

# Overseas Adventure Travel®

THE LEADER IN PERSONALIZED SMALL GROUP ADVENTURES SINCE 1978

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



New! Journey Through Southern Italy: Sicily, the  
Aeolian Islands, Calabria & Puglia

2025

# Overseas Adventure Travel®

347 Congress Street, Boston, MA 02210

Dear Traveler,

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

When you join us, you will slip seamlessly into local life as you explore off the beaten path in your small group. Like all our itineraries, this one is designed to give you an intimate understanding of your destination, not just a superficial view. 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. And if you choose to travel solo, you will enjoy all these cultural experiences at an unmatched value, with our FREE 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 **87% of our travelers who personalize their experience**. Perhaps you will choose to see more of your destination by adding an optional trip extension to your itinerary. You can also arrive a few days early to explore independently and get acclimated, customize your air itinerary, and more.

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

Warm regards,



Harriet R. Lewis  
Chair  
Overseas Adventure Travel

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Greek theater, Taormina

## New! Journey Through Southern Italy: Sicily, the Aeolian Islands, Calabria & Puglia Small Group Adventure

**Sicily:** Taormina, Aeolian Islands | **Italy:** Reggio Calabria, Sila National Park, Martina Franca, Trani

Small groups of no more than 16 travelers, guaranteed

**18 days starting from \$6,395**

including international airfare

Single Supplement: **FREE**

For departure dates & prices, visit [www.oattravel.com/sim2025pricing](http://www.oattravel.com/sim2025pricing)

Seek out the undiscovered gems of southern Italy on a journey through Sicily, the Aeolian Islands, Calabria, Puglia, and beyond. You'll discover ancient ruins set against mountain backdrops, small medieval villages blooming with wildflowers, and the natural wonders of Italy. Castles, cathedrals, quaint harbors, and olive groves are all waiting for you on this adventure through the lesser-visited regions of Sicily and southern Italy.

### IT'S INCLUDED

- 16 nights accommodation
- International airfare, airport transfers, government taxes, fees, and airline fuel surcharges unless you choose to make your own air arrangements
- All land transportation
- 33 meals—16 breakfasts, 11 lunches, and 6 dinners (including 1 Home-Hosted Lunch)
- 24 small group activities
- Services of a local O.A.T. Trip Experience Leader
- Gratuities for local guides, drivers, and luggage porters
- 5% Frequent Traveler Credit toward your next adventure

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

Journey Through Southern Italy: Sicily, the Aeolian Islands, Calabria & Puglia



## WHAT TO EXPECT

① ② ③ ④ ⑤ Moderate

**Pacing:** 6 locations in 17 days.

**Physical requirements:** You must be able to walk 3-5 miles unassisted and participate in 6 hours of physical activities each day; 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 12-18 hours and will most likely have one to two connections.

View all physical requirements at [www.oattravel.com/sim](http://www.oattravel.com/sim)

## SICILY & SOUTHERN ITALY: THE O.A.T. DIFFERENCE

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

**People-to-People Experiences:** Head to the island of Salina for *A Day in the Life* of an Aeolian Island farmstead, where the farm workers will share stories of their life while we lend a hand with daily chores. Enjoy a special **Home-Hosted Lunch**, a delightful way to experience everyday life as a Sicilian family welcomes you to share their table for a traditional meal and conversation. In Taormina, you'll get to watch a chef prepare *arancini*, stuffed and fried rice balls that are a staple of Sicilian cuisine. Then, you'll be able to roll up your sleeves and try your hand at making *arancini* yourself.

**O.A.T. Exclusives:** In Savoca—a small village where a key scene from *The Godfather* was filmed—you'll stop to discuss the **Controversial Topic** of the local Sicilian Mafia, also known as *Cosa Nostra*, during a conversation with locals who are knowledgeable about the infamous organization.

## ITINERARY SUMMARY

DAYS	DESTINATION
1	Fly to Catania, Sicily
2-4	Taormina
5-6	Lipari Island
7-9	Reggio Calabria
10-11	Sila National Park
12-14	Martina Franca
15-17	Trani
18	Return to U.S.

## PERSONALIZE YOUR ADVENTURE

### OPTIONAL EXTENSIONS

The Maltese Archipelago

PRE-TRIP: 5 nights from **\$2,095**

The Amalfi Coast & Sorrento

POST-TRIP: 6 nights from **\$2,595**

### 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 **Valletta** before your Malta pre-trip extension from **\$280** per room, per night
- Arrive early in **Taormina** before your main adventure from **\$320** per room, per night



# Journey Through Southern Italy: Sicily, the Aeolian Islands, Calabria & Puglia

## YOUR DETAILED ITINERARY

### BEGIN YOUR ADVENTURE WITH AN OPTIONAL PRE-TRIP EXTENSION

#### 5 nights in *The Maltese Archipelago*

**Day 1** Depart U.S.

**Day 2** Arrive Valletta, Malta

**Day 3** Explore Valletta

**Day 4** Valletta • Visit Rabat • Mdina

**Day 5** Valletta • Optional Gozo Island tour

**Day 6** Valletta • Visit Hagar Qim • The Three Cities

**Day 7** Valletta • Fly to Catania to begin main trip

#### **Day 1** Depart U.S.

Depart from the U.S. to Catania, Italy.

#### **Day 2** Arrive in Catania, Sicily • Transfer to Taormina

- Destination: Taormina
- Accommodations: Excelsior Palace Hotel or similar

**Morning/Afternoon:** You'll be met at the airport and assisted with your transfer to Taormina, where you'll check into your hotel. Meet your fellow travelers—including those who took our *The Maltese Archipelago* pre-trip extension—and your local Trip Experience Leader. Upon request, your Trip Experience Leader can lead you on an orientation walk around your neighborhood today.

**Dinner/Evening:** The evening is yours to relax or explore independently, with dinner on your own. Ask your Trip Experience Leader for restaurant recommendations.

#### **Day 3** Explore Taormina • Greco-Roman Amphitheater

- Destination: Taormina
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Dinner
- Accommodations: Excelsior Palace Hotel or similar

**Breakfast:** Served at the hotel, with Italian and American options available.

**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. Later, embark on a walking tour of Taormina, Sicily's most famous resort town. Dating from the third and fourth centuries BC, Taormina is perched dramatically high on a rocky promontory

overlooking the Ionian Sea. It's a charming medieval town with typical cobblestone streets leading into spacious squares graced by lovely 15th-century *palazzi*.

You'll tour the upper town's historic center, including a visit to the classical Greco-Roman theater. This is Taormina's most-visited site, offering a view of rare beauty: Mount Etna and the seacoast. In the third century BC, the Greeks carved this theater on the slopes of Mount Tauro out of rock, and even today, the superb acoustics of the theater allow listeners in the last rows to hear a whisper on stage.

**Lunch:** On your own. Ask your Trip Experience Leader to recommend restaurants to you.

**Afternoon:** This afternoon, you can make your own discoveries by exploring independently. Your Trip Experience Leader will have suggestions on what you could see and do.

**Dinner:** Gather with your fellow travelers at a local restaurant for our Welcome Dinner, featuring authentic regional fare. You'll get to watch a chef prepare *arancini*, stuffed and fried rice balls that are a staple of Sicilian cuisine. Then, you'll be able to roll up your sleeves and try your hand at making *arancini* yourself.

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

#### **Day 4 Taormina • Savoca • *The Godfather* tour • **Controversial Topic: The Sicilian Mafia • Home-Hosted Lunch****

- Destination: Taormina
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch
- Accommodations: Excelsior Palace Hotel or similar

**Breakfast:** Served at the hotel, with Italian and American options available.

**Morning:** Step into the setting of Francis Ford Coppola's *The Godfather* as you visit a few of the film's Sicilian locations—rustic towns and villages where the locals adhere to age-old traditions. First, you'll visit the small village of Savoca, a sleepy town of 1,700 that hugs lush hillsides, where the marriage of Michael Corleone and Appolonia Vitelli was filmed. You'll take a walking tour of the village, led by your Trip Experience Leader, before meeting a journalist to discuss the **Controversial Topic** of the Sicilian Mafia, also known as *Cosa Nostra*. We'll go beyond the headlines, myths, and legends about this organization and learn about it on a personal level from people that are intimately familiar with it.

**Lunch:** Break into smaller groups to enjoy a special **Home-Hosted Lunch**, a delightful way to experience everyday life as a Sicilian family welcomes you to share their table for a traditional meal and conversation.

**Afternoon:** Return to Taormina where the rest of the afternoon is yours to spend at leisure—ask your Trip Experience Leader for recommendations on places to visit, restaurants for dinner, and nightlife options.

