three years). It's a laborious and expensive process, and production in Italy has been dropping off since the 1980s as cheaper North African products have become available. Nevertheless, Salina's capers are still considered among the best in the world.

As a reward for our hard work, we'll enjoy a glass of locally-made Malvasia wine. This honey-colored dessert spirit is typically sweet, with notes of apricot and peach. We'll enjoy ours with *nacatuli*—cinnamon-almond cookies flavored with citrus and Malvasia.

We'll bid farewell to our hosts late this afternoon and return to the port in Salina by bus. After tendering back to Lipari, you may wish to return to the ship, or spend some free time exploring the island with our Trip Experience Leader. Those who choose to remain on Lipari will be treated to one final culinary discovery: a cannoli-making lesson with a local chef.

Later on, you'll join your fellow travelers and Trip Experience Leader for your nightly Port Talk.

Dinner: Onboard in the ship's dining room.

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. Our journey will be significantly more pleasant than the crossing Odysseus experienced in *The Odyssey*. Homer introduced his hero to two mythical sea monsters: the rocky horned Scylla on the Italian side and a whirlpool, Charybdis, on the Sicilian side. With this context, the phrase "between a rock and a hard place" takes on new meaning.

Day 21 Salerno, Italy • Explore Paestum • Salerno in World War II conversation

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

Breakfast: Onboard in the ship's dining room.

Morning: After our ship docks in Salerno, we'll travel overland to Paestum, an ancient city in Italy's Campania region and a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

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 guided tour of Paestum, witness three well-preserved Doric Greek temples, which date back to between 600 and 450 BC, as well as the ruins of ancient homes.

Next, 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, and perhaps take the opportunity to watch the cheese-makers at work.

Lunch: At the farm, with dishes featuring the famed mozzarella.

Afternoon: Return to the ship for free time to relax or make your own discoveries in Salerno. Prior to dinner this evening, we'll learn even more about this city when a local expert comes aboard to lead a conversation about the Allied landing at Salerno during World War II.

After this conversation concludes, our Trip Experience Leader will deliver our Port Talk about tomorrow's discoveries.

Dinner: Onboard in the ship's dining room.

Evening: Following dinner, a group of musicians will come aboard to treat us to traditional tunes. Then, the remainder of the evening is yours.

Day 22 Salerno • Optional Pompeii tour

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

Breakfast: Onboard in the ship's dining room.

Morning: Free for your own discoveries—ask your Trip Experience Leader for recommendations.

Or, journey to Pompeii, a UNESCO World Heritage Site and one of the world's most famous archaeological treasures.

Early on an August afternoon in the year AD 79, 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 in the ship's dining room.

Afternoon: As our ship begins cruising toward Sorrento, pull up a chair on the Sun Deck to watch the colorful Amalfi Coast pass by. Our Trip Experience Leader will provide commentary during this scenic sailing. Weather permitting, our ship will drop anchor this evening so that we may take in sweeping views of the colorful seaside homes here.

Following this scenic sailing, gather in the lounge with your Trip Experience Leader for a Port Talk about Sorrento.

Dinner: Onboard in the ship's dining room.

Evening: At leisure. Perhaps you'll enjoy a nightcap at the bar, or take in views of Sorrento from a seat on the Sun Deck.

Day 23 Explore Sorrento • Home-Hosted Lunch

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

Breakfast: Onboard in the ship's dining room.

Morning: Disembark your ship and tender to the cliff-side town of Sorrento.

With its romantic location overlooking 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 some free time, we'll split up into small groups and set out 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, which may be a villa overlooking the sea or an apartment in the town center. Learn what it's like to live and work in this seaside locale as you watch—and perhaps help—your hosts prepare lunch. Sorrento is famous worldwide for a number of its locally-grown ingredients, and you may be lucky enough to sample some of them during your meal. Bright, citrusy notes of Sorrento lemons are used to flavor everything from pasta sauces and cakes to *limoncello*, the popular post-dinner liqueur. Tomatoes, too, are a Sorrento specialty, and they may show up on your hosts' table in the form of a classic *Caprese* salad or in a spicy *fra diavolo* sauce. And of course, this close to the sea, mussels, clams, and fresh fish are abundant as well.

Whatever you dine on, your meal will be seasoned with lively chatter—Italians are known for their warm hospitality, after all. Take advantage of this time together to get to know your hosts, ask them questions about their lives and customs, and maybe even share with them a little bit of what brought you to Italy.

Afternoon: We return to our ship late this afternoon and begin sailing toward Naples. Prior to dinner, join your fellow travelers and Trip Experience Leader in the lounge for your nightly Port Talk.

Dinner: Onboard in the ship's dining room.

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 24 Explore Naples

- Destination: Naples
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner
- Accommodations: M/V *Athena*

Breakfast: Onboard in the ship's dining room.

Morning: Our small ship will dock in Naples, whose historic center is a UNESCO World Heritage Site. On a discovery walk with a native resident, we'll explore this vibrant yet ancient city before heading to a local bar to sample *sfogliatella*, a shell-shaped Italian pastry. Our tour concludes at the Piazza del Gesu, where you can enjoy free time to pursue your own discoveries. Perhaps you'll delve into the city's millennia-old history at the national Archaeological Museum of Naples, discover Castel Nuovo, or stroll into the artisan workshops that dot the city.

Lunch: Onboard in the ship's dining room.

Afternoon: Yours to explore independently.

After returning to your ship late this afternoon, join your Trip Experience Leader in the lounge for your Port Talk.

Dinner: Onboard in the ship's dining room.

Evening: Enjoy a Neapolitan folk music performance.

Day 25 Explore Pozzuoli

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

Breakfast: Onboard in the ship's dining room.

