

Overseas Adventure Travel[®]

THE LEADER IN CUSTOMIZED SMALL GROUP ADVENTURES SINCE 1978

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



New! Jewels of the Sicilian Coast:
Palermo, Siracusa & Mount Etna

2026

Overseas Adventure Travel®

347 Congress Street, Boston, MA 02210

Dear Traveler,

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

When you join us, you will 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 customize their experience**. Perhaps you will choose to see more of your destination by adding an optional trip extension to your itinerary. You can also arrive a few days early to explore independently and get acclimated, customize your air itinerary, and more.

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

Warm regards,



Harriet R. Lewis
Chair
Overseas Adventure Travel

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Ruins of Agrigento

New! Jewels of the Sicilian Coast: Palermo, Siracusa & Mount Etna Small Ship Adventure

Sicily: Palermo, Trapani, Mazara del Vallo, Agrigento, Pozzallo, Val di Noto, Siracusa, Mount Etna, Taormina, Aci Castello, Catania

Small groups of no more than 25 travelers, guaranteed

16 days starting from \$6,495

including international airfare

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

For departure dates & prices, visit www.oattravel.com/wcs2026pricing

Discover an Italian island with more than 3,000 years of history on a coast-to-coast journey from the bustling markets of Palermo to the ancient city of Siracusa and the dramatic slopes of Mount Etna. Spend **A Day in the Life** on a family farm in Val di Noto, drive through the windmill-dotted landscape of Trapani, and immerse yourself in Sicily's landscapes, history, and culture. At the heart of your journey will be 9 nights aboard our privately owned **89-passenger small ship, the M/V Clio**.

IT'S INCLUDED

- 14 nights accommodation, including 9 nights aboard the privately owned 89-passenger M/V *Clio*
- International airfare, airport transfers, government taxes, fees, and airline fuel surcharges, unless you choose to make your own air arrangements
- 35 meals: 14 breakfasts, 10 lunches, 11 dinners—including 1 Home-Hosted Lunch—plus all onboard house beer, wine, and soft drinks
- 23 guided tours (with personal headsets) and cultural experiences
- Gratuities for local guides and motorcoach drivers
- All port charges
- Baggage handling for 1 piece of luggage per person, including tips
- 5% Frequent Traveler Credit toward your next trip

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

Jewels of the Sicilian Coast: Palermo, Siracusa & Mount Etna



ITINERARY SUMMARY

DAYS	DESTINATION
1	Depart U.S.
2-4	Palermo, Sicily
5	Palermo • Embark Ship
6	Trapani • Museo de Sale
7-8	Mazara del Vallo
9	Agrigento • Valley of Temples
10-11	Pozzallo • Val di Noto
12	Siracusa • Ortigia
13	Mount Etna
14-15	Disembark Ship • Taormina • Aci Castello & Catania
16	Return to U.S.

WHAT TO EXPECT

① ② ③ ④ ⑤ Moderate

Pacing: 8 locations in 16 days with 9 nights aboard the 89-passenger M/V *Clio*.

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

Flight Time: Travel time will be 12-20 hours and will most likely have one to two connections.

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

SICILY: THE O.A.T. DIFFERENCE

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

People-to-People Experiences: Learn how to cook a few local specialties from an Italian chef, and join a local family for a **Home-Hosted Lunch** in Siracusa and learn what daily life is like on the island of Sicily.

O.A.T. Exclusives: Head to the countryside for to experience **A Day in the Life** in the Val di Noto, a UNESCO World Heritage Site. You'll visit a family-owned farm, help with some daily chores, and get to know each other over a home-cooked meal.

CUSTOMIZE YOUR ADVENTURE

OPTIONAL EXTENSIONS

Florence & Lucca: The Soul of Tuscany

PRE-TRIP: 6 nights from **\$1,795**

Italy's Itria Valley & Ancient Matera

POST-TRIP: 5 nights from **\$1,495**

ARRIVE EARLY

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

- Arrive early in **Florence** before your Tuscany pre-trip extension from **\$190** per room, per night
- Arrive early in **Palermo** before your main adventure from **\$260** per room, per night

Jewels of the Sicilian Coast: Palermo, Siracusa & Mount Etna

YOUR DETAILED ITINERARY

BEGIN YOUR ADVENTURE WITH AN OPTIONAL PRE-TRIP EXTENSION

6 nights in *Florence & Lucca: The Soul of Tuscany*

Day 1 Depart U.S.

Day 2 Arrive Florence, Italy

Day 3 Explore Florence

Day 4 Florence • Optional Siena tour

Day 5 Explore Vinci • Visit agritourism farm • Lucca

Day 6 Explore Lucca

Day 7 Vineyard visit & wine experience • Optional Pisa tour

Day 8 Fly to Palermo • Join main adventure

Day 1 Depart U.S.

Fly to Palermo, Sicily.

Day 2 Arrive in Palermo, Sicily

- Destination: Palermo
- Accommodations: Hotel in Palermo

Afternoon: You'll be met at the airport and assisted with your transfer to your hotel in Palermo. Meet your fellow travelers—including those who took our *Florence & Lucca: The Soul of Tuscany* pre-trip extension—and your local Trip Experience Leader. Upon request, your Trip Experience Leader can lead you on an orientation walk around the neighborhood surrounding your hotel.

Later this afternoon, gather together for a Welcome Drink as your kick off your discoveries in Sicily.

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

Evening: On your own. You may wish to relax after a day of travel, or grab a nightcap at one of Palermo's lively bars.

Day 3 Explore Palermo

- Destination: Palermo
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Dinner
- Accommodations: Hotel in Palermo

Breakfast: At the hotel.

Morning: We'll begin this morning with a Welcome Briefing, during which your Trip Experience Leader will discuss logistics and answer any questions you may have.

Then, explore Palermo on an included tour with a local guide. The city's strategic position in the middle of the Mediterranean has led to a past

filled with a regular succession of invaders, from Phoenicians, Carthaginians, Greeks, and Romans, to Normans, Swabians, French and Spanish Bourbons, and more. This helps to explain the city's eclectic mix of architectural styles—although the 17th- and 18th-century Baroque period has left the most visible mark on Palermo's civic and religious structures. Intense rebuilding after heavy bombing during World War II has also contributed to the city's chaotic beauty.

During your tour, you'll explore some of the city's most impressive highlights, including the medieval Duomo of Palermo.

Lunch: On your own. Perhaps you'll try *panelle*, crispy fritters made with chickpea flour that are a Palermo street food staple.

Afternoon: Enjoy an afternoon of independent discovery in Palermo.

Dinner: Celebrate the discoveries ahead during a Welcome Dinner at a local restaurant.

Evening: On your own. You may wish to seek out a sweet finish to the day with one of Sicily's famous *cannolo*—more commonly known by its plural form: *cannoli*.

Day 4 Palermo • Optional Castelbuono tour

- Destination: Palermo
- Included Meals: Breakfast
- Accommodations: Hotel in Palermo

Breakfast: At the hotel.

Morning: Enjoy a full day of independent exploration in Palermo. You could visit the Archaeological Museum, featuring a noteworthy Etruscan collection and artifacts from the Hellenic temples at Selinunte; tour the Abatellis Palace, admiring its gallery of

Renaissance paintings; or visit the Mercato delle Pulci, a flea market well known for its antiques.

Or, you may wish to join our optional excursion to the small hilltop village of Castelbuono, which boasts centuries of rich history and a charming medieval town center. Upon arrival, we'll take a discovery walk with our Trip Experience Leader, including a visit to Castelbuono's most famous attraction: its medieval castle.