**Dinner:** On your own.

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

#### **Day 5 Taormina • Ferry to Aeolian Islands • Explore Lipari**

- Destination: Lipari Island
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch
- Accommodations: Arciduca Grand Hotel or similar

**Activity Note:** Due to local restrictions, travelers will be required to carry their own luggage on and off the ferry.

**Breakfast:** Head down for an early breakfast this morning, served at the hotel, with Italian and American options available.

**Morning:** We'll check out of our hotel and set off for the town of Milazzo, where we'll embark on a public ferry to the Aeolian Island of Lipari. The Aeolian Islands are seven individual islands declared a UNESCO site, and Lipari is the largest and most populated of them. Often overlooked by tourists, this charming archipelago is bursting with natural beauty, quaint culture, and local flavor.

**Lunch:** At a local restaurant on Lipari.

**Afternoon:** Check into your hotel this afternoon in Lipari. Depending on where you stay, your room may feature air-conditioning, wireless Internet access, TV, telephone, and safe. Hotel amenities may include and on-site restaurant and bar as well as a lounge area.

The afternoon is yours to spend at leisure—perhaps you'd like to head back to Marina Corta square for a wine *aperitivo* while you look out over the Tyrrhenian Sea.

**Dinner:** On your own—check with your Trip Experience Leader for suggestions.

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

## Day 6 Explore Lipari

- Destination: Lipari
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Dinner
- Accommodations: Arciduca Grand Hotel or similar

**Breakfast:** At the hotel.

**Morning:** Set out on a discovery walk with a local guide, heading to Corso Vittorio Emanuele, a market area of town filled with shops, art galleries, cafés, and restaurants. Once there, we'll spend some time at the

Marina Corta, a charming town square overlooking the sea. We'll take in views of the Castle of Lipari, explore the Archaeological Museum, and stroll through the narrow alleys leading up to the Cathedral of San Bartolomeo.

**Lunch:** On your own.

**Afternoon:** Free to continue exploring the natural beauty of Lipari on your own. If the weather is nice, you might like to go for a swim at one of the island's many beaches.

**Dinner:** Sit down for dinner with your fellow travelers at a local "home restaurant."

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

## Day 7 Lipari • Salina • *A Day in the Life of an Aeolian Island farm*

- Destination: Lipari Island
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch
- Accommodations: Arciduca Grand Hotel or similar

**Breakfast:** Served at the hotel, with Italian and American options available.

**Morning:** Embark on a public ferry at Lipari's pier to head to the island of Salina for *A Day in the Life* of an Aeolian Island homestead.

When we arrive, we'll meet a local resident who will show us around their property. Depending on which home we visit, we might tour a small farm or get an inside look at our host's gardens.

Before lunch, we'll help with preparing for our meal by harvesting fresh vegetables. The type of produce we pick depends on the season, but may include pumpkin, eggplant, green beans, wild strawberries, or loquat. We'll also learn about the various endemic vegetables that grow here. After, we'll venture back to the farmhouse, where we'll help with food preparation and setting up the table.



**Lunch:** At the farmhouse, featuring fresh-grown vegetables and various regional specialties.

**Afternoon:** Following lunch, we'll help the family clean up before heading to the pier by coach to catch a ferry back to Lipari. The rest of the afternoon is free for you to explore.

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

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

### **Day 8 Lipari • Ferry to Reggio Calabria • Explore Scilla**

- Destination: Reggio Calabria
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner
- Accommodations: Hotel Medinblu or similar

**Activity Note:** Due to local restrictions, travelers will be required to carry their own luggage on and off the ferry.

**Early Morning:** We'll check out of our hotel very early this morning to head down to the pier, where we'll board a ferry to Reggio Calabria, a city on the tip of mainland Italy's "toe."

**Breakfast:** A boxed breakfast will be provided by the hotel.

**Morning:** We'll arrive in Reggio Calabria, a historic city that was an important crossroads for the Romans. Reggio Calabria was hit by a devastating earthquake in 1908, which leveled portions of it. Tragedy has now given the city a unique character, where the historic blends with the modern as the city rebuilt itself in the aftermath.

Before we settle into our Reggio Calabria accommodations, we'll explore the nearby ancient town of Scilla. Named for the mythological sea monster that tried to swallow

Odysseus as he made his way home, this town has existed in some form since 493 B.C. Now, it's a picturesque seaside locale known for the castle that sits up high on a sheer cliff overlooking the sea, and for inviting beaches. You'll explore Scilla and its highlights, and also meet some of the fishermen who make their living out on the waters around Scilla, getting a better picture of daily life here. Before lunch, you'll also have some time to explore on your own.

**Lunch:** Sit down for a lunch with your fellow travelers at a local *trattoria* in Scilla.

**Afternoon:** Leave Scilla for Reggio Calabria, and once there we'll check into our hotel. Depending on where you stay, your room may feature air-conditioning, wireless Internet access at a charge, TV, telephone, and safe. Hotel amenities may include an on-site restaurant and bar as well as a lounge area.

The rest of the afternoon is yours to spend relaxing and enjoying the hotel's amenities or exploring Reggio Calabria independently.

**Dinner:** We'll have a light dinner of typical *aperitivi* (savory Italian hors d'oeuvres) such as cheese, cured meats, and bread.

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

### **Day 9 Explore Reggio Calabria • Museo Archeologico Nazionale • Optional Pentedattilo tour**

- Destination: Reggio Calabria
- Included Meals: Breakfast
- Accommodations: Hotel Medinblu or similar

**Activity Note:** The Museo Archeologico Nazionale is closed on Mondays, so some departures may visit the museum on another day.

**Breakfast:** Served at the hotel, with Italian and American options available.

**Morning:** Explore Reggio Calabria with a local guide leading you on a walking tour through the city, seeing its highlights and ending at the Museo Archeologico Nazionale. We'll enjoy a visit to the Bronzes of Riace, two life-size Greek warrior statues which date back to the fifth-century Greek era but remained undiscovered until 1971. They are known as the best-preserved Greek bronzes in the world. It took a decade to restore them and present them to the public, and we'll get to see them up close.

**Lunch:** On your own.

**Afternoon:** Your afternoon is yours to explore Reggio Calabria independently. Or, you might choose to take an optional tour to the ancient village of Pentedattilo.

Found south of Reggio Calabria, Pentedattilo has been the destination of writers, artists, and travelers since the early 19th century. Known as the "cradle of Calabrian Greek civilization," this village has Greek heritage, Byzantine churches, hiking paths, and more to discover. During this tour, we'll visit with local artisans and peruse their handmade wares, as well as hike to the "five fingers" cliffs.

**Dinner:** On your own.

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

## **Day 10 Reggio Calabria • Explore Gerace**

- Destination: Reggio Calabria
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch
- Accommodations: Hotel Medinblu or similar

**Breakfast:** Served at the hotel, with Italian and American options available.

**Morning:** After breakfast, we'll head to Gerace, a picturesque village perched atop a 1,640-foot-tall rock. The town features well-preserved remains of the largest religious building in Calabria, a 10th-century Norman Castle, as well as a historic medieval center. Upon arrival, we'll embark on a walking tour with a local guide, beginning with the old gate of "Varvara" and continuing on to Piazza della Repubblica. Despite its relatively small size, Gerace was once home to 128 churches, and we'll observe the ramparts of some of these structures throughout our walk.

Later, you'll have some free time to explore on your own. Be sure to glean recommendations from your Trip Experience Leader, or perhaps you prefer to find a local eatery, sip an espresso, and watch locals go about their daily routine.

**Lunch:** Sit down for lunch with your fellow travelers at a local *trattoria*.

**Afternoon:** This afternoon, we'll head back to our hotel in Reggio Calabria, where you'll have the remainder of the day free to explore. Your Trip Experience Leader is happy to provide activity suggestions.

**Dinner:** On your own. Check with your Trip Experience Leader for restaurant recommendations.

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

## **Day 11 Reggio Calabria • Pizzo • Sila National Park**

- Destination: Sila National Park
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Dinner
- Accommodations: National Park Hotel & Spa or similar

**Breakfast:** Served at the hotel, with Italian and American options available.

**Morning:** Begin your journey to Sila National Park, a hidden and wild gem set in the mountains of southern Italy. Along the way, we'll stop in the historic seaport of Pizzo. The word "pizzo" means "the tip," which refers to its position overlooking the Gulf of Santa Eufemia. During our time here, we'll explore this fishing town on foot and learn about its world-renowned tuna industry. We'll also observe one of its architectural jewels: a 15th-century Aragonese castle.

After, enjoy free time to explore Pizzo on your own. Check with your Trip Experience Leader for suggestions, including where to dine for lunch.