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.

We'll embark on 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, our walk takes us past the Serapide Temple (which is actually a misnomer, as it is an ancient Roman market) and the local fish market. Our Trip Experience Leader will try to facilitate conversation with the shoppers or fish mongers here so we can learn more about the importance of this market to Italian families, restaurateurs, and sales people alike. After our tour concludes, you're free to spend the remainder of the morning exploring Pozzuoli on your own.

Lunch: We'll enjoy lunch onboard.

Afternoon: After lunch, you have the remainder of the afternoon to do as you'd like, whether that's relaxing onboard the ship, or heading back into Pozzuoli for independent explorations.

Prior to dinner, join your Trip Experience Leader in the lounge for your final Port Talk.

Dinner: Enjoy a special Captain’s Farewell Dinner tonight to celebrate your final night onboard.

Evening: Following dinner, enjoy a Neapolitan folk music performance. You’ll then have the remainder of the evening to spend as you wish.

Day 26 Gaeta • Disembark ship • Visit Ninfa • Rome

- Destination: Rome
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch
- Accommodations: Kolbe Hotel Rome or similar

Breakfast: Onboard in the ship’s dining room.

Morning: Say goodbye to your small ship as you disembark in the port of Gaeta. Then begin your overland transfer to Rome.

Along the way, delight in an included tour through the Garden of Ninfa. This 260-acre, English-styled garden, located about 40 miles southwest of Rome, was created on the site of an ancient settlement. Today it continues to feature a temple dedicated to the water nymphs believed to live nearby. Now an Italian natural monument, the garden has transformed the ruins of the village into a decadent oasis: Flora covers crumbling buildings and bridges, while the garden is crowned by the tower of an eleventh-century castle.

Lunch: At a local restaurant.

Afternoon: Arrive in Rome where you’ll check in to your hotel and have time for your own discoveries—ask your Trip Experience Leader for recommendations.

Dinner: On your own—ask your Trip Experience Leader for local restaurant recommendations.

Evening: You have the freedom to spend the rest of your evening as you wish. Perhaps you’ll see some of Rome’s famous ruins lit up at night, a gelato cone in hand.

Day 27 Explore Rome • Controversial Topic: The Catholic Church’s sexual abuse scandal in Italy

- Destination: Rome
- Included Meals: Breakfast
- Accommodations: Kolbe Hotel Rome or similar

Breakfast: At the hotel.

Morning: Today we 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 some free time for your own discoveries—ask your Trip Experience Leader for recommendations. Later this afternoon, our small group will reconvene at our hotel for a discussion about the **Controversial Topic** of how the Vatican and the Italian authorities have handled decades of abuse allegations. While this discussion may at times be emotional, it will also shed light on an important issue that is often swept under the rug in Italy, where the Church is deeply revered—and more or less immune from government oversight.

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 28 Explore Rome

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

Breakfast: At the hotel.

Morning: We spend the morning exploring Rome with our Trip Experience Leader. Activities may vary depending on your departure but what's for certain is that you'll feel like you're part of the history of this city as you observe how seamlessly ancient relics and artifacts blend with modern energy here. We'll witness its massive central park which features two aqueducts, a small lake, and several different types of fruit-bearing trees.

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: The remainder of the day is free for your own discoveries. Perhaps you'll embark on a spirited walk to Piazza Navona, home to the Obelisk of Domitian, the Fountain of Neptune, and more. Or, if you'd prefer, you can relax in an open-air café and indulge in a leisurely lunch or espresso as you watch Rome's well-heeled residents travel past.

Dinner: Savor a Farewell Dinner with your fellow travelers and Trip Experience Leader at a local restaurant and reminisce about all you've discovered.

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 29 Rome • Return to U.S. or begin your post-trip extension

- Destination: Rome
- Included Meals: Breakfast

Breakfast: At the hotel.

Morning: Transfer to the airport for your return home, or continue your discoveries with our optional *Tuscany: Florence & Siena* post-trip extension.

END YOUR ADVENTURE WITH AN OPTIONAL POST-TRIP EXTENSION

5 nights in *Tuscany: Florence & Siena*

Day 1 Rome • Explore Pienza • Siena

Day 2 Explore Siena

Day 3 Siena • Optional *Spiritual Landscape of Siena* tour

Day 4 Siena • Chianti • Florence

Day 5 Explore Florence

Day 6 Florence • 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.*

Matera Troglodyte City

(Day 12 \$165 per person)

Embark on a journey back in time to the Sassi di Matera, a collection of ancient troglodyte cave dwellings believed to be one of the first human settlements in Italy, in this UNESCO World Heritage Site. You'll get a glimpse of what life was like during the Stone Age all the way through the 20th century. After exploring the homes and nearby cave church, enjoy lunch at a local restaurant before returning to Monopoli.

Pompeii

(Day 22 \$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

Ljubljana & Trieste: World War II to the Present

INCLUDED IN YOUR PRICE

- » 5 nights accommodation
- » 7 meals: 5 breakfasts, 1 lunch, and 1 dinner
- » 4 guided tours with personal headsets:
Collio Wine Country • Trieste • Postojna
Caves • Ljubljana
- » Services of our local Trip Experience Leader
- » Gratuities for local guides and drivers
- » All transfers

PRE-TRIP EXTENSION ITINERARY

With cafe-lined streets in its Old Town and quaint bridges spanning its namesake river, Ljubljana, Slovenia, is reminiscent of the timeless cities of Old Europe. It boasts a modern touch as well—much of the city was rebuilt after an earthquake at the end of the 19th century. Then find inspiration where James Joyce once did in Trieste, Italy—where Italian, Slovenian, Croatian, and Austrian influences combine in a flourish of central European elegance.