Lunch: On your own.

Or, if you have joined our optional tour, savor an included lunch at a local restaurant while enjoying a live musical performance.

Afternoon: Continue making your own discoveries in Palermo.

Or, for those on our optional tour, take some free time to explore Castelbuono independently before we drive back to Palermo.

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

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

Day 5 Arab-Norman Palermo & Monreale Cathedral • Embark ship

- Destination: Palermo
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner
- Accommodations: M/V *Clio*

Breakfast: At the hotel.

Morning: Today we'll travel to the UNESCO World Heritage Site known as Arab-Norman Palermo to witness the splendor of Monreale Cathedral. Situated in the hills overlooking Palermo, this magnificent duomo is an incredible example of the blending of Western, Islamic, and Byzantine cultures on the island of

Sicily. During our visit, we'll see Byzantine art come to life within the Monreale Cathedral's nave, where nearly every surface is covered with intricately-detailed mosaics depicting biblical scenes in rich colors and gold filigree.

After our discoveries here, we'll drive back to Palermo.

Lunch: At a local restaurant.

Afternoon: After lunch, we'll transfer to the dock where we'll embark our small ship. For the next nine nights, our privately owned 89-passenger vessel will be your home. 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 settling in, your Captain will conduct a safety briefing. At the conclusion, you'll have time to get acquainted with the ship's inviting common areas.

Dinner: In the ship's dining room. As with all the dinners during your cruise, the dress code is relaxed and smart casual, and you are free to sit at whichever table you please. You'll be offered a choice of appetizer, soup, entrée, and dessert—including regional options—and complimentary house beer, house wine, and soft drinks.

Evening: The rest of the evening is free. You may wish to visit the ship's lounge.

Day 6 Trapani • Museo de Sale visit • Home-Hosted Lunch

- Destination: Trapani
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner
- Accommodations: M/V *Clio*

Breakfast: Onboard the ship.

Morning: Our explorations this morning will take us to the province of Trapani and the Museo del Sale, a semi-working salt

museum. To get there, we'll drive through a windmill-dotted landscape set against dramatic mountains. Upon arrival, we'll take a short discovery walk of Trapani with our Trip Experience Leader. Then, at the museum, we'll view the 17th-century mill and learn how the region has been shaped by the age-old Trapani tradition of salt production and refining. We'll also view historic photos of salt workers, highlighting the division of labor between the skilled elders who maintained the windmills and the young apprentices who hauled water.

Afterwards, we'll transfer to the home of a local Sicilian family.

Lunch: Settle in for a **Home-Hosted Lunch**, a unique opportunity to experience daily life in Trapani.

Afternoon: You'll have some free time to explore more of Trapani at your leisure. Later this afternoon, join your Trip Experience Leader onboard for an *Interesting Facts About Sicily* discussion.

Dinner: Onboard the ship.

Evening: Enjoy the rest of your evening onboard as we sail towards Mazara del Vallo.

Day 7 Explore Mazara del Vallo • Tunisian Kasbah

- Destination: Mazara del Vallo
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner
- Accommodations: M/V *Clio*

Breakfast: Onboard the ship.

Morning: Sit back and enjoy a relaxing morning of scenic sailing.

Lunch: Onboard the ship.

Afternoon: This afternoon, we'll disembark to explore the UNESCO-protected city of Mazara del Vallo. As we'll see during our walking tour

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

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

You'll then have the opportunity to explore independently before we return to the ship.

Dinner: Onboard the ship.

Evening: Free to spend onboard however you wish.

Day 8 Mazara del Vallo • Optional Marsala tour

- Destination: Mazara del Vallo
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner
- Accommodations: M/V *Clio*

Breakfast: Onboard the ship.

Morning: Today, enjoy a full day of independent discoveries in Mazara del Vallo.

Or, join us on an optional excursion to Marsala. Located in the westernmost point of Sicily, Marsala is most known for its sweet amber wine, but it is also an elegant seaside town with a historic Baroque city center. Enjoy a discovery walk with your Trip Experience Leader, followed by a visit to a local winery.

Lunch: Onboard the ship.

Or, if you've joined our optional tour, savor an included lunch at the winery paired with a Marsala wine tasting.

Afternoon: Continue to enjoy free time in Mazara del Vallo.

Those on our optional tour will transfer back to the ship.

Dinner: Onboard the ship.

Evening: Spend time at leisure onboard after dinner. Perhaps you'll enjoy a nightcap in the lounge.

Day 9 Explore Agrigento Archeological Site • Cooking class with Italian chef

- Destination: Agrigento
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner
- Accommodations: M/V *Clio*

Breakfast: Onboard the ship.

Morning: Step off the ship today and transfer to the UNESCO-protected site of the Valley of Temples, situated just outside the city of Agrigento. Agrigento was once the Greek city of Akragas, one of the most culturally advanced cities of the ancient world. Here in the Valley of Temples, we'll set off by foot with a local guide to explore the archaeological remains of the Greek temples, each built between 510 and 430 BC. In addition to the honey-colored architecture, the area provides sweeping views of the neighboring hillsides, where homes and agricultural plots form a patchwork display of green, brown, and white.

Lunch: Onboard the ship.

Afternoon: Enjoy a few hours of free time. Then, gather for a special cooking lesson with a local Italian chef onboard the ship.

Dinner: Onboard the ship.

Evening: Enjoy the rest of your evening as the ship sails to our next destination.

Day 10 *A Day in the Life* of the Val Di Noto

- Destination: Pozzallo
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner
- Accommodations: M/V *Clio*

Breakfast: Onboard the ship.

Morning: We'll step ashore this morning and head to the countryside for our *A Day in the Life* experience in the Val di Noto, a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Following a catastrophic earthquake in 1693, the cities of the Val di Noto were rebuilt in the late-Baroque style of the times, creating a region steeped in history and splendid architectural beauty.

We'll spend our time in the Val di Noto visiting a local family's farm. We'll be invited to join in the morning's activities—helping to make bread or cheese, depending on the day. Then we'll join a family member for a walk through their fields, sampling a local aperitif as we stroll. We'll next head to the family home where we'll help with the preparation of the midday meal.

Lunch: Enjoy a home-cooked meal with your hosts in their home.

Afternoon: Sit down for a cup of coffee after our meal. This is a perfect opportunity to engage in cultural connection with our hosts.

Afterwards, we'll return to the ship where you'll enjoy a few hours of free time.

Dinner: Onboard the ship.

Evening: Free to spend onboard however you wish. We will dock overnight in Pozzallo.

Day 11 Pozzallo • Optional *Baroque Heritage of Sicily* tour

- Destination: Pozzallo
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner
- Accommodations: M/V *Clio*

Breakfast: Onboard the ship.

Morning: Today is free to spend exploring Pozzallo at your leisure.

Or, join a full-day optional tour, the Baroque Heritage of Sicily. We'll witness some of the best examples of the Sicilian Baroque architecture in Val di Noto. The day begins with a visit to the Ragusa Ibla (Ancient Ragusa), where we'll tour the majestic Church of Saint George. Then, explore the city of Modica, where we'll sample local chocolates.

Lunch: Onboard the ship.

Or, for those on our optional tour, savor an included lunch at a local restaurant.

Afternoon: Continue your independent explorations. Those on our optional tour will transfer back to the ship.

Dinner: Onboard the ship.

Evening: Relax onboard as our ship sails to tomorrow's destination—Siracusa.