**Lunch:** On your own in Pizzo.

**Afternoon:** We'll continue on this afternoon to our hotel. Set in the heart of Sila National Park, a UNESCO World Heritage site, our chalet accommodations are the perfect place to launch our explorations of the park. Depending on where you stay, your room may feature air-conditioning, wireless Internet access, TV, telephone, and safe. Chalet amenities may include an on-site restaurant and bar as well as a lounge area. Once you settle in to your chalet, you'll have an orientation walk with your Trip Experience leader to familiarize yourself with the area. After, you may choose to stroll around the park or perhaps take advantages of the spa services available.

**Dinner:** At the hotel.

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

## **Day 12 Pollino National Park • Transfer to Martina Franca**

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

**Activity Note:** Hiking and picnicking in Pollino National Park is weather dependent. In the case of inclement weather, we will visit Morano Calabro with lunch included at local restaurant.

**Breakfast:** Served at the hotel, with Italian and American options available.

**Morning:** We depart this morning for Pollino National Park, a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Encompassing nearly 750 miles of preserved land, it's one of the largest national parks in the world and home to one of the oldest European trees, a Heldreich's pine. The park also boasts the greatest variation of fauna in southern Italy, including roe deer, wild cats, wolves, birds of prey, and the endangered otters, *Lutra lutra*. The landscape here consists of everything from alpine meadows to deep river canyons, but the main feature of the park is its namesake, Mount Pollino, which towers over the preserve at nearly 7,500 feet. During our time here, we'll enjoy a guided hike, giving us an opportunity to immerse ourselves in this pristine environment.

**Lunch:** After our hike, sit down for a relaxing picnic in the park.

**Afternoon:** After lunch, we'll continue on to our destination for the evening: the whitewashed village of Martina Franca. Perched on a hilltop in Valle d'Itria, the village is known for its well-preserved Baroque architecture and old-world charm. The narrow streets are dotted with family-owned eateries and cozy cafés, and the residential alleyways are crisscrossed with laundry lines, blowing in the breeze. Here, we'll find quintessential small-town Italy. Upon



arrival, we'll check in to our hotel. Depending on where we stay, our hotel may feature an on-site bar and restaurant.

Following check in, our Trip Experience Leader will guide us on an orientation walk around town. Take this opportunity to ask any questions you may have.

**Dinner:** Sit down for dinner with your fellow travelers at our hotel.

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

### **Day 13 Explore Martina Franca • Visit a local farm • Optional tour to the grottos of Monopoli**

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

**Activity Note:** Today's optional tour to the grottos of Monopoli can be enjoyed by boat or by land; the boat tour is available seasonally from late April to early October.

**Breakfast:** Served at the hotel, with Italian and American options available.

**Morning:** This morning we'll embark on a walking tour led by a local guide through the historic streets of Martina Franca. Established in the 10th century by refugees fleeing the Arab invasion of Taranto, the town's tragic beginnings eventually gave way to prosperity when King Philip of Anjou granted tax exemptions—so wealthy, in fact, that a castle and defensive walls were built to fortify the area. Today, Martina Franca is a village seemingly frozen in time, boasting dazzling whitewashed homes, a labyrinthine warren of alleyways, and remarkably-preserved Baroque and Rococo buildings.

After some free time to explore, our discoveries will then take us to a local, family-run farm, where we'll meet with the owner and learn about the traditional production of *capicolli*, dry-cured pork. The owner will welcome us and provide an introduction to the operation, and then we'll join them on a walk around the property. We'll have an opportunity to observe the animals and ask any questions we may have.

**Lunch:** We'll sit down for a lunch that includes fresh *capicolli*.

**Afternoon:** After lunch, we'll head back to the hotel, and you'll have the rest of the day free to explore. Alternatively, you may wish to join the optional tour to the grottos of Monopoli. Nestled along the Adriatic coast, the town of Monopoli sits atop a vast underground system of karst caves that stretch nearly two miles. These caves began forming nearly 100 million years ago when what is now Puglia was below sea level. Organic matter from marine life, such as mollusks and various plants, accumulated in the seabed, generating a massive deposit of mud and sand. Over time, this deposit compressed to form a layer of limestone that was gradually pushed up to the earth's surface by tectonic shifting—thereby creating the spectacular system that exists today.

For those who join the optional tour, we'll first drive to San Polignano, where we'll board a boat that will take us to Monopoli. With the help of a local guide, we'll explore the grottos and have a chance to admire the canyons, deep abysses, fossils, stalactites, stalagmites, and dripstones of unique shapes and colors. We'll then continue on to the town of Monopoli, where we'll enjoy a walking tour. Known for its Baroque cathedral, this idyllic seaside town is actually full of historic gems, including a crypt of ancient tombs, as well as the 16th-century

Castle of Carlo V. In addition to its cultural offerings, the Monopoli coastline is particularly beautiful, with its shimmering, blue waters.

**Dinner:** On your own for those who don't join the optional tour. Ask your Trip Experience Leader to recommend restaurants to you. For those on the optional tour, we'll sit down for dinner at a local restaurant in Monopoli.

**Evening:** Travelers taking the optional tour will return to the hotel after dinner. You have the freedom to spend the rest of your evening as you wish—ask your Trip Experience Leader for recommendations.

#### **Day 14 Explore Alberobello • Visit a local cheese farm • Discovery walk of Locorotondo**

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

**Breakfast:** Served at the hotel, with Italian and American options available.

**Morning:** Today we'll depart for the historic village of Alberobello, where we'll witness the iconic conical-roofed homes, or *trulli*, that line the hilly streets of this UNESCO World Heritage Site. With a local guide, we'll wind our way through the narrow streets as we learn about the huts for which this town is known. Historically, these structures were built using dry stone masonry, meaning without the adhesive power of mortar or cement. Maintenance on the huts is, therefore, highly specialized, requiring skilled carpentry that is passed down through generations. This technique cannot be learned in trade schools—the method is purely preserved in the mind of a “Mastro Trullaro” and his or her apprentices.

Later this morning, we'll have some free time to explore Alberobello on our own before driving to a local cheese farm. Here, we'll learn about the production of regional cheeses and we may even be able to observe the process before sitting down for lunch.

**Lunch:** At the cheese farm, featuring an array of cheeses and other local delicacies.

**Afternoon:** After lunch, we'll depart for the small, whitewashed town of Locorotondo, rising out of the lush green countryside. As we'll find out, one of the main features of the town are also its *trulli* huts, but its distinctive heritage is also visible in sites like the 18th-century Mother Church of “St. George the Martyr.” Locorotondo also boasts a particularly charming and historic town center, complete with dazzling white alleys, an opulent clock tower, and a uniquely circular structure—from which the town derives its name, meaning “round place.”

Following our tour, you have the freedom to spend the rest of your afternoon in Locorotondo as you wish—ask your Trip Experience Leader for recommendations. Later, we'll return to Martina Franca and have the remainder of the evening to explore on our own.

**Dinner:** On your own. Check with your Trip Experience Leader for suggestions.

**Evening:** Free to explore—ask your Trip Experience Leader for recommendations.

#### **Day 15 Explore Matera • Transfer to Trani**

- Destination: Trani
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner
- Accommodations: San Paolo al Convento or similar

**Breakfast:** Served at the hotel, with Italian and American options available.

**Morning:** We'll check out of our hotel this morning and depart for the city of Matera. Here, we'll meet with a local guide to embark on a walking tour of Matera's Churches Road, so called for the stretch of ancient stone houses of worship we'll discover in Sassi di Matera—a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

Sassi di Matera consists of two original districts in the valley, Sasso Caveoso and Sasso Barisano. Our hike will take us back in time as we journey past quarries, ravines, and sculpted gardens toward a network of small cave churches, crypts, and fortifications. During the trek, you may see the churches of San Pietro Barisino, Sant'Agostino, and Santa Maria de Idris, which overlook the scenic neighboring valley. You'll want to keep an eye out for medieval paintings on many of the churches' walls.

**Lunch:** Sit down for a lunch with your fellow travelers at a local restaurant.

**Afternoon:** We'll continue on to the seaport city of Trani after lunch, where we'll check in to our hotel there and settle in. Depending on where you stay, your room may feature air-conditioning, wireless Internet access at a charge, TV, telephone, and safe. Hotel amenities may include an on-site restaurant and bar as well as a lounge area.

Later, you'll have an orientation walk with your Trip Experience leader to familiarize yourself with the area, before having the rest of the afternoon to explore on your own. Perhaps you'll stop at Trani's fishing piers to meet with local fishermen and see what a fresh catch looks like.