Day 1 Depart U.S.

Depart the U.S. this evening for Ljubljana, Slovenia.

Day 2 Ljubljana, Slovenia

- Destination: Ljubljana
- Accommodations: Mrak Hotel Ljubljana or similar

Afternoon: Upon arrival in Ljubljana, you'll be met at the airport and assisted to your hotel. Then, embark on an orientation walk of your new neighborhood. Later, enjoy a Welcome Drink with your fellow travelers and Trip Experience Leader at your hotel.

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

Evening: Free to make independent discoveries.

Day 3 Explore Ljubljana & scenic boat ride

- Destination: Ljubljana
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Dinner
- Accommodations: Mrak Hotel Ljubljana or similar

Breakfast: At the hotel.

Morning: Discover the serene university town of Ljubljana on today's walking tour, led by your Trip Experience Leader. As you walk, you'll witness the array of outdoor coffee shops and art museums that line the Ljubljanica River, which divides the city in two. In fact, your walk will take you to the pier where you'll board a vessel and enjoy a scenic boat ride on this curved body of water.

Lunch: On your own. Perhaps you'll indulge in some Slovenian prosciutto, a popular snack in this area.

Afternoon: The afternoon is free for independent discoveries. Perhaps you'll visit the National Museum of Slovenia, which is an elaborate display of this country's varied history.

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 4 Visit the Postojna Caves • Trieste, Italy

- Destination: Trieste
- Included Meals: Breakfast
- Accommodations: Starhotels Savoia Excelsior Palace or similar

Breakfast: At the hotel.

Morning: Set off for an excursion to the fascinating Postojna Caves, underground chambers that tantalize explorers with names like Upturned Ship, Gothic Hall, and famous Brilliant.

Lunch: On your own—ask your Trip Experience Leader for local restaurant recommendations.

Afternoon: Continue your journey to Trieste, Italy. Long serving as a crossroads of cultures, Trieste was once a hub of art and commerce. But if you look on a map of Italy, you may not find it immediately. As the last slip of land in Italy's north-easternmost corner, this city is tucked away and often overlooked by tourists, but has served as a beloved locale for artists, writers, and musicians for centuries.

Take an orientation walk with your Trip Experience Leader after checking into your hotel.

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

Evening: Free to make independent discoveries.

Day 5 Explore Trieste • Foibe Massacres conversation

- Destination: Trieste
- Included Meals: Breakfast
- Accommodations: Starhotels Savoia Excelsior Palace or similar

Breakfast: At the hotel.

Morning: Take a sobering look into World War II-era history today, beginning at Risiera di San Sabba, the rice factory-turned concentration camp at which Nazis killed as many as 3,000 political prisoners, while tens of thousands of Jews were processed for transfer to Auschwitz. Continue on to discover Trieste, a crossroad for cultures and perennial gathering spot for artists and thinkers (James Joyce lived here for 15 years), during an included walking tour.

Lunch: On your own.

Afternoon: Yours to do as you please. Your Trip Experience Leader will be happy to recommend free time activities.

Dinner: On your own—ask your Trip Experience Leader for local restaurant recommendations.

Evening: Learn more about Trieste's painful past during a conversation about the foibe massacres. Following World War II, Yugoslav partisans killed thousands of Italians on the Istrian peninsula by throwing them into deep sinkholes known as foibe. For decades, these crimes were largely ignored by Italy and its neighbors in favor of maintaining good relations in the region.

Day 6 Trieste • Optional *Villages of Istria* tour

- Destination: Trieste
- Included Meals: Breakfast
- Accommodations: Starhotels Savoia Excelsior Palace or similar

Breakfast: At the hotel.

Morning: Spend the day at your leisure in Trieste. Or, join us on our optional *Villages of Istria* tour. Drive to Motovun Village in Croatia, where you'll embark on a discovery walk with your Trip Experience Leader and hike up to an antiquated village to explore the artisanal workshops there. Many of the artists here make their living selling handicraft goods, which you can converse with them about with the help of your Trip Experience Leader.

Lunch: If you choose to stay in Trieste, lunch is on your own today.

If you take the optional tour, lunch is included at a family-owned delicatessen and truffle farm in the center of town. Tour the family's factory and learn about their home-grown truffles, asking them any questions you may have about the truffle business. You'll enjoy a lunch featuring locally-made products.

Afternoon: If you take the optional tour, you'll next travel to the artist colony of Groznjan. You'll take a brief discovery walk with your Trip Experience Leader and learn about the history of this community, admiring the works of Croatian artists as you pass. After your tour, you'll have time to explore on your own before returning to Trieste.

Travelers who remained in Trieste can continue to explore on their own.

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

Evening: Free to make independent discoveries.

Day 7 Trieste • Winery visit • Venice • Join main trip

- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch

Breakfast: At the hotel.

Morning: Depart Trieste to join the main trip.

En route, turn onto the *Strada del Vino* (Wine Road), and follow it into the Collio region of Italy. Known for its exceptional white wines, Collio also has another, less romantic claim to fame: Following World War I and the dissolution of the Austrian Empire, the region was divided between Italy and Slovenia. Families were split overnight by the arbitrary border, and remained so until the end of the Cold War. During your time here, you'll meet the owners of a family-run vineyard for an exclusive cellar tour and tasting.

Lunch: At the vineyard.

Afternoon: Arrive in Venice to begin your *Italian Coastal Odyssey: Hidden Italy, Sicily & Malta* Small Ship Adventure.

OPTIONAL TOUR

Villages of Istria

(Day 6 \$155 per person)

Journey to the Croatian villages of Motovun and Groznjan, each known for their handicrafts.