Day 12 Explore Siracusa

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

Breakfast: Onboard the ship.

Morning: Today we'll discover Siracusa. Known as the birthplace of the famed mathematician Archimedes, Siracusa was one of the most powerful ports of the ancient Mediterranean world. Now more than 2,700 years old, the city boasts a rich and storied history—evident in

the Greek, Roman, and Baroque architecture that has helped earn the city UNESCO World Heritage Site status.

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

After our guided tour, enjoy some free time to continue exploring Siracusa on your own.

Lunch: Onboard the ship.

Afternoon: After lunch, we'll bid our hosts goodbye and drive back to our ship. The rest of your day is free—check with your Trip Experience Leader for suggestions.

Dinner: Onboard the ship.

Evening: Enjoy your evening onboard, chatting with fellow travelers in the lounge or relaxing in your cabin.

Day 13 Mount Etna hike

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

Activity Note: Today's hike will be around 4 miles long. In the event of snow, an alternate hiking path may be chosen and snowshoes will be provided.

Breakfast: Onboard the ship.

Morning: Visit magnificent Mount Etna, Europe's largest active volcano. The peak has changed in size over the years, but is presently listed around 10,000 feet. Etna has been active

in modern times, destroying the village of Mascali in 1928, and erupting again in 1971, 1992, 2001, and 2002.

It was beneath this mountain that Zeus is said to have crushed the multi-headed, hundred-handed, snake-infested dragon Typhoeus, thus attaining dominion over Olympus. Zeus forever banned the dragon to the infernal regions of Tartarus under Mount Etna. The Greeks warned that whenever Typhoeus tried to break out of his confinement, lava would spill forth and earthquakes would crack open the land.

Your included tour takes us up to view the Sartorius Craters—a vantage point that offers views of the sea, pine woods, and ancient craters in the valley below. As you walk along the volcanic soil, your Trip Experience Leader can offer insights into the geological drama happening beneath your feet, and how locals have learned to live with such a volatile neighbor.

After our hike, we'll descend and make our way to a well-earned lunch.

Lunch: At a local restaurant.

Afternoon: We'll return to the ship in Marina di Riposto. After taking some time to rest and refresh, join your fellow travelers in the lounge for an exclusive discussion with a local vulcanologist to round out our day of Mount Etna discoveries.

Dinner: Onboard the ship.

Evening: At your leisure. You may wish to retire early after your day of hiking and prepare for tomorrow's disembarkation.

Day 14 Disembark ship • Explore Taormina • Aci Castello

- Destination: Taormina
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch
- Accommodations: Grand Hotel Faraglioni or similar

Breakfast: Onboard the ship.

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

After our tour, you'll have some free time to explore Taormina on your own. Continue meandering down the charming streets of town, or take a cable-car ride down to the sea.

Lunch: At a local restaurant.

Afternoon: We'll set off for Aci Castello after lunch and check into our hotel upon arrival. Then we'll set off on an orientation walk of the surrounding area with our Trip Experience Leader.

Dinner: On your own. Perhaps you'll seek out a classic Sicilian dish such as *Pasta con le Sarde*, a pasta dish featuring sardines and anchovies with fennel and pine nuts.

Evening: On your own—ask your Trip Experience Leader for recommendations.

Day 15 Explore Catania • World War II Museum

- Destination: Catania
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Dinner
- Accommodations: Grand Hotel Faraglioni or similar

Activity Note: If this day falls on a Monday, the World War II Museum is closed. In that instance, we will visit the museum on another day during our time in Catania.

Breakfast: At the hotel.

Morning: Today, we'll drive to Catania, Sicily's second-largest city, and visit its local World War II Museum. The museum is dedicated to the Allied landing on the southern coast of Sicily, which we'll learn more about from a local guide during our tour.

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

Our Trip Experience Leader will then guide us on a tour of one of Catania's bustling outdoor markets, after which you will have some free time to continue exploring independently.

Lunch: On your own in Catania—ask your Trip Experience Leader for suggestions.

Afternoon: We'll then return to the hotel where the remainder of the afternoon is free. You may wish to join our Trip Experience Leader on a discovery walk of Aci Catello.

Dinner: Join your fellow travelers for a Farewell Drink and Farewell Dinner at a local restaurant this evening.

Evening: Free to enjoy your last night in Sicily however you wish.

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

• Included Meals: Breakfast

Breakfast: At the hotel.

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

Travelers taking our *Italy's Itria Valley & Ancient Matera* post-trip extension will fly to the Italian mainland this morning.

END YOUR ADVENTURE WITH AN OPTIONAL POST-TRIP EXTENSION

5 nights in *Italy's Itria Valley & Ancient Matera*

Day 1 Fly to Brindisi • Transfer to Martina Franca

Day 2 Explore Martina Franca • Visit local Masseria

Day 3 Explore Matera • Cave dwelling tour

Day 4 Martina Franca • Optional Ostuni & Cisternino tour

Day 5 Alberobello visit

Day 6 Transfer to Brindisi • 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.*

Castelbuono

(Day 4 \$95 per person)

Head to the small hilltop village of Castelbuono, which boasts centuries of rich history and a charming medieval town center. Embark on a discovery walk with your Trip Experience Leader here, including a visit to Castelbuono's most famous attraction: its medieval castle. In fact, the name Castelbuono means “good castle” in Italian. Construction on the castle began in the 14th century, and over the centuries it underwent more changes and additions as members of the wealthy Ventimiglia family moved from Palermo to Castelbuono. Today, the castle houses the Castelbuono Civic Museum and a chapel featuring impressive medieval art. Afterwards, savor an included lunch at a local restaurant, accompanied by live music. Enjoy some time for independent exploration before driving back to Palermo.

Marsala

(Day 8 \$115 per person)

Located in the westernmost point of Sicily, Marsala is most known for its sweet amber wine, but it is also an elegant seaside town with a historic Baroque city center. Upon arrival, enjoy a discovery walk with your Trip Experience Leader, followed by a visit to a local winery. Learn about the process of crafting the city's namesake wine; then sit down for an included lunch paired with a Marsala wine tasting.

Baroque Heritage of Sicily

(Day 11 \$130 per person)

On this full-day optional tour, you'll witness some of the best examples of the Sicilian Baroque architecture in the area, when you visit towns in *Val di Noto* (southeast Sicily)—part of a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Your day begins with a visit to the *Ragusa Ibla* (Ancient Ragusa), where you'll tour the majestic Church of Saint George. This afternoon, your journey continues in the city of Modica, where you'll entice your taste buds with local chocolates during a tasting, followed by an included lunch.

PRE-TRIP

Florence & Lucca: The Soul of Tuscany

INCLUDED IN YOUR PRICE

- » 6 nights accommodation
- » 10 meals: 6 breakfasts, 2 lunches, and 2 dinners
- » Guided tours (with personal headsets): Florence • Vinci • Olive farm visit • Lucca • Vineyard visit
- » Services of our local Trip Experience Leader
- » Gratuities for local guides and motorcoach drivers
- » All transfers

PRE-TRIP EXTENSION ITINERARY

Indulge in the timeless traditions of Tuscany on this trip extension. Sample farm-fresh olive oil; witness iconic, vineyard-laced landscapes; and admire artistic and architectural marvels as you make your way from the mighty, regional capital of Florence to the charming city of Lucca.

Day 1 Depart U.S.

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

Day 2 Arrive Florence, Italy

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

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

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

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

Day 3 Explore Florence

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

Breakfast: At the hotel.