**Dinner:** We'll enjoy a light dinner of *aperitivi* at a local restaurant.

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

## **Day 16 Explore Trani • Visit a wine and olive oil farm**

- Destination: Trani
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch
- Accommodations: San Paolo al Convento or similar

**Breakfast:** Served at the hotel, with Italian and American options available.

**Morning:** Set out on a walking tour of Trani with a local guide. From the sea, the skyline of this city is dominated by two impressive buildings, the San Nicola Pellegrino and Swabian Castle. In the 15th century, this seaport was a trading and shipping hub, and there are still remnants of this grand history here today. You'll explore Trani, with stops at both of these mighty landmarks.

After your walking tour, depart for a local wine and olive oil farm, where we'll discover the art of growing two of Italy's most cherished products. First, we'll stroll through the vineyards, as we learn about Italian viticulture. This will give us an opportunity to understand the meticulous growing and harvesting methods behind every bottle.

Afterward, we'll head to the dining room and begin our wine and olive oil tasting journey accompanied by lunch.

**Lunch:** Sit down for an included lunch at the farm.

**Afternoon:** We'll head back to the hotel after lunch, and you'll have the freedom to spend the rest of your afternoon as you wish.

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

**Evening:** After returning to our hotel, you have the freedom to spend the rest of your evening as you wish.



## Day 17 Trani • Visit Castel del Monte

- Destination: Trani
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Dinner
- Accommodations: San Paolo al Convento or similar

**Breakfast:** Served at the hotel, with Italian and American options available.

**Morning:** This morning, we'll depart for Castel del Monte, a 13th-century citadel and castle situated on a hill in Andria. Erected by King Frederick II, who had inherited the lands from his mother, the castle was never furnished and the only substantial evidence of its purpose was that it was used as a prison and later a refuge during a plague before being abandoned. Now a UNESCO World Heritage Site, Castel del Monte offers visitors a look into this unusual and historic structure, which features an octagonal design, a courtyard, throne room, tower ceiling, and fireplace. As we tour the grounds, take the opportunity to ask any questions you may have.

Later, we'll return to Trani, where you'll have free time to explore.

**Lunch:** On your own. Check with your Trip Experience Leader for suggestions.

**Afternoon:** Enjoy free time to discover Trani on your own. Your Trip Experience Leader can provide activity ideas.

**Dinner:** We'll enjoy a Farewell Dinner at a local restaurant, featuring the southern Italian cuisine we've come to know. Raise a glass and toast to the discoveries you've made in Italy.

**Evening:** After dinner, you'll head back to your hotel in Trani. Once there, you have the freedom to spend the rest of your evening as you wish—ask your Trip Experience Leader for recommendations.

## Day 18 Return to U.S. or begin your post-trip extension

- Included Meals: Breakfast

**Breakfast:** Served at the hotel, with Italian and American options available.

**Morning:** Transfer to the airport for your flight home. Or, begin your *The Amalfi Coast & Sorrento* post-trip extension.

## END YOUR ADVENTURE WITH AN OPTIONAL POST-TRIP EXTENSION

### 6 nights in *The Amalfi Coast & Sorrento*

**Day 1** Transfer to Amalfi • Explore Venosa • Manfredi Canteen winery

**Day 2** Explore Amalfi • Boat ride

**Day 3** Amalfi • Visit Villa Rufolo

**Day 4** Amalfi • Optional Vietri sul Mare Tour

**Day 5** Amalfi • Explore Positano • Transfer to Sorrento • Home-Hosted Dinner

**Day 6** Amalfi • Explore Capri • Monte Solaro funicular ride

**Day 7** Return to U.S.

## OPTIONAL TOURS

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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.

### Pentedattilo

(Day 9 \$145 per person)

Explore the ancient village of Pentedattilo, found south of Reggio Calabria, and discover why it has been the destination of writers, artists, and travelers since the early 19th century. Known as the “cradle of Calabrian Greek civilization,” this village has Greek heritage, Byzantine churches, hiking paths, and more to discover. During this tour, we’ll visit with local artisans and peruse their handmade wares, as well as hike to the “five fingers” cliffs.

**Please Note:** The optional tour can be enjoyed by boat or by land; the boat tour is weather-dependent, and only runs seasonally from April to October. When traveling by bus, the price of this tour will be \$115.

### Grotto of Monopoli

(Day 13 \$165 per person)

Situated along the Adriatic coast, the town of Monopoli sits atop a vast underground system of karst caves that stretch nearly two miles. This optional tour will take you through the caves by boat, enabling you to admire millions of years of naturally occurring limestone. We’ll board the boat in San Polignano, and then cruise to the caves. Afterward, we’ll continue on to the town of Monopoli and disembark for a walking tour. Dinner is included in Monopoli.

## PRE-TRIP

### The Maltese Archipelago

#### INCLUDED IN YOUR PRICE

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- |   |   |
|---|---|
| » Airfare from Valletta to Catania              | » Services of a local O.A.T. Trip Experience Leader         |
| » 5 nights accommodation                        | » Gratuities for local guides, drivers, and luggage porters |
| » 8 meals—5 breakfasts, 2 lunches, and 1 dinner | » All transfers   |
| » 7 small group activities                      |   |

#### PRE-TRIP EXTENSION ITINERARY

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*Journey to the Maltese Islands, where you'll be welcomed by a warm, friendly people and bask in their sun-kissed Mediterranean climate as you share the rich heritage of their country.*

##### Day 1 Depart U.S.

Depart the U.S. today on your flight to Malta.

##### Day 2 Arrive Valletta, Malta

- Destination: Valletta
- Accommodations: The Victoria Hotel or similar

**Morning/Afternoon:** Arrive in Valletta, Malta, today, where you'll meet your Trip Experience Leader. Transfer to your hotel and enjoy an orientation walk to acquaint yourself with the neighborhood surrounding your hotel.

**Dinner/Evening:** The evening is yours to relax or explore independently, with dinner on your own. Ask your Trip Experience Leader for restaurant recommendations.

##### Day 3 Explore Valletta

- Destination: Valletta
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Dinner
- Accommodations: The Victoria Hotel or similar

**Activity Note:** The Grandmaster's Palace is the seat of Malta's government, and may be closed to the public when Parliament is in session.

**Breakfast:** At the hotel.

**Morning:** Enjoy a walking tour of Malta's capital city, Valletta, a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Begin at the Upper Barrakka Gardens, taking in the breathtaking panorama of the Grand Harbor and the Three Cities, the three fortified towns of Vittoriosa, Cospicua, and Senglea located across the harbor. Continue through the city of Valletta with a visit to the priceless art at St. John's Cathedral with its elaborately ornate interior, and Caravaggio's masterpiece, *The Beheading of St. John*, hanging in the Oratory. You'll see the Grandmaster's



Palace staterooms, completed in 1574 and decorated with friezes and a collection of unique Gobelin tapestries.

Then, take a stroll through Strait Street, a one-time nightlife hot spot for British and American soldiers during World War II, followed by a visit to the market, where a variety of crafts and treats beckon from the many stalls.

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

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

**Dinner:** Gather with your fellow travelers at a local restaurant for our Welcome Dinner, featuring authentic regional fare.

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

#### **Day 4 Valletta • Visit Rabat • Mdina**

- Destination: Valletta
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch
- Accommodations: The Victoria Hotel or similar

**Breakfast:** At the hotel.

**Morning:** Begin your tour in the Wignacourt Collegiate Museum in Rabat which, in addition to exhibiting fine art and artifacts, also includes numerous underground features such as St. Paul's Grotto, Punic, Roman, and Early Christian catacombs, and a complex of World War II-era air raid shelters. You'll also stop to see the artistry, craftsmanship and skill of a gilder. This is someone who lays gold accents into different objects, in this instance, ornate Maltese clocks.

Proceed next to Mdina, the former capital of Malta. This medieval city is surrounded by thick, imposing walls, and the limited access allowed to traffic gives Mdina its nickname—the “Silent City.” Stroll along the peaceful winding streets, admire palaces now serving as private homes, and see Mdina's Baroque cathedral anchoring a large square.

**Lunch:** We'll enjoy lunch at a local farm, where we'll have the opportunity to sample freshly-made Maltese specialties.

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

**Dinner/Evening:** Continue making independent discoveries this evening, with dinner on your own. Ask your Trip Experience Leader for restaurant recommendations.

#### **Day 5 Valletta • Optional Gozo Island tour**

- Destination: Valletta
- Included Meals: Breakfast
- Accommodations: The Victoria Hotel or similar

**Breakfast:** At the hotel.

**Morning:** Your day is free to do as you please in Valletta. Or, join us on an optional full-day excursion to the island of Gozo. After breakfast, transfer to the pier for your ferry ride to Gozo, a small fishing and farming island with cultivated hills, rugged cliffs, and beautiful beaches.