Explore the artisanal workshops of Motovun—a picturesque hilltop town—during a discovery walk. While here, you'll also learn about the city's truffle tradition—including how the prized mushroom is hunted and the best way to prepare it. Then, after an included lunch featuring the famed food, discover the charming artist colony of Groznjan.

POST-TRIP

Tuscany: Florence & Siena

INCLUDED IN YOUR PRICE

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

POST-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. Discover Siena, home to some of the most splendid examples of Gothic architecture in all of Italy, and then behold iconic Florence, Siena's ancient rival to the north. Behold artistic treasures, from the Ponte Vecchio to the Duomo, to cap your Italian sojourn in style.

Day 1 Rome • Explore Pienza • Siena

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

Morning: Depart Rome for Pienza. Upon arrival, you'll learn how Enea Silvio 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 during a walking tour.

Lunch: At a local restaurant.

Afternoon: Continue your overland transfer to Siena. When we arrive, the afternoon is free for your own discoveries—ask your Trip Experience Leader for recommendations.

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

Evening: Free to make independent discoveries.

Day 2 Explore Siena

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

Breakfast: At the hotel.

Morning: Discover Siena during 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 in defense against foreign conquerors.

Today's Siena 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, Siena's inclined central square. And with automobiles banned from the city center, you'll be free to explore by foot during your morning tour walking tour.

You'll also tap into timeless cultural traditions here, as you 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. 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 restaurant.

Afternoon: Yours to do as you please.

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

Evening: Free to make independent discoveries this evening.

Day 3 Siena • Optional *Spiritual Landscape of Siena* tour

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

Breakfast: At the hotel.

Morning: On your own—ask your Trip Experience Leader for local restaurant 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: On your own—ask your Trip Experience Leader for local restaurant recommendations. The optional tour includes lunch at a local restaurant.

Afternoon: Free for your own discoveries—ask your Trip Experience Leader for recommendations.

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

Evening: Free to make independent discoveries.

Day 4 Siena • Chianti • Florence

- Destination: Florence
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch
- Accommodations: Grand Hotel Baglioni or similar

Breakfast: At the hotel.

Morning: Begin your journey north to Florence—a route that takes you through the storied Chianti countryside.

This is Tuscany at its most iconic: rolling, vineyard-carpeted hills, sun-dappled estate buildings, and small villages. You'll stop in the town of Greve to savor the view, as well as the local flavors, with a visit to a local winery. Here you will get to sample this region's namesake vintage.

Lunch: At the local winery.

Afternoon: Arrive at your hotel, where you'll check in and have some free time for your own discoveries—ask your Trip Experience Leader for recommendations.

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

Evening: Free to make independent discoveries this evening.

Day 5 Explore Florence

- Destination: Florence
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Dinner
- Accommodations: Grand Hotel Baglioni or similar

Breakfast: At the hotel.

Morning: 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.

Your walking tour will introduce you 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 you witness this cathedral's exterior, you'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.

Continue your tour 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 you'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—ask your Trip Experience Leader for local restaurant recommendations.

Afternoon: Free for your own discoveries. 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, whether that's sharing a bottle of *vino* with fellow travelers, or enjoying a gelato.

Day 6 Florence • Return to U.S.

- Included Meals: Breakfast

Breakfast: At the hotel.

Morning: Transfer to the airport for your flight home.

OPTIONAL TOUR

Spiritual Landscape of Siena

(Day 3 \$160 per person)

Discover Italy's Crete region, a landscape of cypress-dotted hills, farm houses, and biancane, distinct clay formations that evoke desert thoughts. Atop one of 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.

YOUR MEDITERRANEAN SMALL SHIP

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

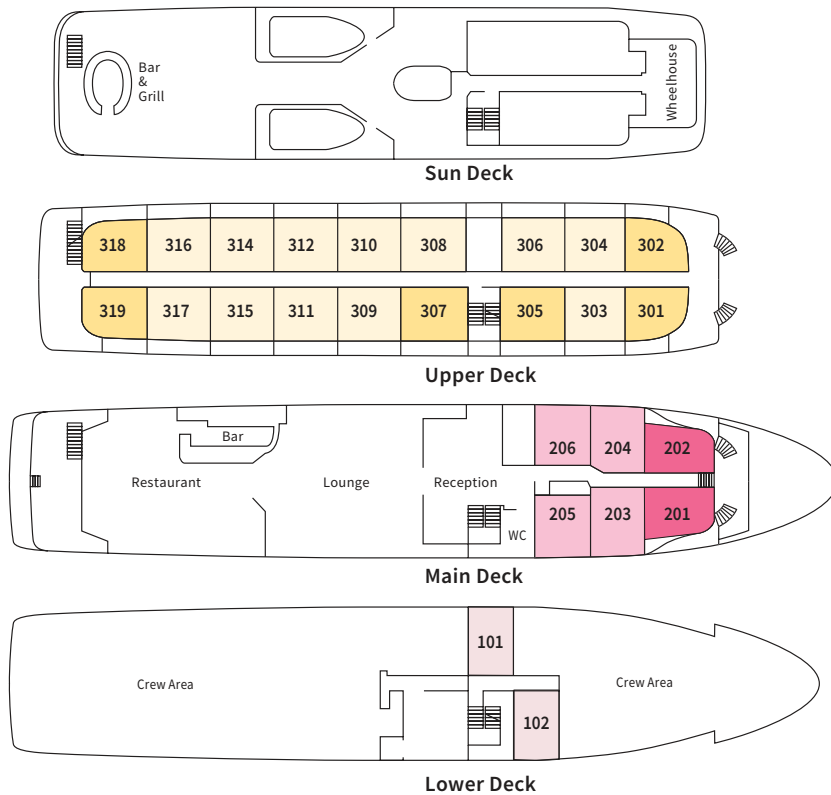
During your travels in the Mediterranean—including the Aegean and Adriatic seas and French and Italian Rivas—you'll be cruising aboard one of our 50-passenger small ships, rated excellent by 96% of travelers. The M/V *Athena*, M/V *Artemis*, and M/V *Arethusa* were designed and built to carry just two 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 2 blank passport pages.
- **Optional extension to Tuscany:** No additional pages needed.
- **Optional extension to Trieste & Ljubljana:** No additional pages needed.
- **Both extensions:** No additional pages needed.