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

A former Roman city, Florence grew in size, significance, and power during medieval times—becoming one of Europe's most important cities along the way. Between the 14th and 16th centuries, many of Europe's biggest names—in literature, art, architecture, finance, and more—had ties to Florence, and when that city began to demonstrate renewed interests in the Classical Era, much of Europe

followed suit. Today, historians note the Renaissance as the period of transition between the Medieval Era and Early Modern Europe.

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

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

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

Afternoon: Free for your own discoveries—ask your Trip Experience Leader for recommendations. Perhaps you’ll seek out the original David to see Michelangelo’s work firsthand, or walk among Leonardo da Vinci’s inventions and designs in his namesake museum.

Dinner: At a local restaurant.

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

Day 4 Florence • Optional Siena tour

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

Breakfast: At the hotel.

Morning: Today, enjoy a full day of independent discoveries in Florence.

Or, you may wish to join our optional tour of Florence’s ancient rival to the south—Siena. A rich and powerful city during the medieval ages, Siena’s banking activities and trade in wool and textiles placed it in direct competition with Florence. While Florence continued to thrive, however, Siena’s influence decreased after the 16th century, as it spent much of its energies on defense against foreign conquerors.

Today’s Siena, however, still retains the air of the Tuscan Middle Ages, with some of the most splendid examples of Gothic architecture in Italy. Explore this timeless city with our Trip Experience Leader by foot, including its medieval cathedral—the Duomo di Siena.

Lunch: On your own in Florence.

Or, if you have chosen our optional tour, savor an included lunch in a local *trattoria*.

Afternoon: Continue to discover Florence on your own.

For those on our optional tour, the afternoon is at your leisure in Siena. Afterwards, drive back to Florence arriving around dinner time.

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

Evening: Free to make independent discoveries this evening.

Day 5 Explore Vinci • Visit agritourism farm • Lucca

- Destination: Lucca
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch
- Accommodations: Corte degli Angeli or similar

Breakfast: At the hotel.

Morning: We'll depart Florence today and begin our overland journey to Lucca. Along the way, we'll stop in the hilltop town of Vinci—birthplace of Renaissance artist Leonardo da Vinci. We'll set off on a walking tour of the scenic medieval village, followed by some time for independent exploration.

Next, we'll head out into the pastoral landscape to visit a local agritourism farm.

Lunch: At the farm.

Afternoon: We'll continue our drive to Lucca. After checking into our hotel, our Trip Experience Leader will guide us on an orientation walk. Then the remainder of the day is on your own.

Dinner: On your own in Lucca. Perhaps you'll seek out a dish of *tortellini Lucchese*, a local egg-based pasta stuffed with finely seasoned meat.

Evening: Free to spend as you wish.

Day 6 Explore Lucca

- Destination: Lucca
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Dinner
- Accommodations: Corte degli Angeli or similar

Breakfast: At the hotel.

Morning: Set off for a guided tour of Lucca, a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Nestled in a verdant valley, this gem of Tuscany features ancient architecture and customs that have

withstood the tests of time. This can be seen most readily in the well-preserved city walls which have surrounded the city since the 17th century, when they successfully defended against the advances of Florence during the rise of the Medici—they encompass a wide expanse of red terra-cotta roofed homes, and the eye-catching Case-Torri or “Tower Houses” of wealthy families.

You'll see the walls up close during your tour, which also takes you through Lucca's charming piazzas, including the Puccini House—a museum dedicated to the life and works of the Italian composer, Giacomo Puccini.

Following our tour, you'll have a little time to amble around the city independently.

Lunch: On your own in Lucca.

Afternoon: The remainder of the day is free for independent exploration.

Dinner: At a local restaurant.

Evening: On your own—ask your Trip Experience Leader for recommendations.

Day 7 Vineyard visit & wine experience • Optional Pisa tour

- Destination: Lucca
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch
- Accommodations: Corte degli Angeli or similar

Breakfast: At the hotel.

Morning: We'll drive into the countryside today to visit a local vineyard. We'll tour the grounds and learn about wine production—from the grape to the bottle.

Lunch: Included at the vineyard, featuring a selection of their vintages to sample.

Afternoon: Drive back to Lucca where the rest of the day is on your own.

Or, join us on an optional tour to the city of Pisa, a UNESCO World Heritage Site that is famous for so much more than its iconic Leaning Tower. You'll explore the Piazza dei Miracoli (the Square of Miracles)—decorated by the stunning marble architecture of its Cathedral, the Baptistery (with its marvelous echo), and, yes, the Leaning Tower.

Dinner: On your own in Lucca.

Or, for those who have joined our optional tour, enjoy dinner at a local restaurant in Pisa.

Evening: The evening is free. Those on our optional tour will drive back to our hotel in Lucca after dinner.

Day 8 Fly to Palermo • Join main adventure

• Included Meals: Breakfast

Breakfast: At the hotel.

Morning: We'll depart for the airport in Florence this morning where we'll catch a flight to Palermo and join the main adventure.

OPTIONAL TOURS

Siena

(Day 4 \$120 per person)

Discover the medieval walled city of Siena, Florence's great historical rival, on this full-day optional tour. Laid out over the slopes of three steep hills, Siena offers its visitors a rich tapestry of churches, monuments, and other historical sites. See the Duomo—Siena's main cathedral—and its famous square, the Piazza del Campo, during a walking tour before lunch at a local *trattoria*. You'll also have time to make your own discoveries before returning to Florence in time for dinner.

Pisa

(Day 7 \$145 per person)

Discover the city of Pisa on this optional tour. Explore the Piazza dei Miracoli (the Square of Miracles), which includes the stunning marble architecture of its Cathedral, the Baptistery (with its marvelous echo), and, of course, the Leaning Tower. At the square's Cathedral, you can still view the lamp that inspired Galileo Galilei's theory of the pendulum. He used the

vantage point of the top of Pisa's celebrated Leaning Tower to demonstrate principles of speed and velocity.

This tour also features an included dinner at a local restaurant.

POST-TRIP

Italy's Itria Valley & Ancient Matera

INCLUDED IN YOUR PRICE

- » 5 nights accommodation
- » 8 meals—5 breakfasts, 1 lunch, and 2 dinners
- » 7 small group activities
- » Services of a local O.A.T. Trip Experience Leader
- » Gratuities for local guides, drivers, and luggage porters
- » All transfers

POST-TRIP EXTENSION ITINERARY

Explore the sun-drenched landscapes of Puglia as you wander through the historic charm of Martina Franca, where Baroque architecture meets traditional trattorias, offering an unforgettable cultural experience in the Itria Valley.

Day 1 Fly to Brindisi • Transfer to Martina Franca

- Destination: Martina Franca
- Accommodations: Park Hotel San Michele or similar

Morning: After bidding farewell to the rest of our group, we'll begin our journey to the Itria Valley. First, we'll head to the airport for our flight to Brindisi.

Lunch: On your own en route. You may want to pick something up at the airport to enjoy on the plane.

Afternoon: Upon arrival in Brindisi, we'll transfer to our hotel in Martina Franca, a charming town in the heart of the Puglia region known for their picturesque historic centers, Baroque architecture, and winding cobblestone streets. Martina Franca boasts elegant palaces and a lively market square.

Dinner: On your own. Perhaps you'll seek out Puglian cuisine such as orecchiette pasta with *cime di rapa* (turnip greens), creamy burrata cheese, and bruschetta topped with sun-ripened tomatoes and olive oil. Be sure to try a refreshing glass of Primitivo wine, known for its rich, velvety texture and notes of dark berries.