On arrival, you'll visit a local bakery for a taste of *hobz*, traditional fresh-baked Maltese sourdough bread. Then, tour the Ggantija Neolithic Temples. This group of two very important temples, set side-by-side on the Xaghra Plateau, date to about 4000 BC, making them older than Egypt's pyramids.

**Lunch:** Today's optional tour includes lunch in a local restaurant. Otherwise, lunch is on your own today.

**Afternoon:** Your optional tour continues this afternoon as you discover Gozo's modern-day culture with a visit to a *bocce* club. Here, you'll have the opportunity to chat with some local players and learn more about the game's popularity in Malta. Then, enjoy a boat ride along the shore of beautiful Dwejra Bay, which boasts some of the most spectacular coastal scenery in Gozo.

Late this afternoon, board a ferry to return to Malta. The rest of the day is yours to do as you please. Your Trip Experience Leader will be happy to recommend free time activities.

**Dinner/Evening:** Continue making independent discoveries this evening, with dinner on your own. Ask your Trip Experience Leader for restaurant recommendations.

## **Day 6 Valletta • Visit Hagar Qim • The Three Cities**

- Destination: Valletta
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch
- Accommodations: The Victoria Hotel or similar

**Breakfast:** At the hotel.

**Morning:** Set out for a tour of one of Malta's best-known prehistoric temples, Hagar Qim, which means "free-standing boulders." This megalithic temple complex was constructed more than 5,200 years ago. The large stone complex contains rooms formerly devoted to animal sacrifices, burnt offerings, and ritual oracles, making it one of the oldest religious sites on Earth.

Next, explore the area Napoleon dubbed "The Three Cities," settled as early as the time of the Phoenicians. A trio of historic fortified towns—Cospicua, Senglea, and Vittoriosa—ring the Grand Harbor.

Vittoriosa, also known as Birgu, was settled by the Knights of St. John in 1530 when King Charles V of Spain granted them the territory of Malta. After resisting an Ottoman siege in 1565, in which a force of 700 knights overcame 40,000 Turkish soldiers, the knights ushered in Malta's Golden Age. Cospicua, the largest of the three, is a double-fortified harbor city known for its majestic bastions, built by the Knights of Malta. Today the city is also dominated by its old dockyard, one of the features that endured the terrible bombing campaigns of World War II. And Senglea, set atop a narrow promontory extending into the Grand Harbor with an area of just over half a square mile, is Malta's smallest locality but also its most densely populated.

**Lunch:** At a local restaurant.

**Afternoon:** Free for your own discoveries before returning to Valletta—ask your Trip Experience Leader for recommendations.

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

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

## **Day 7 Valletta • Fly to Catania to begin main trip**

- Included Meals: Breakfast

**Breakfast:** At the hotel.

**Morning:** Transfer to the airport this morning for your flight to Catania, where you'll begin your main *Journey Through Southern Italy: Sicily, the Aeolian Islands, Calabria & Puglia* adventure.

## OPTIONAL TOUR

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### Gozo Island

(Day 5 \$170 per person)

Join us on an optional full-day excursion. After breakfast, transfer to the pier for your ferry ride to Gozo, a small fishing and farming island with green, flat-topped cultivated hills, rugged cliffs, and beautiful inlets and beaches. Gozo, a UNESCO World Heritage Site, is known as “The Isle of Calypso” because of its Calypso Cave, which is supposedly where the legendary Ulysses took refuge during his ten years’ journey home at the end of the Trojan Wars.

On arrival, you’ll sample fresh Maltese bread at a local bakery, then tour the Ggantija Neolithic Temples. This group of two very important temples, set side-by-side on the Xaghra Plateau, date to about 4000 B.C., making them older than Egypt’s pyramids. Nearby, you’ll see the 17th-century Xaghra Windmill.

After lunch—included in your optional tour price—meet the members of a local *bocce* club to learn about the game’s popularity in Malta, and then enjoy a boat ride in beautiful Dwejra Bay, which boasts some of the most spectacular coastal scenery in Gozo.



## POST-TRIP

### *The Amalfi Coast & Sorrento*

#### INCLUDED IN YOUR PRICE

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- |   |   |
|---|---|
| » Overland transfer to Amalfi                   | » Services of a local O.A.T. Trip Experience Leader         |
| » 6 nights accommodation                        | » Gratuities for local guides, drivers, and luggage porters |
| » 12 meals—6 breakfasts, 3 lunch, and 3 dinners | » All transfers   |
| » 7 small group activities                      |   |

#### POST-TRIP EXTENSION ITINERARY

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*Experience the turquoise Tyrrhenian waters, sun-bleached villas, and precipitous cliffs of the Amalfi Coast and Sorrento on this 6-night extension.*

##### **Day 1 Transfer to Amalfi • Explore Venosa • Manfredi Canteen winery**

- Destination: Amalfi
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch
- Accommodations: Hotel Sole Splendid or similar

**Morning:** Depart your Trani hotel for Amalfi. Along the way, we'll stop for a walking tour of the historic town of Venosa. With a local guide leading the way, we'll take in the facades of the buildings, the amphitheater, the domus, the baths, and the Aragonese castle with its archaeological museum. Then, visit the unfinished Abbey of the Holy Trinity, the largest monastery complex in the Basilicata region, consisting of the old church from paleo-Christian times and the new church. Inside the abbey, frescos and mosaics from different eras are on display. The Holy Trinity Church contains the tomb of the Norman crusader, Robert Guiscard, as well as more beautiful frescos and mosaics.

After exploring Venosa, continue on to one of the most decorated wineries in the world, Manfredi Canteen. You'll explore the vineyards and visit the canteen before sitting down for lunch.

**Lunch:** At the winery, including a wine tasting of the local vintages.

**Afternoon:** Continue on to Amalfi, where we'll check into our hotel. Depending on where you stay, your room may feature air-conditioning, wireless Internet, TV, telephone, and safe. Hotel amenities may include and on-site restaurant and bar as well as a lounge area. Once you settle into your hotel, you'll have an orientation walk with your Trip Experience leader to familiarize yourself with the area.

**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—ask your Trip Experience Leader for recommendations.

## Day 2 Explore Amalfi • Boat ride

- Destination: Amalfi
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Dinner
- Accommodations: Hotel Sole Splendid or similar

**Activity Note:** The boat ride along the Amalfi Coast is available from April–October and dependent on weather conditions.

**Breakfast:** At the hotel.

**Morning:** Today we'll enjoy a guided walking tour of the iconic *Costiera Amalfitana* (Amalfi Coast). Discover what is perhaps Italy's most beautiful coastline—a UNESCO World Heritage Site richly imbued with centuries-old charm.

Then, set off on a boat ride along the ruggedly stunning shoreline, decorated by colorful fishing boats, distinctive rock formations, and villages whose buildings cling to the cliffs and seemingly tumble toward the sea.

**Lunch:** On your own.

**Afternoon:** You'll have the freedom to make independent discoveries.

**Dinner:** Our group will gather for a Welcome Dinner at a local restaurant.

**Evening:** Free to explore as you wish.

## Day 3 Amalfi • Visit Villa Rufolo

- Destination: Amalfi
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch
- Accommodations: Hotel Sole Splendid or similar

**Breakfast:** At the hotel.

**Morning:** We'll start our day in the town of Ravello, which sits atop a promontory and commands sweeping views of the rugged Amalfi Coast and Bay of Salerno. The center of town is the Piazza Duomo, boasting breezy

cafés and a sizeable terrace that overlooks the neighboring town of Scala. Here, we'll begin with a tour of the Villa Rufolo, a 13th-century villa built upon a pre-existing Roman structure. Afterward, enjoy the freedom to explore.

**Lunch:** Sit down for a lunch with your fellow travelers at a local restaurant.

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

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

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

## Day 4 Amalfi • Optional Vietri sul Mare Tour

- Destination: Amalfi
- Included Meals: Breakfast
- Accommodations: Hotel Sole Splendid or similar

**Breakfast:** At the hotel.

**Morning:** Today is free for you to make your own discoveries in Amalfi. Or, you may choose to join an optional tour to Vietri sul Mare, the “first pearl” of the Amalfi Coast and a UNESCO World Heritage site. This small coastal town is known for its ceramics and its historic center, and you'll experience both.

**Lunch:** On your own. Those on our Vietri sul Mare optional tour will sit down for lunch at a local restaurant.

**Afternoon:** Free to explore as you'd like. Those on the Vietri sul Mare optional tour will take a hands-on ceramics workshop at a local ceramics factory before heading back to the hotel.