You may want 1 additional blank page for a souvenir stamp in San Marino during the main trip.

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, Slovenia):** 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

- 29 days, with two 3-night hotel stays and 21 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 ship
- The ship does 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 50-98°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 2004) 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, WhatsApp, or FaceTime. These services are usually less expensive than making a traditional call, but you’ll need a Wi-Fi connection 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

Slovenia: +386

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 walking shoes are critical.** This program features many included tours that follow steep, unpaved or cobbled routes; and even an average day of light sightseeing or shopping can put great demands on your feet. If you prefer more ankle support, take light hiking boots. In case you get caught in the rain, we suggest you bring an extra pair of walking shoes, and rain boots or galoshes. Aboard ship, you'll want non-slip shoes with rubber soles.

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
- Comfortable walking shoes and/or water resistant shoes
- 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
- Vitamins
- Cold remedies: Sudafed/Dristan
- Pain relievers: Ibuprofen/naproxen/aspirin
- Laxatives: Senokot/Ex-Lax
- Stomach upset: Pepto-Bismol/Mylanta
- Anti-diarrheal: Imodium
- Band-Aids, Moleskin foot pads
- Antibiotics: Neosporin/Bacitracin

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, Slovenia 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.

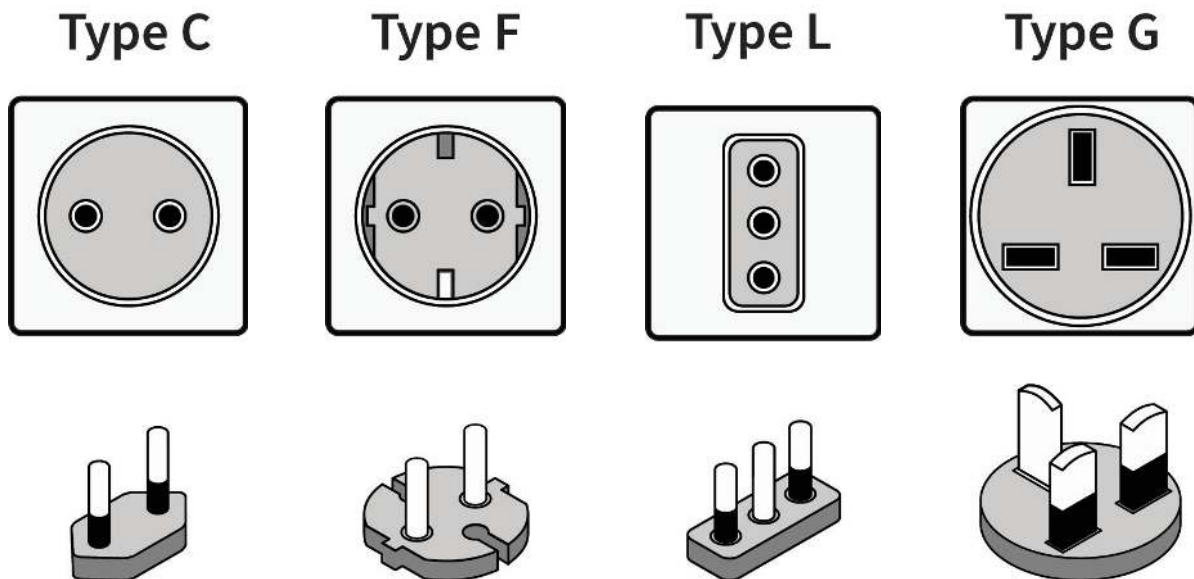
Different plug shapes are named by letters of the alphabet. Standard U.S. plugs are Type A and Type B. Here is the list of plugs for the countries on this trip:

Italy: C, L, or F

Sicily: C or F

Malta: G

Slovenia: C and/or F



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.

Venice, Italy: Venice is situated in the flat, low-lying plains of northern Italy, where the climate features year-round rain and sunshine, hot summers, and surprisingly cold temperatures during the three winter months. Fog, frost, and snow are frequent in midwinter. Thunderstorms can pass through in autumn and spring, though they are the exception and not the rule. While “off-season” travel may involve stints of inclement weather, it rewards you with the chance to explore Venice’s museums, piazzas, and canals at a time when they are wonderfully free of the summer tourist crowds.

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.

Ljubljana, Slovenia: Ljubljana, capital of Slovenia, is situated between the Alps and the Adriatic Sea; both the warmth of the sea and the cool air of the mountains influence its climate. Although coastal regions of the country have a Mediterranean climate with hot summers and mild winters, Ljubljana’s weather reflects a continental climate. The city’s summer days from June to September are moderately warm and dry, with comfortably cool evenings, while autumn brings mornings of sunshine occasionally interspersed with some showers or haze. Winter months, beginning in January, can be quite cold with temperatures dropping below freezing, while the warmth of spring brings refreshing breezes. This continental climate is changeable, and a day with some passing showers is to be expected during any two-week interval.