Evening: At your leisure—you are free to relax at the hotel, enjoy a night exploring, or chat with your fellow travelers.

Day 2 Explore Martina Franca • Visit local Masseria

- Destination: Martina Franca
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Dinner
- Accommodations: Park Hotel San Michele or similar

Breakfast: At the hotel.

Morning: Set off on a tour of Martina Franca with a local guide, who will regale you with tales of the town's history, culture, and architectural treasures.

Following our city tour, you have some free time to explore on your own.

Lunch: On your own.

Afternoon: Reconvene with the rest of the group to visit a local Masseria, a traditional Puglian farmhouse typically at the center of agricultural estates. Here, we'll explore the grounds surrounded by olive groves and vineyards.

Dinner: Savor a farm-to-table dinner experience at the Masseria, enjoying rustic yet refined dishes prepared with the local ingredients, fresh wines, and engaging conversations with our hosts and fellow travelers.

Evening: Return to the hotel where the rest of the evening is free.

Day 3 Explore Matera • Cave dwelling tour

- Destination: Martina Franca
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch
- Accommodations: Park Hotel San Michele or similar

Activity Note: Today's Matera city tour will be physically demanding. Appropriate walking shoes are recommended.

Breakfast: At the hotel.

Morning: Depart for Matera, a captivating city renowned for its ancient cave dwellings, also known as Sassi, which have been inhabited for thousands of years. Explore these fascinating troglodyte dwellings with a guided walking tour, marveling at the unique architecture and rich history of this UNESCO World Heritage Site.

Following our tour, you are free to make your own discoveries in Matera. Perhaps you'll join your Trip Experience Leader for a stroll down narrow alleyways to soak up the timeless atmosphere of this extraordinary city.

Lunch: At a local trattoria.

Afternoon: Return to the hotel where the rest of the day is yours to make your own discoveries.

Dinner: On your own.

Evening: Feel free to relax in the hotel or enjoy a nightcap with your fellow travelers.

Day 4 Martina Franca • Optional Ostuni & Cisternino tour

- Destination: Martina Franca
- Included Meals: Breakfast
- Accommodations: Park Hotel San Michele or similar

Breakfast: At the hotel.

Morning: Enjoy a full day of independent discoveries.

Or, you may join us on our optional full-day excursion to Ostuni and Cisternini. First, depart for Ostuni, also called *La Citta Bianca*—The White City—due to its dazzling whitewashed buildings perched above the Adriatic. We'll explore the charming historic center with a walking tour, admiring its narrow alleys, medieval walls, and panoramic views of the surrounding countryside.

You are free to explore at your leisure following our tour. Perhaps you'll visit a local olive oil mill for a tasting experience as Puglia is renowned for its high-quality olive oil. Or maybe you'll seek out the rich history of Ostuni by visiting local museums, such as the Civic Museum or the Archaeological Museum, to delve into the region's cultural heritage.

Lunch: On your own—perhaps you’ll try a local trattoria to savor traditional Apulian dishes.

Those who have chosen our optional tour will enjoy an included lunch at a local restaurant.

Afternoon: Continue your day at leisure.

Or, if you’ve joined our optional tour, journey to Cisternino, a picturesque hilltop town known for its narrow streets, traditional *trulli* houses, and breathtaking views of the Valle d’Itria. Then, enjoy a gelato discovery experience, sampling artisanal flavors crafted from seasonal fruits and local ingredients. After, we’ll return to our hotel in Martina Franca to join our fellow travelers.

Dinner: On your own. Ask your Trip Experience Leader for a recommendation.

Evening: At your leisure.

Day 5 Alberobello visit

- Destination: Martin Franca
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Dinner
- Accommodations: Park Hotel San Michele or similar

Breakfast: At the hotel.

Morning: Depart for Alberobello. This charming Italian town is known for its *trulli*, the conical-roofed and dry-stone dwellings

that have earned UNESCO World Heritage Site status. Built out of limestone—and without cement—these homes date back as far as the mid-14th century but remain remarkably well-preserved today.

Following our tour, you are free to explore. Perhaps you’ll visit the Museo del Territorio Casa Pezzolla, a recreated *trulli* house that represents life as it was centuries ago.

Lunch: On your own.

Afternoon: We’ll return to our hotel in Martina Franca this afternoon.

Dinner: We’ll enjoy a Farewell Dinner at a local restaurant, where you can enjoy a delicious meal with your fellow travelers, reminiscing about your adventures in Puglia.

Evening: On your own. You are free to rest up for the next day’s flight home or ask your Trip Experience Leader for recommendations on how to make the most of your last night.

Day 6 Transfer to Brindisi • Return to U.S.

- Included Meals: Breakfast

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

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

OPTIONAL TOUR

Ostuni & Cisternino

(Day 4 \$100 per person)

Depart for Ostuni, also called *La Citta Bianca*—The White City—due to its dazzling whitewashed buildings perched above the Adriatic. We’ll explore the charming historic center with a walking tour, admiring its narrow

alleys, medieval walls, and panoramic views of the surrounding countryside. You are free to explore at your leisure following our tour. Perhaps you’ll visit a local olive oil mill for a tasting experience as Puglia is renowned for its high-quality olive oil. Or maybe you’ll seek out the rich history of Ostuni by visiting

local museums, such as the Civic Museum or the Archaeological Museum, to delve into the region's cultural heritage.

Then continue your journey to Cisternino, a picturesque hilltop town known for its narrow streets, traditional *trulli* houses, and breathtaking views of the Valle d'Itria. Then, enjoy a gelato discovery experience, sampling artisanal flavors crafted from seasonal fruits and local ingredients. This optional tour includes lunch at a local restaurant.

YOUR M/V CLIO SMALL SHIP

Explore aboard our privately owned, 89-passenger small ship

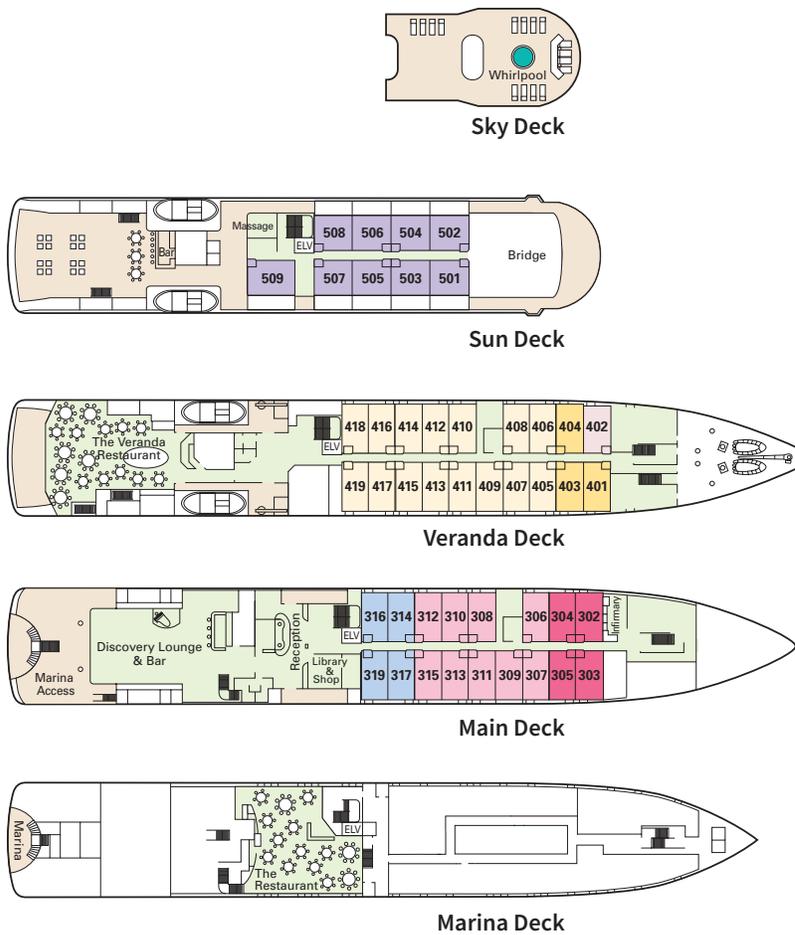
Cruise the world's legendary waterways aboard our 89-passenger small ship, the M/V *Clio*, rated excellent by 96% of travelers. Built in 1998, the *Clio* was purchased and refurbished in 2016, prior to its first departure. The ship holds four groups of 20–25 travelers (with an average of 22), each with its own local Trip Experience Leader, dedicated to bringing culture to life in the Baltics, Portugal, Spain, the Red Sea, and beyond.