**Dinner:** On your own. Ask your Trip Experience Leader to recommend restaurants to you.

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

### **Day 5 Amalfi • Explore Positano • Transfer to Sorrento • Home-Hosted Dinner**

- Destination: Sorrento
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Dinner
- Accommodations: Hotel Villa di Sorrento or similar

**Breakfast:** At the hotel.

**Morning:** Set out for Sorrento today, stopping along the way to explore Positano on foot with a local guide. With its terraced gardens and signature pink and terracotta houses cascading down a steep hillside, Positano is perhaps the most beloved and widely recognized village along the Amalfi Coast. We'll embark on a guided walk through the steep, narrow lanes, paying notice to the vibrant stucco, chic boutiques, and plethora of gelato shops. We'll also pass notable sites like the Church of Santa Maria Assunta, which sits upon the site of a Roman villa buried by Mount Vesuvius in 79 AD.

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

**Afternoon:** Continue your journey to Sorrento, considered the gateway to the Amalfi Coast. With its romantic location on the cliffs over the Bay of Naples, Sorrento has long served as the subject of songs and legends. It was here that mythical sirens, with the beauty of their sweet singing, were believed to lure sailors to shipwreck on the rocks. Sorrento is a town made for strolling, with remarkable architecture and commanding ocean views around each bend. Your Trip Experience Leader will lead an orientation walk around the area once everyone is settled in to the hotel.

**Dinner:** Sit down for a **Home-Hosted Dinner** with a local family.

**Evening:** Free to explore as you wish. perhaps you'll take a night stroll to try limoncello, a bright, citrusy post-dinner liqueur.

### **Day 6 Amalfi • Explore Capri • Monte Solaro funicular ride**

- Destination: Amalfi
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner
- Accommodations: Hotel Villa di Sorrento or similar

**Breakfast:** At the hotel.

**Morning:** Board a ferry bound for the island of Capri to explore the town and surrounding area. led by a local guide, we'll take a walking tour of the town and visit some of its highlights before having some time to explore this unique coastal commune independently. Then, we'll head to Anacapri, a nearby town set at the foot of Monte Solaro, the mountain that dominates the island.

**Lunch:** Sit down for lunch with your fellow travelers at a local restaurant.

**Afternoon:** After lunch, board a funicular that will take you high up the slopes of Monte Solaro, where you can take in spectacular views. Afterwards, we'll board a ferry back to Sorrento where you will have the rest of the afternoon to do as you wish.

**Dinner:** We'll gather for a Farewell Dinner at a local restaurant.

**Evening:** Free to make independent discoveries.

### **Day 7 Return to U.S.**

- Included Meals: Breakfast

**Breakfast:** We'll enjoy an early breakfast the hotel before transferring to the airport.

**Morning:** Transfer to the airport in Naples for your flight home.

## OPTIONAL TOUR

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### **Vietri sul Mare**

(Day 4 \$200 per person)

Explore Vietri sul Mare, the “first pearl” of the Amalfi Coast. This is the first town you will discover if you traveled the entire Amalfi Coast coming from Salerno, and Vietri sul Mare is known for its incredible coastline stretching all the way to Positano. Declared a UNESCO World Heritage Site, Vietri sul Mare is known for its ceramic artists and craftsmen, and you can discover these works of art at the Museum of Ceramics in town. You’ll also explore the historical center with its majestic Church of San Giovanni Battista, decorated in bright yellow and blue tiles.



# TRAVEL DOCUMENTS & ENTRY REQUIREMENTS

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## 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:** If you are taking only the main trip, you will need 2 blank passport pages.
- **Pre-trip extension to Malta:** No additional passport pages needed.
- **Post-trip extension to Amalfi and Sorrento:** No additional passport pages needed.
- **Both a pre and a post-trip extension:** No additional passport pages needed.
- **Stopover in Munich or Rome:** No additional passport 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 info is for U.S. citizens only. All visas and fees are subject to change.

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

## **Traveling Without a U.S. Passport?**

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

## **Traveling With a Minor?**

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

## **Emergency Photocopies of Key Documents**

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

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

## **Overseas Taxes & Fees**

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

## RIGORS, VACCINES & GENERAL HEALTH

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### 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

- 6 locations in 17 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
- 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 60–95°F
- Sicily has a typical Mediterranean climate, with hot, dry summers and warm, rainy winters
- Sicily can sometimes reach temperatures of 100°F with high humidity in the summer

#### 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 30-passenger coach, and ferry
- Three drives of 3 to 4 hours each

## 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](http://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.

## Medication Suggestions

- An antibiotic medication for gastrointestinal illness

## 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 in Sicily is safe to drink. It is also OK to brush your teeth or wash fruit with tap water.
- If you prefer bottled water, is readily available and inexpensive. (Bottled water is not included in the price of your tour.) Or you could bring a reusable water bottle from home to fill out at the hotel before heading out for the day.
- When in doubt about the water, salads, or ice, just ask the restaurant or your Trip Experience Leader.

### Food

- The food in Sicily shouldn’t cause any health problems—salads, fruit, and dairy products are all fine.

- Be careful with food that has been cooked and left to go cold, which might happen in some self-service places.

### **Electricity Supply for Medical Devices**

Electricity is as readily available in Sicily as it is in the U.S., but there can be occasional power outages. If you have a medical device that relies on electricity (such as a CPAP), you may wish to bring a battery as a backup.

# MONEY MATTERS: LOCAL CURRENCY & TIPPING GUIDELINES

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## 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](http://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 to obtain local currency 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 may be able to exchange cash at some hotels, large post offices, and money exchange offices, however they do not typically offer good exchange rates and can be difficult to find. To exchange cash, you'll usually need your passport and bills in good condition (not worn, torn, or dirty). New bills (post 2004) are best.

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

## ATMs

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

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

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

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

## Credit & Debit Cards

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

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

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

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

## Chip Cards

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

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

## Notify Card Providers of Upcoming Travel

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



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

## 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.*
- **Housekeeping staff at hotels:** The equivalent in euros of \$1–2 per room, per night
- **Waiters:** Your Trip Experience Leader will tip waiters for included meals. If you are dining on your own, tipping is often included in the price; look for the words *servizio incluso* in the menu or bill. If tipping is not included, a tip of 5% to 10% is customary. In addition, you may see the word *coperto* on your bill. This is not a tip, but more of a cover charge for the use of the table.
- **Public Restrooms:** Many public restrooms in Italy are manned by cleaning staff. It is customary to leave a small tip for them—about EUR .50 per person. 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. Prices range from EUR .50 to EUR 2.00 per single use. Many restaurants, cafes, and shops have pay-toilets or expect you to make a purchase before using the facilities.
- **Included in Your Trip Price:** Gratuities are included for local guides, drivers, and luggage porters on your main trip, extensions, and all optional tours.

*Please note: For your convenience, tips to O.A.T. staff can be paid in U.S. dollars or local currency. Please do not use personal or traveler's checks for tips.*

## AIR, OPTIONAL TOURS & STAYING IN TOUCH

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### Land Only Travelers & Personalized Air

#### Quick Definitions

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

### Air Inclusive Travelers

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

- **U.S. Departure:** If you are among a group of ten or more travelers who depart the U.S. from your international gateway city, it is our goal to have an O.A.T. Representative assist you at the U.S. airport with the check-in of your flight. Unless there are extenuating circumstances beyond our control, the Representative will be at the check-in counter three hours before your departure time. If you are flying domestically before your international flight, the representative will be stationed at the check-in counter for your departing international flight, not at the domestic arrival gate.
- **U.S. Return:** If you are among a group of ten or more travelers who return to the same U.S. gateway city, an O.A.T. Representative will meet you as you exit Customs and help you find taxis, buses, hotel accommodations, or connecting flights. Again, it is our goal to have our Representative waiting to assist your group. In rare instances, unforeseen circumstances may prevent this service.

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

### **Airport Transfers Can Be Purchased**

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

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

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

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

## **Communicating with Home from Abroad**

### **Cell Phones**

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

### **Calling Apps**

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

### **Calling Cards and 1-800 Numbers**

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

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

### **Internet**

Most hotels in Italy have Internet services available, some for free, some for an hourly charge. Sometimes the charge depends on your location—for example, there may be complimentary WiFi service in a common area, like the lobby or reception, but the WiFi in the guest rooms is a paid service. Most hotels will also offer a limited number of computers in the lobby or business center for guests to use.

So you can either bring your own device during the trip and use WiFi where it is available, or leave your device at home and rely on hotel computers.