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			SIRACUSA, SICILY		
	Temp. High-Low	% Relative Humidity	Average # of Days with Rainfall	Temp. High-Low	% Relative Humidity (am-pm)	Monthly Rainfall (inches)
JAN	69 to 38	76	7	60 to 40	89 to 71	3.0
FEB	73 to 38	72	7	62 to 40	88 to 66	1.9
MAR	80 to 43	71	7	65 to 42	88 to 65	1.6
APR	86 to 48	70	7	70 to 46	83 to 62	1.5
MAY	94 to 55	70	6	78 to 52	75 to 57	0.9
JUN	103 to 62	65	3	86 to 59	67 to 51	0.4
JUL	104 to 67	63	2	92 to 65	62 to 46	0.2
AUG	105 to 68	64	2	92 to 66	66 to 48	0.6
SEP	104 to 61	70	6	87 to 62	77 to 56	1.4
OCT	90 to 54	74	7	78 to 56	86 to 65	3.9
NOV	80 to 47	78	9	69 to 48	89 to 68	2.2
DEC	70 to 41	77	9	62 to 43	90 to 73	3.4

MONTH	VALLETTA, MALTA			VENICE, ITALY		
	Temp. High-Low	% Relative Humidity (am-pm)	Average # of Days with Rainfall	Temp. High-Low	% Relative Humidity	Average # of Days with Rainfall
JAN	60 to 49	80	17	60 to 32	81	6
FEB	59 to 49	80	13	65 to 33	77	5
MAR	61 to 51	80	11	70 to 40	75	6
APR	68 to 54	75	10	81 to 48	75	8
MAY	75 to 59	75	6	89 to 56	73	6
JUN	83 to 66	70	3	95 to 63	74	9
JUL	88 to 71	65	1	98 to 67	71	6
AUG	88 to 72	70	3	98 to 66	72	6
SEP	83 to 69	75	8	90 to 59	75	6
OCT	76 to 64	80	11	81 to 51	77	7
NOV	69 to 57	80	15	65 to 42	79	6
DEC	62 to 52	80	19	60 to 33	81	6

MONTH	FLORENCE, ITALY			LJUBLJANA, SLOVENIA		
	Temp. High-Low	% Relative Humidity (avg)	Average # of Days with Rainfall	Temp. High-Low	% Relative Humidity (am-pm)	Monthly Rainfall (inches)
JAN	49 to 35	76	6	36 to 23	91 to 77	1.6
FEB	53 to 36	75	7	40 to 25	90 to 65	1.6
MAR	60 to 40	72	7	50 to 31	91 to 57	1.6
APR	68 to 46	72	7	57 to 37	88 to 52	2.0
MAY	75 to 53	72	7	67 to 45	86 to 52	2.0
JUN	84 to 58	71	7	73 to 52	87 to 55	2.0
JUL	89 to 63	64	4	77 to 55	87 to 53	2.0
AUG	88 to 62	66	5	77 to 55	90 to 53	2.0
SEP	81 to 58	71	8	69 to 49	95 to 60	2.4
OCT	69 to 51	76	9	58 to 41	95 to 68	2.8
NOV	58 to 42	81	9	44 to 31	93 to 78	2.8
DEC	50 to 37	81	8	37 to 26	92 to 84	2.0

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 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—just as they are of their country.

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:

- **Apertivo:** A glass of sparkling prosecco or spumante white wine or Spritz.
- **Antipasto all'Italiana:** Raw vegetables served with various cheeses salami and Speck
- **Crostini** Fried polenta squares topped with sauces or pâtés,
- **Bagna Cauda:** A hot dish made with garlic and anchovies, dipping sauce for vegetables typical of Piedmont

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

- **Polenta:** A dense cornmeal porridge can be served with various toppings, like tomato meat sauce or a “white” sauce of sausage and mushrooms.
- **Canederli:** A large gnocchi dish made with stale bread soaked in milk, eggs, and smoked bacon, flavored with butter and cheese.
- **Risotto alla Milanese:** A simple and creamy risotto with the perfect combination of simple ingredients like butter, white wine, parmesan, and saffron
- **Pizzoccheri:** Long noodles, made from a dough of wheat and buckwheat, is served with potatoes, butter, Casera cheese and stewed savoy cabbage from Lombardy

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

- **Cotoletta alla Milanese:** A tender veal cutlet coated in crunchy breadcrumbs fried in butter
- **Osso Buco:** Braised veal shanks crusted with a citrus zest mixture called gremolata.
- **Vitello Tonnato:** A dish of cold, sliced tuna

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

- **Tiramisu:** A layered confection of sponge cake, mascarpone cheese, coffee and liqueur.
- **Sbrisolona:** A crumbly almond cake from Lombardy.
- **Strudel di Mele:** Similar to the German apple strudel, this is a flaky pastry stuffed with apples.
- **Castagnaccio:** A gluten-free cake, baked with chestnut flour mixed with olive oil, walnuts, pine nuts, raisins, and rosemary for a slightly savory taste

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 braciolo, 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.

Slovenian Cuisine

Slovenia may only be the size of Massachusetts, but it still boasts 24 distinct gastronomic regions, and many dishes with EU protected status. Here are some dishes to try:

- **Idrijski zlikrofi:** Heavenly pasta pockets filled with potato, bacon and herbs.

- **Kremšnita:** This Bled Cream Cake is a confection of flaky crust, vanilla custard, icing sugar and whipped cream.
- **Kraški pršut:** (prosciutto from the karst lands) and Istrian olive oil give their Italian cousins a run for the money.
- **Štruklji:** Slovenia's version of strudel, filled with either savory or sweet ingredients like cheese, walnuts, apples and poppy seeds. In spring and summer, try it with fresh tarragon.

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.