SHIPBOARD FEATURES

- **Two dining areas with single, open seating:** Savor regionally-inspired dishes or American favorites during all buffets and table-service meals in the ship's dining room or indoor/outdoor veranda.
- **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.
- **Complimentary 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 in the indoor/outdoor veranda, Sun Deck, or whirlpool on the Sky Deck.
- **English-speaking crew:** Enjoy dedicated attention from our international staff throughout your voyage. Plus, all shipboard announcements are made in English for your convenience.
- **Zodiac crafts & tenders:** These onboard crafts are available to take you to shore in the most remote ports.
- **Elevator service:** An elevator serves the first four passenger decks (must use stairs to access the Sky Deck).

M/V CLIO



CABIN CATEGORIES	
VS	Cabin with balcony – 205 sq. ft.
A	Cabin with window – 194 sq. ft.
B	Cabin with window – 194 sq. ft.
C	Cabin with window – 194 sq. ft.
D	Cabin with window – 194 sq. ft.
E	Cabin with window – 194 sq. ft.
S	Single cabin with window – 161 sq. ft.

Registry: Malta

Length: 328 ft.

Beam: 46 ft.

Draft: 11 ft.

Cabin Size: 194-205 sq. ft., with a single cabin of 161 sq. ft.

Number of Cabins: 45

Passenger Capacity: 89

Entered Service: 1998

Refurbished in: 2016

International crew: 60

Passenger Decks: 5

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

Elevator service to first four passenger decks

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

- 44 double-occupancy cabins between 194–205 sq. ft.; one single-occupancy cabin is 161 sq. ft.
- All outside-facing with a window or a balcony
- Queen-size bed (convertible to two twins)
- Complimentary wireless Internet access, closet, flat-screen TV, DVD/CD player, telephone, mini-refrigerator, safe
- Private bath with shower, hair dryer, and toiletries



Cabin on the Veranda Deck

TRAVEL DOCUMENTS & ENTRY REQUIREMENTS

Your Passport

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

Need to Renew Your Passport?

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

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

Recommended Blank Pages

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

- **Main trip only:** You will need 1 blank passport page.
- **Optional extension to Florence and Lucca:** No additional pages needed.
- **Optional extension to Itria Valley:** No additional pages needed.

Visa Required

We’ll be sending you information with 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 information is for U.S. citizens only. All visas and fees are subject to change.

- **Europe (Italy, Sicily):** 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).

RIGORS, VACCINES & GENERAL HEALTH

Is This Adventure Right for You?

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

PACING

- 8 locations in 16 days

PHYSICAL REQUIREMENTS

- Not appropriate for travelers using wheelchairs, walkers, or other mobility aids
- You must be able to walk 3-5 miles unassisted and participate in 6 hours of physical activities each day
- Agility and balance are required for embarking a small boat or ferry
- Travelers using walkers, crutches, or other mobility aids will not be able to board the *M/V Clio*
- 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

CLIMATE

- Daytime temperatures range from 44-62°F in the winter
- Sicily has a typical Mediterranean climate, with warm, rainy winters

TERRAIN & TRANSPORTATION

- Travel on some rugged paths and many cobblestoned streets on foot, as well as over bumpy, narrow rural roads by bus
- Ability to climb steep stairs and walk up and downhill is required in several locations
- Travel by 89-passenger small ship and 30-passenger coach

FLIGHT INFORMATION

- Travel time will be 12-20 hours and will most likely have two connections of between 2-3 hours
- International flights to Sicily depart around midnight

ACCOMMODATIONS & FACILITIES

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

Steps to Take Before Your Trip

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

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

No Vaccines Required

Recommended Vaccines

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

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 will charge a set fee or a percentage fee each time you use a foreign ATM. We recommend that you check with your bank before you depart. Don’t forget to memorize the actual digits of your card’s PIN number (many keypads at foreign ATMs do not include letters on their keys—they only display numbers.)

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

Credit & Debit Cards

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

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

ilb

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.). You can pay this bill by cash or credit/debit card only. For cash, we accept U.S. dollars or Euros (on itineraries in Europe). For credit/debit cards, we accept MasterCard and Visa. Other forms of payment, such as checks, Discover, or 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).

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 & Customized Air

Quick Definitions

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

- **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

Sicily: +39

PACKING: WHAT TO BRING & LUGGAGE LIMITS

Luggage Limits

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

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

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

Don't Forget:

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

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

Your Luggage

Checked Luggage

Consider a duffel bag or soft-sided suitcase. Look for one with heavy nylon fabric, wrap-around handles, built-in wheels, and a heavy duty lockable zipper. Due to space limitations on our motorcoaches, you are allowed one piece of checked luggage per person. Porterage at airports and hotels is provided for **one** bag per person. All bags should have luggage tags.

Carry-on Bag

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

Locks

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

Clothing Suggestions: Functional Tips

- **Travel light:** A good rule of thumb is to gather together everything you want to bring; then take half of that. To have a varied travel wardrobe, yet keep your luggage light, we recommend you select a color scheme and pack color-coordinated clothing items that can be mixed to create different outfits.
- **Consider clothing designed for travel, sports, or camping:** With modern fabrics, lightweight packing for comfort and protection through a wide range of weather is easy.
- **Bring rain gear:** Regardless of your month of travel, rainfall is certainly a possibility. We suggest you bring a folding umbrella and waterproof shell. Water-resistant walking shoes are advantageous in case heavy downpours pass through.
- **Good shoes are critical:** Why? Because you'll be doing a lot of walking on this trip—between 3 to 5 miles a day—on a variety of surfaces: over uneven cobblestones, on rocky Mt Etna, up and down steep village streets, and on a moving ship (to name a few). We strongly recommend bringing at least **2 pairs of comfortable athletic-type shoes with good traction**, such as sneakers, trekking shoes, hiking shoes, or sport sandals (i.e. Tevas, Merrells, Keens, etc.). Trekking shoes are required for the Mt Etna visit as the gravel and loose rock surface can be very slippery; if you have difficulties with balance you may even want to bring a folding trekking pole.