## How to Call Overseas

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

**Italy:** +39

**Malta:** +356

**Sicily:** +39

## PACKING: WHAT TO BRING & LUGGAGE LIMITS

### Luggage Limits

MAIN TRIP LIMITS	
Pieces per person	One checked bag and one carry-on per person.
Weight restrictions	Varies by airline. The current standard is <b>50 lbs for checked bags</b> and <b>15 lbs for carry-ons</b> .
Size Restrictions	Varies by airline. Measured in linear inches ( <i>length+width+depth</i> ). Generally, <b>62 linear inches is the checked bag limit; carry-on limit is 45 linear inches</b> .
Luggage Type	Duffel bag or soft-sided suitcase. Please do not bring a hard-sided (clamshell) suitcase.
TRIP EXTENSION(S) LIMITS	
Same as the main trip.	
REMARKS/SUGGESTIONS	
<p><b>Luggage rules:</b> 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:** One 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. Please do not bring a rigid (plastic shell) suitcase.
- **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

As you will experience a wide range of temperatures and weather conditions, we suggest several layers of clothing. If you like to hand-wash your clothes, look for fabrics that will dry out overnight. You can buy clothing designed especially for travel, with features like wrinkle-resistant fabric or built-in sun protection.

- **Footwear:** You'll be on your feet a lot during the trip, and walking over some rough and slippery surfaces. The soles of your shoes should offer good traction. Sturdy and comfortable walking shoes with arch support are suggested.
- **Light rain gear is recommended.** Regardless of when you travel, rainfall is a possibility. While it may not rain on your trip, we suggest you bring a waterproof shell or coat, preferably with a hood. This might be a better choice than a folding umbrella, which is usually less effective in wind. (Plus it can be tricky to try to hold onto an umbrella and take photos at the same time.)
- **Layers are key.** We suggest wearing layers, so you can adjust to warmer and cooler conditions as needed.

## Style Hints

- **Dress on our trip is functional and casual.** You might want to bring one slightly dressier outfit for dining on your own at a nice restaurant, or for the Welcome and Farewell Dinners, but that is totally up to you.

## Suggested Packing Lists

We have included suggestions from Trip Experience Leaders and former travelers to help you pack. These packing lists are only jumping-off points—they offer recommendations based on experience, but not requirements. We recommend using [www.weather.com](http://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 in a breathable fabric, like cotton or cotton-blend. Polo shirts are more versatile than T-shirts.
- ☐ Trousers and/or jeans.
- ☐ Shoes and socks: Sturdy and comfortable walking shoes with arch support are suggested. Bring at least a couple pairs of medium- to heavy-weight socks for hiking.
- ☐ Underwear and sleepwear
- ☐ Light rain jacket/windbreaker with hood
- ☐ Wide-brim sun hat
- ☐ Swimsuit for hotel pools

## Seasonal Clothing Recommendations

### For spring departures:

- ☐ Light pieces and cotton sweaters for daytime
- ☐ Slacks, long-sleeve shirts, warmer dresses, and a heavy sweater or fleece jacket for evenings.

### For summer departures:

- ☐ Short-sleeve shirts and lightweight slacks or shorts for daytime
- ☐ Cotton or linen skirts or sundresses
- ☐ Cotton sweater or some other warm layer for cool evenings

### For fall departures:

- ☐ Rain gear and/or an umbrella—fall is the rainiest time of year.
- ☐ Be sure to check the weather online as temperatures fluctuate this time of year.

### For winter departures:

- ☐ Warm pants and socks, long-sleeved tops, a fleece or a wool sweater, and an outer jacket
- ☐ Layering is key this season, allowing you to adjust as the temperatures fluctuate

## Essential Items

- ☐ Daily essentials: toothbrush, toothpaste, floss, hairbrush or comb, shaving items, deodorant, etc. Our hotels will provide the basics like soap and shampoo, but if you are sensitive to fragrances or new products, you may wish to bring your preferred brands. Most hotels do not provide a washcloth, so you may wish to pack one.
- ☐ Spare eyeglasses/contact lenses. If you wear eyeglasses, consider a string or band to keep them from falling into the water during the rafting excursion.
- ☐ Sunglasses, 100% UV block
- ☐ Sunscreen, SPF 15 or stronger
- ☐ Insect repellent
- ☐ Cold-water hand-wash laundry soap such as Woolite and plastic hang-up clothespins
- ☐ Light folding umbrella
- ☐ Photocopies of passport, air ticket, credit cards
- ☐ Moisturizer and sun-blocking lip balm
- ☐ Packets of pocket-size tissues or small roll of toilet paper
- ☐ Moist towelettes and/or anti-bacterial “water-free” hand cleanser
- ☐ Water bottle (narrow-mouth)
- ☐ Electrical converter & plug adapter
- ☐ Camera gear with extra batteries or battery charger

## Medicines & First Aid Gear

- ☐ 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.
- ☐ An antibiotic medication for gastrointestinal illness

## Optional Gear

- ☐ Folding walking staff, sold in most camping stores (preferably rubber-tipped)



- ☐ Reading materials
- ☐ Travel journal/notepad and pens
- ☐ Phrase book
- ☐ Pocket-size calculator for exchange rates

## Home-Hosted Visits

Many of our adventures feature a visit with a local family, often as part of the *A Day in the Life* experience. 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 communities because it is forbidden in Islam, and your hosts may be religious. Not all O.A.T. 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 volts. In the U.S. it is 110 volts. Most of the things a traveler will want to plug in—battery chargers, MP3 players, 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.)

### Plugs

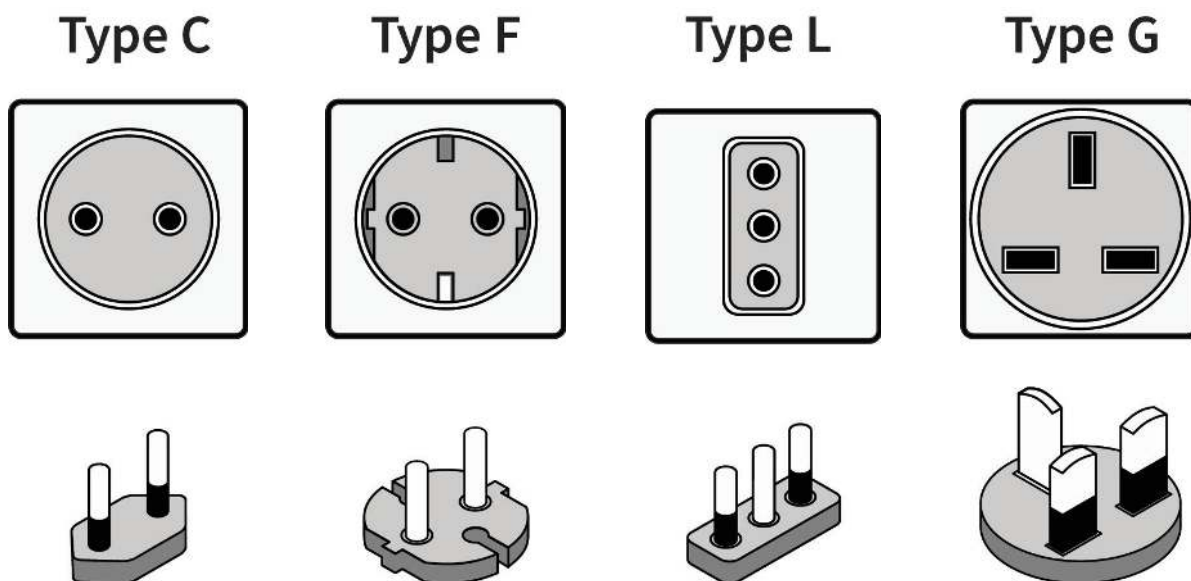
The shape of plugs will vary from country to country, and sometimes even within a country depending on when that building was built. To plug something from the U.S. into a local socket you'll need an adapter that fits between the plug and the socket. Although you are only traveling in one country on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

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

**Italy:** C, L, or F

**Sicily:** C or F

**Malta:** G



### Availability

Barring the occasional and unpredictable power outage, electricity is as readily available on this adventure as it is in the U.S.

## CLIMATE & AVERAGE TEMPERATURES

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**Calabria:** Calabria has a typical Mediterranean climate, with some influence from the nearby Tyrrhenian Sea and mountains. Cities on the west coast of Calabria, like Reggio Calabria, experience heavy rainfall due to the sea compared to the western coast, where a hot air current from Africa leaves cities like Catanzaro or Crotone hot and dry.