Venice in Brief

City Layout and Details

Venice is about two and a half miles from the Italian mainland and one and one quarter miles from the Adriatic Sea. The city is built on and around 118 islands and islets, separated by approximately 150 small canals. These small land clusters are joined together by some 400 bridges. The three largest and most historically significant bridges are the Rialto, Accademia, and degli Scalzi, each of which crosses the Grand Canal. The city has only one main piazza—San Marco—and it bustles all day long. Most visitors are primarily interested in seeing San Marco, with its St. Mark's Basilica and Doge's Palace, but there's much to see elsewhere if you are game for walking. Shoppers will want to explore along the Mercerie, which leads out of the piazza San Marco and serves as the city's major shopping artery. It eventually leads to the Rialto, site of the market area.

The city is divided into six quarters, called sestieri, and these include San Marco, Santa Croce, San Polo, Castello, Cannaregio, and Dorsoduro. Each has its own mood and appeal. The Dorsoduro, for example, has been compared to New York's Greenwich Village. Don't expect to find any order to the tiny streets and winding canals that comprise each sestiere. Street numbers do not follow a logical sequence, and finding a specific address can be baffling. Looking for certain cross streets and posted signs can be more helpful than trying to pinpoint an address by its street number. Regardless of your orientation skills, however, expect to get at least a little lost at some point while exploring on your own. Everybody does—that's part of the charm of Venice.

Across the lagoon from Venice proper is the shoestring island of Lido. This long, narrow sandbar protects Venice from the force of the Adriatic Sea; it is also one of Italy's most fashionable beach resort areas. Venice is connected to mainland Italy via a three-mile bridge that runs from the city across the Venetian Lagoon to the town of Mestre.

Evening Entertainment

Compared to Rome, Venice is a quiet city that shuts down pretty much by midnight. Typical nighttime entertainment includes classical concerts (often featured in various churches), opera performances, art exhibitions, leisurely visits at cafés and bars, and sunset strolls. The tourist office and some hotels distribute the free weekly pamphlet *Un Ospite a Venezia* ("A Guest in Venice"). It is a useful multilingual booklet that lists up-to-date museum schedules, special events, entertainment programs, and other activities, as well as the current rates for gondolas and motorboat taxis.

Local Transportation

There are no cars in Venice, except on the Lido. To get around, you can walk, or take a vaporetto or gondola. Remember, Venice has 460 pedestrian bridges.

Vaporetti: These motorboats operate as public waterbuses. An *accelerato* boat makes every stop; a *diritto* makes only express stops. They operate from designated piers and run about every 15 minutes. Service is frequent from about 7 am to midnight, then hourly between midnight and 7 am.

Gondola: If you opt for a gondola ride, first agree on the price and the length of the trip. Two major stations at which you can hire gondolas include piazza San Marco and Ponte Rialto. *TIP: In 2019, the official price for a 30 minute gondola ride was set as 80 euros, but may cost more during the evening or if music is included.*

On foot: By far, the easiest way to explore Venice is on foot. All the locals walk, too. Because the city has 400 bridges with stairs, bicycles are impractical.

Motorboat Taxis: A ride as short as 10 minutes can cost upwards of \$60. Given the small distances of Venice, use of water taxis is a very expensive proposition that can be easily avoided with a little forethought or scheduling.

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 Caltarigione 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.

Slovenia

Handicraft shops in Slovenia feature locally made ceramics, woolens, wood carvings, embroidery, tapestries, filigree jewelry, pumpkin seed oil, hand-painted beehive panels, honey brandy and handmade carpets. The fashion brands Sens and Akultura are popular, and for something more traditional, consider Idrija lace and Rogaska crystal.

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:** 58,990,000 (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.

Slovenia

Facts, Figures & National Holidays

- **Area:** 7,827 square miles
- **Capital:** Ljubljana
- **Population:** 1,983,412 (estimate)

- **Languages:** Slovenian is the official language.
- **Religions:** Catholic 57.8%, Muslim 2.4%, Orthodox 2.3%, other Christian 0.9%, unaffiliated 3.5%, other or unspecified 23%, none 10.1%
- **Time Zone:** Slovenia is on Central European Time, six hours ahead of Eastern Time. Summer hours operate from the last Sunday in March until the last weekend in October.

National Holidays: Slovenia

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

01/01 New Year's Day

02/08 Preseren Day

04/27 Day of Uprising Against Occupation

05/01 Labor Day/May Day

06/25 Statehood Day

08/15 Assumption of Mary

10/31 Reformation Day

11/01 Remembrance Day

12/25 Christmas Day

12/26 Independence and Unity Day

Slovenia: A Brief History

While Slovenia experienced many of the same historical events as its neighbors, its development diverged in several important ways. For one thing, we know a little more about the Bronze Age inhabitants who predated the Illyrians here: they were marsh dwellers who lived in huts on stilts south of present-day Ljubljana, trading along the Amber Route that linked the Balkans with the rest of Europe. By 400 BC, the Celts established the first political entity on Slovenian soil, the Noric kingdom. The Romans annexed this and brought Slovenia into its larger province, Illyrium.

As Rome declined, Slavs arrived and eventually joined with the Frankish kingdom to form the Duchy of Carantania. Charlemagne sealed the deal when he made Carantania a vassal state called Carinthia, and established Roman Catholicism as the state religion. This brought Slovenia into the fold of the Holy Roman Empire, and far from the sway of eastern Orthodoxy. By the 10th century, control of the Holy Roman Empire fell to German nobility. They replaced local Slovenian lords with German ones, reduced the peasants to serfs, and divided Slovenia into six provinces that remained intact until 1918: Carniola, Carinthia, Styria, Gorica and the White March.