Style Hints

- **Pack casual clothes:** Comfortable, informal apparel is acceptable at each of your destinations. At dinner, you will not need to wear “dressy” clothing; men do not need jackets or ties and women do not need fancy dresses. You may want one or two “smart casual” outfits for the Welcome Reception or Farewell Dinner, but it’s completely up to you.
- **Proper attire in churches:** To satisfy dress codes for Italian churches, men and women are requested to cover their arms and legs. No shorts above the knees or sleeveless garments please. Women wearing sleeveless blouses can cover their bare arms with a scarf. It’s no longer necessary for women to cover their heads. Pantsuits are now acceptable in churches.

Recommended Packing Lists

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

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

Recommended Clothing

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

Essential Items

- Daily essentials: toothbrush, toothpaste, floss, hairbrush or comb, shaving items, deodorant, shampoo/conditioner, shower cap, body soap, etc.
- Spare eyeglasses/contact lenses and your prescription
- Sunglasses with a neck strap

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

Medicines

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

Home-Hosted Visits

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

Electricity Abroad

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

Voltage

Electricity at hotels in Italy 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

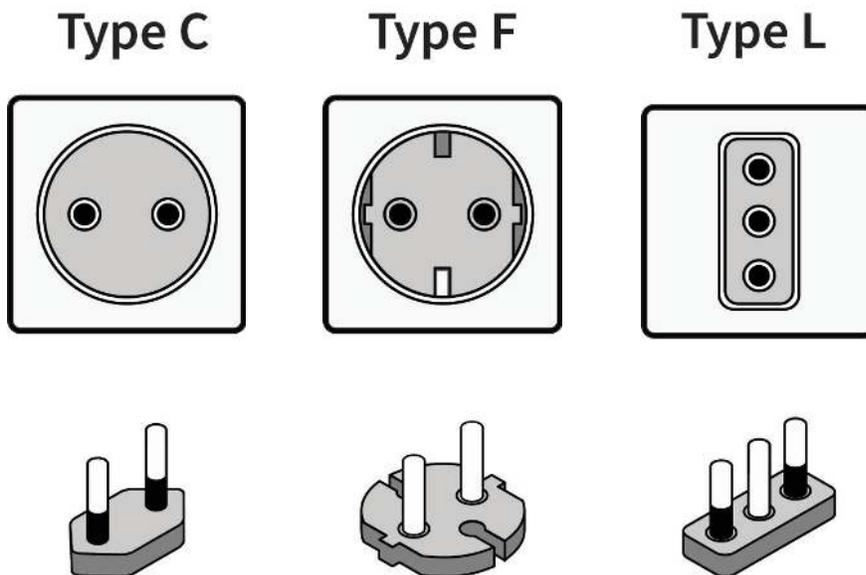
Aboard ship, there are both standard American plugs and Western European Type C plugs.

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



CLIMATE & AVERAGE TEMPERATURES

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

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

Lucca, Italy: The coast and valleys near Lucca usually have warm summers, with highs in the 80s. July and August are generally the hottest months, while June and September offer warm weather without being too hot. April, May, and October have sunny days but the chances of rain are higher. Winter offers many sunny, mild days but nights are cool.

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	FLORENCE, ITALY			SIRACUSA, SICILY		
	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	60 to 40	89 to 71	3.0
FEB	53 to 36	75	7	62 to 40	88 to 66	1.9
MAR	60 to 40	72	7	88 to 66	88 to 65	1.6
APR	68 to 46	72	7	88 to 71	83 to 62	1.5
MAY	75 to 53	72	7	95 to 75	75 to 57	0.9
JUN	84 to 58	71	7	98 to 85	67 to 51	0.4
JUL	89 to 63	64	4	112 to 90	62 to 46	0.2
AUG	88 to 62	66	5	112 to 90	66 to 48	0.6
SEP	81 to 58	71	8	98 to 85	77 to 56	1.4
OCT	69 to 51	76	9	78 to 56	86 to 65	3.9
NOV	58 to 42	81	9	69 to 48	89 to 68	2.2
DEC	50 to 37	81	8	62 to 43	90 to 73	3.4

MONTH	PALERMO, SICILY			LUCCA, ITALY		
	Temp. High-Low	% Relative Humidity (am-pm)	Monthly Rainfall (inches)	Temp. High-Low	% Relative Humidity (avg)	Monthly Rainfall (inches)
JAN	59 to 50	77 to 72	2.8	65 to 36	--	2.4
FEB	59 to 50	77 to 71	2.6	68 to 37	--	1.9
MAR	61 to 52	78 to 71	2.3	70 to 41	--	2.3
APR	65 to 55	77 to 71	1.7	80 to 46	--	3.3
MAY	71 to 61	80 to 73	1.0	80 to 55	--	2.3
JUN	77 to 68	77 to 71	0.5	90 to 59	--	1.5
JUL	83 to 73	76 to 70	0.2	93 to 64	--	1.0
AUG	84 to 75	77 to 71	0.5	100 to 65	--	2.3
SEP	80 to 71	76 to 69	1.6	91 to 59	--	4.9
OCT	73 to 64	76 to 68	3.9	85 to 53	--	5.9
NOV	67 to 58	75 to 68	3.7	75 to 45	--	5.6
DEC	61 to 53	76 to 71	3.1	65 to 39	--	3.4

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

M/V Clio

Cabin Amenities

Your cabin amenities include a private bathroom with shower, hairdryer, TV, in room heating, internal telephones and a mini-refrigerator. Each cabin is appointed with a sitting area, plus the decks and dining rooms are spacious and attractively decorated, providing welcoming locations for relaxing with your traveling companions.

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 onboard the ship. (This is normal procedure for many small ships.) 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

All meals are taken in the onboard restaurant, which acts as the ship's dining room. Meals will be a mix of regional specialties and familiar American standards, and will feature a variety of entrée options including vegetarian. Complimentary beer, wine and soft drinks are served with lunch and dinner. A selection of fine wines is also available for purchase, starting at approximately \$20-30 per 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.

If you require a special diet, such as vegetarian, low-cholesterol, or gluten-free, please request this in advance, you may do so by contacting one of our Travel Counselors. Dining times will vary according to the scheduled daily activities. In keeping with regional custom, dinner may be served at a later hour (around 7:00 pm) than Americans may be accustomed to.

Electricity

Cabins are equipped with 110-volt outlets that are designed to fit American plugs. In your bathroom you will find a dual 110/220-volt outlet, for use with electric shavers. While your bathroom does come equipped with a hairdryer, please do not use any other appliances that heat up, such as hair irons or curlers—they tend to short out.

Getting Ashore

Getting from ship to shore during an ocean-going voyage is not the same experience as on a river cruise—it requires more balance and agility, plus there are more formalities.

- **Balance and agility are needed:** You'll either walk down a gangway—which can be steep, wet, and slippery—or be shuttled to land in a small boat (a process known as “tendering”). We'll use the gangway most of the time, but tenders will be used when the ship cannot dock closely enough for the gangway to reach the shore. Tenders can differ in size, and some of them maybe open with no covering. From time to time we will use the ship's own fleet of Zodiacs—which are small but sturdy open-air boats holding 8-10 people each—as tenders. To get into one of the Zodiacs, you'll need to go down a steep staircase, and then crew members will assist you as you step from the M/V Clio into the Zodiac.
- **Clothing note:** Since tenders in general (and the Zodiacs in particular) are small open-air boats, they are more susceptible to being splashed by water. You might want to bring a rain jacket or waterproof cover (like a poncho) to protect your clothing while transferring from ship to shore.
- **Expect formalities on arrival in port:** When the M/V Clio arrives in a new port, she'll need to be cleared by the local port authorities before you can leave the ship. In some cases, the wait will be as short as 30 minutes, but other times it may take up to 2 hours. Your crew will do all they can to make the wait as short as possible and to minimize the inconvenience to you. (For example, you will be asked to leave your passport with the front desk when you first embark on the ship. That way, it is on hand if the port authorities ask to see it.) However, the procedure can be complex and may take a while to complete. Typically the authorities work directly with the crew, but they do retain the right to speak with you as well.