Between the late 13th and early 16th century, almost all of Slovenia passed to the Hapsburgs, who improved the infrastructure, opened mines, and lifted the economy. But soon, Germanic domination of the political and cultural scene faced a challenge. Slovenia was never occupied by the Ottomans, but under the Hapsburgs, it had to fight many battles against the Turks. Slovenian peasants were required to pay for their own defenses, and also pay tribute to their feudal lords. Between the 14th and 19th centuries there were more than 100 Slovenian peasant revolts.

Another turning point came when the Protestant Reformation reached Slovenia at the end of the 16th century. Many Protestant reformers wrote their treatises in the vernacular, elevating the status of Slovenian language. An awakening of Slovenian identity had begun.

When the Hapsburg dynasty was dismantled after World War I, Slovenia joined the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes. But much of Slovenia's land was ceded to Italy, Austria, and Hungary, and there was dissatisfaction with the government, which was dominated by Serbs. But when the Nazis invaded in 1941, a larger threat had to be dealt with. Communists and other left-wing groups formed a Liberation Front. The people took up arms, and fought in the best-organized anti-Nazi resistance in Europe. The communist partisan leader, Josip Broz Tito, became the leader of the new Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia.

When Tito died in 1980, Slovenian dissatisfaction with the Serb-dominated government deepened. In 1987, a Slovenian magazine published an article calling for political pluralism, democracy, a market economy and more Slovenian independence, but stopped short of calling for secession. But Yugoslavia's new de facto leader, Serbia's Slobodan Milošević, resolved to put an end to it. Slovenia doubled down and in 1990, it voted to become an independent republic. The Yugoslav army marched on Slovenia, but after meeting with unexpected resistance, units of the federal army began disintegrating.

Since no territorial or ethnic issues were involved, the Yugoslav government agreed to a truce and finally withdrew in October 1991. Slovenia enacted its own constitution in December, and was recognized by the European Community in January, 1992. In May, 1992, it became the 176th member state of the United Nations, and in 2004, it joined the European Union.

RESOURCES

Suggested Reading

Venice

A Venetian Affair: A True Tale of Forbidden Love in the 18th Century by Andrea di Robilant (2003, Historical Memoir) A captivating tale of star-crossed lovers, forbidden to marry due to their status in society.

History of Venice by John J. Norwich (1982, History) The author skillfully manages to compress 1,000 years of Venetian history into one book.

The World of Venice by Jan Morris (1960, Travel Account) A new edition of a classic that blends history, social commentary, and personal travel experience.

Coastal Italy

Nationalists Who Feared the Nation: Adriatic Multi-Nationalism in Habsburg, Dalmatia, Trieste, and Venice by Dominique Reill (2012, History) The author examines the struggles of the nationalist movement under the Habsburg Empire to create a common identity while holding onto valuable cultural differences.

Beautiful Ruins by Jess Walter (2012, Literature) A charming story of an innkeeper living in coastal Italy who meets an beautiful actress in his youth. The story unfolds when the innkeeper is an elderly man and he finds himself in Hollywood searching for the woman he had met fifty years previously.

Trieste And The Meaning of Nowhere by Jan Morris (2001, Travel Account) A fascinating account of Trieste incorporating both history and personal stories from her life as a soldier (formerly James Morris) during WWII.

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 (1993, 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.

Slovenia

Slovenology: Living and Traveling in the World's Best Country by Noah Charney (2017, Memoir/Travel) A witty and wise guidebook from an American art historian. The title tells you something about his love for Slovenia's history, food and drink, sights, music and people.

I Saw Her That Night by Drago Jancar (2010, Fiction) Explores the disappearance of a young woman from Ljubljana during a turbulent period in that city's history, as told by five different people.

Forbidden Bread: A Memoir (2009, Memoir) A New York financial analyst leaves her home and job to marry her Slovenian poet-lover. As she struggles to understand her new family and Slovenia's complex history, language, traditions and old-fashioned sexism, Slovenia itself is being transformed. A love story with witty and worldly observations on the birth of a new nation.

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.

Slovenia

Good to Go (2012, Comedy/Drama) A weary, disillusioned music teacher in his late 70s decides to retire—not just from his job, but from living. He buys a cemetery plot and moves into a retirement home. But once there, surprising turns make him rethink his decision, and his life.

Cheese and Jam (2004, Comedy) Lovely Slovenian Spela decides to leave her beer-drinking, jobless Bosnian husband, Bozo. Desperate to keep her, Bozo takes a job smuggling illegal immigrants, and things go wildly wrong. A black comedy about stereotypes, village life, and love.

No Man's Land (2002, Comedy/Drama) Filmed in Slovenia, this allegorical look at the Balkan War won the 2002 Golden Globes and the Oscar for Best Foreign Film. Two soldiers, one Bosnian, one Serb, find themselves facing off in a trench in no man's land. Insults and concessions ensue until a third soldier awakens nearby, but cannot move as he is sitting above a bouncing mine. The men forge a truce as they try to get help, and to find common ground.

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

GeoSure

Safely navigate neighborhoods around the world

Chirpey

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



SHARE YOUR TRAVEL EXPERIENCES

We invite you to share your videos, slideshows, and photos of your past O.A.T. adventures to help inspire your fellow travelers. Go to www.oattravel.com/myplanner to upload your photos or videos, and they may be featured on our website.

Most Popular Videos, Slideshows & Photos from our O.A.T. Adventures Created by O.A.T. Travelers



Submitted by Joy and Don Janke,
8-time travelers from Stevensville, MI



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



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



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



Submitted by David Fong, 16-time traveler
from Foster City, CA



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



1-800-955-1925 | www.oattravel.com

CONNECT WITH US:



World's Best
#4 Best Intimate-Ship
Ocean Cruise Line



Readers' Choice
Named to the Best
Tour Operators list



USA Today
#6 Best Educational
Tour Companies



"Best Tours"
Named one of the
"Best Tours"