Internet Access and Email

Limited WiFi service is available for free in some of the public spaces, but not in individual cabins. If you want to use the WiFi connection you'll need to bring your own device—a laptop, tablet, smartphone, etc.—because the ship does not rent or loan these devices. Instructions on how to connect will be available at Reception. Please keep in mind that our WiFi access onboard is subject to the challenges of travel: ship location, signal availability, and usage volume onboard will affect connectivity and speed. You should expect that there will be times when the WiFi is either slow or not available, and that these disruptions can be brief or longer lasting.

Laundry Services

There is laundry service available on board, but no dry cleaning. Prices are per piece of clothing and will be provided to you onboard.

Medical Services

There is always a doctor onboard, as well as all of the basic First Aid supplies. All physician's fees will be payable directly to the doctor. All specific medicines are the responsibility of each traveler.

Recreational Facilities

Our ship features a library, a lounge with a bar, a dining room, and a sun deck. The bar is open from approximately 11 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).

Shipboard Payments

Payment for shipboard expenses can be made using major credit cards such as Visa, MasterCard, or Discover. You will not need a PIN to use your credit card onboard. Personal checks and American Express are not accepted onboard.

Ship-to-Shore Communications

The ship has satellite telephone connections which allows you to call anywhere in accordance with the current local tariffs. You can purchase phone cards at the reception desk for \$10, which will give you 15-30 minutes' worth call time to the U.S. (depending on which state you are calling).

Smoking Policy

Smoking is prohibited on board, with the exception a designated outdoor deck area reserved for smokers.

Wheelchairs

The ship is not built to accommodate wheelchairs.

Water

Tap water onboard ship is filtered and safe to drink. As part of our sustainability commitment, we offer filtered tap water at meals rather than bottled water, which creates waste. If you prefer bottled water, it will be available onboard for a charge.

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 Clio

- **Year built:** 1998
- **Year purchased:** 2015
- **Length and width** 328' by 46'
- **Passenger capacity:** 89

- **Crew members:** 60
- **Decks:** 5
- **Cabins:** 45
- **Elevator:** Yes

ABOUT YOUR DESTINATIONS: CULTURE, ETIQUETTE & MORE

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

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

Sicilian Culture

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

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

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

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

Religion and Religious Observances

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

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

For instance, from February 3–5, Catania erupts with an around-the-clock celebration of Sant' Agata. On March 19, Sicilian tables and altars overflow with food in honor of St. Joseph, and the evenings are lit by bonfires. Syracuse honors Santa Lucia delle Quaglie for the first and second Sundays of May, carrying her silver statue around the main square. The second week of July brings *U Fistinu*, a massive celebration of Santa Rosalia. In early August in Cefalù, St. Salvatore is honored by young men scrambling to climb a greased pole, followed by plenty of feasting and later, illuminated regattas.

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

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

Lent ends during *Settimana Santa* (Holy Week). This runs the week before Easter, and includes the Monday after. The holiday is observed with colorful processions, many depicting the passion of Christ, and each with its own special motifs that vary from town to town. One of the most unusual is the *Ballo Dei Diavoli* (Devils' Dance) that takes place in the Prizzi section of Palermo. Red-faced devils and a yellow figure representing Death run amok in the streets, but are eventually defeated by the faithful.

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

Language

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

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

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

Hotel Courtesy in Sicily

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.

Hotel Courtesy in Italy

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Taking Photographs

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

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

Safety & Security

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

Italian Cuisine

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

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

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

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

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

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

- **Bistecca alla Fiorentina:** A T-Bone steak from a local breed of cow, the Chianina cattle

- **Lampredotto:** A panino stuffed with the fourth stomach of a cow and soaked in broth, with salsa Verde and black pepper from Florence
- **Polpette:** Savory and seasoned Italian meatballs.

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

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

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

Sicilian Cuisine

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

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

Florence in Brief

Capital of Tuscany

From the Etruscans to the Romans to the Renaissance, the region of Tuscany is possibly the world's greatest repository of art, ranging from extraordinary paintings and sculpture to frescoes and architectural masterpieces. The region is a blend of rugged hills, fertile valleys, and long stretches of sandy beaches that arc along the west coast of central Italy and fringe the pine-forested coastal plain of the Maremma. Visitors come in search of fine art, to explore the extraordinary countryside, to savor the simple yet tasty cuisine and wine, or enjoy the seacoast and islands. The cities and towns of Tuscany house a centuries-old heritage of culture and art that produced magnificent medieval cathedrals and the marvels of the Renaissance period. Florence is the most popular city, but many other cities are popular as well: Siena, Pisa, Arezzo, Cortona, San Gimignano and Lucca, and Volterra come immediately to mind.

City Layout and Details

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

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

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

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

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

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

Local Transportation

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

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

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

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

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

Cuisine

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

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

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

Some of Florence’s best-known dishes include:

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

Shopping: What to Buy, Customs, Shipping & More

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

Returns

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

Crafts & Souvenirs

Italy

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

Sicily

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

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

U.S. Customs Regulations & Shipping Charges

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

The top three points to know are:

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

DEMOGRAPHICS & HISTORY

Italy

Facts, Figures & National Holidays

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

National Holidays: Italy

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

01/01 New Year's Day

01/06 Epiphany

04/25 Liberation Day

05/01 Labor Day

06/02 Republic Day

08/15 Assumption of Mary

11/01 All Saints' Day

12/08 Feast of the Immaculate Conception

12/25 Christmas Day

12/26 St. Stephen's Day

Italy: A Brief History

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Sicily

Facts, Figures & National Holidays

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

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

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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.

RESOURCES

Suggested Reading

Campania

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

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

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

Tuscany

Within Tuscany: Reflections on a Time and Place by Matthew Spender (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 City of Florence: Historical Vistas and Personal Sightings by R.W.B. Lewis (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.

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

A Culinary Traveller in Tuscany: Exploring and Eating off the Beaten Track by Beth Elon (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 (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.

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 Simeți'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.

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.

Useful Websites

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

Useful Apps

Flight Stats

Track departures, arrivals, and flight status

LoungeBuddy

Get access to premium airport lounges around the world

Timeshifter

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

GoogleMaps or Maps.me

Maps and directions anywhere in the world

Triposo

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

Rome2rio

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

Flush or Sit or Squat

Find a clean toilet anywhere

Uber or Bolt or Grab

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 or Skype or Signal

WiFi calling anywhere in the world

Duolingo or 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



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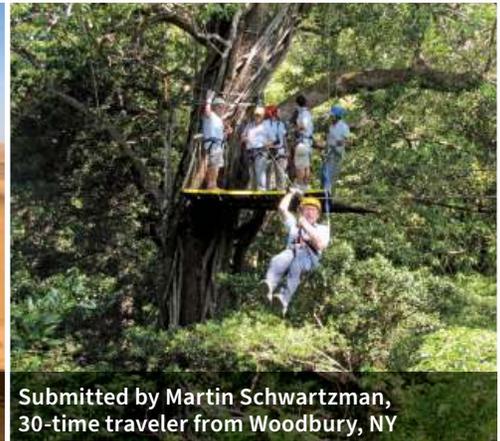
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