**Puglia, Italy:** Puglia's climate is often compared to Greece's: sunny and mild year-round. Winter temperatures tend to be in the 50s and 40s, and rain is more likely than other times of year (but there are still lots of bright, sunny days too). Spring is mild and sunny, although it can still be cool at night. Summer highs are generally in the 80s, but with occasional heat waves that spike temperatures into the 90s. Fall is like spring, but with more rainfall. However, water temperatures are still warm enough for swimming through October.

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

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

**Amalfi Coast:** Situated in the Campania region, the Amalfi Coast is a picturesque collection of coastline towns on the Tyrrhenian Sea. Summers are long and hot, extending as far as into early October before the temperatures tend to cool. During the hot summer months, the coastline breeze from the sea is refreshing under the blistering sun while relaxing on one of the Amalfi Coast's lauded beaches. As typical of a Mediterranean location, the winters are mild and warm, if known to be windy and rainy.

**Winter Departures:** If you are traveling during the winter, please be aware that the weather in Italy can be somewhat volatile at this time of year, though it's still relatively mild compared to that of the rest of the world. Moreover, while "off-season" travel may involve stints of inclement weather, it rewards you with the chance to explore Italy's museums, piazzas, and ruin sites at a time when they are wonderfully free of the summer tourist crowds.

**NOTE:** If you are taking one of our optional stopovers before or after your OAT adventure, please be aware the climate and temperatures might be different from what you experienced during your tour. To prepare for weather differences and pack appropriate clothing, we recommend the following world weather sites:

- [www.intellicast.com](http://www.intellicast.com)
- [www.weather.com](http://www.weather.com)
- [www.wunderground.com](http://www.wunderground.com)

## 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](http://www.weather.com)** for a more accurate forecast of the locations you visit.

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

MONTH	TAORMINA, SICILY			LIPARI, ITALY		
	Temp. High-Low	% Relative Humidity (am-pm)	Monthly Rainfall (inches)	Temp. High- Low	% Relative Humidity	Average # of Days with Rainfall
<b>JAN</b>	57 to 46	--	3.7	58 to 45	70	10
<b>FEB</b>	57 to 45	--	2.9	59 to 46	69	8
<b>MAR</b>	61 to 48	--	2.6	62 to 49	74	7
<b>APR</b>	65 to 52	--	1.9	66 to 54	77	7
<b>MAY</b>	73 to 59	--	1.3	72 to 61	77	4
<b>JUN</b>	80 to 66	--	0.6	79 to 68	76	3
<b>JUL</b>	86 to 72	--	0.6	84 to 74	73	2
<b>AUG</b>	86 to 72	--	0.9	85 to 75	73	2
<b>SEP</b>	80 to 66	--	2.0	80 to 70	71	7
<b>OCT</b>	73 to 60	--	4.0	74 to 65	73	7
<b>NOV</b>	65 to 53	--	3.2	67 to 54	71	9
<b>DEC</b>	59 to 48	--	3.9	60 to 45	69	11

MONTH	REGGIO CALABRIA, ITALY			TRANI, ITALY		
	Temp. High- Low	% Relative Humidity	Average # of Days with Rainfall	Temp. High- Low	% Relative Humidity	Average # of Days with Rainfall
JAN	59 to 48	77	9	55 to 40	76	7
FEB	60 to 50	76	9	55 to 40	73	7
MAR	63 to 53	75	7	60 to 44	71	6
APR	67 to 56	74	6	65 to 48	69	7
MAY	75 to 61	70	3	74 to 55	65	5
JUN	82 to 70	67	1	81 to 63	59	4
JUL	88 to 76	65	1	86 to 67	54	3
AUG	88 to 77	67	2	85 to 67	57	3
SEP	83 to 71	72	5	79 to 61	67	6
OCT	75 to 65	77	7	71 to 55	75	7
NOV	68 to 59	78	9	63 to 48	76	6
DEC	62 to 53	77	9	56 to 42	77	7

MONTH	VALLETTA, MALTA			RAVELLO, ITALY		
	Temp. High-Low	% Relative Humidity (am-pm)	Average # of Days with Rainfall	Temp. High-Low	% Relative Humidity (avg)	Monthly Rainfall (inches)
JAN	60 to 49	80	17	51 to 42	86	0.53
FEB	59 to 49	80	13	52 to 44	83	0.54
MAR	61 to 51	80	11	57 to 49	78	0.47
APR	68 to 54	75	10	63 to 54	73	0.78
MAY	75 to 59	75	6	68 to 60	70	0.35
JUN	83 to 66	70	3	76 to 68	64	0.31
JUL	88 to 71	65	1	80 to 72	60	0.15
AUG	88 to 72	70	3	82 to 72	60	0.08
SEP	83 to 69	75	8	76 to 65	72	0.40
OCT	76 to 64	80	11	68 to 57	77	0.42
NOV	69 to 57	80	15	61 to 52	84	0.69
DEC	62 to 52	80	19	54 to 44	86	0.65



## ABOUT YOUR DESTINATIONS: CULTURE, ETIQUETTE & MORE

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### 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.

## Visiting Churches

Many churches run special services that you are welcome to attend—even if you are not Catholic. Otherwise, you are welcome to visit outside of services. Most churches in Sicily have a dress code, whether overtly stated or not. Typically, they request that you cover your shoulders and that shorts or skirts reach the knee. It is rare nowadays for churches to require women to cover their heads. If you'll be traveling during warm weather and want to go sleeveless or wear a tank top, then we suggest that you throw a light sweater or cover-up into your daypack. A pashmina-type shawl is ideal for covering shoulders or low-cut blouses, or even wrapping around the waist as a sarong.

## 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.

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## Taking Photographs

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

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

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

## Safety & Security

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

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

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

## Italian Cuisine

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

## Sicilian Cuisine

The cuisine of Sicily is markedly different than on the Italian mainland—just like Sicilians themselves. One reason is geography. Sicily is blessed with abundant sunshine, fertile volcanic soil, and mild Mediterranean winters that allow for year-round agriculture. The freshness and quality of the ingredients make even the simplest Sicilian dishes pop with intense flavor. Another



reason is the culinary legacy of the invaders who came to Sicily. The Greeks brought capers, grapes, pomegranates, figs, olives and hazelnuts. The Romans cleared forests to plant wheat, and we all know what Sicilians do with wheat: they make what is arguably the best pasta and bread in Italy. Later, French and Spanish chefs introduced New World items like tomatoes, turkey and potatoes. Popular dishes include:

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

## Maltese Cuisine

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

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

## Shopping: What to Buy, Customs, Shipping & More

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

### Returns

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

### Crafts & Souvenirs

#### Italy

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

#### Sicily

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

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

## Malta

Maltese shops range from small, family-run businesses and quaint boutiques to large shopping complexes and chain stores. In nearby Valletta, Republic Street is a major shopping thoroughfare, and Valletta's Sunday market, held below St James Bastion, is one of Malta's top attractions. Among the best Maltese buys are Mdina decorative glass, which has earned a reputation for good workmanship and attractive colors, finely worked filigree jewelry, and delicate lace, which has been the traditional craft for generations of the women of Gozo, who work in their own homes.

## U.S. Customs Regulations & Shipping Charges

For all things related to U.S. Customs, the ultimate authority is the U.S. Bureau of Customs & Border Protection. Their website, [www.cbp.gov](http://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

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### 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](http://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 7<sup>th</sup> 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 2<sup>nd</sup> 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 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup>-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 19<sup>th</sup> century, many Italians believed that they could function as a single nation, a belief spearheaded by the general Giuseppe Garibaldi. Independence was declared in 1861, and by 1870, the nation was consolidated under King Victor Emmanuel II. Italy was ruled as a monarchy and joined the Allies in World War I. But the 1920s ushered in a dark era as Benito Mussolini organized discontented Italians into the Fascist Party to “rescue Italy from Bolshevism.” What he delivered was a totalitarian state. Mussolini joined with Hitler and fought the Allies during World War II, during which 400,000 people were killed, hundreds of thousands were left homeless, and the economy was ruined. In 1945, Mussolini was captured and killed by partisans.

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

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

## Sicily

### Facts, Figures & National Holidays

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

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

## National Holidays: Sicily

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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.

## **Malta**

### **Facts, Figures & National Holidays**

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



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

### National Holidays: Malta

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

01/01 New Year's Day

02/10 Feast of St. Paul's Shipwreck

03/31 Freedom Day

05/01 Labor Day / May Day

06/07 Sette Giugno

08/15 Assumption Day

09/21 Independence Day

12/08 Feast of the Immaculate Conception

12/13 Republic Day

12/25 Christmas Day

### Malta: A Brief History

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

## RESOURCES

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### Suggested Reading

#### Italy

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

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

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

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

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

#### Sicily

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

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

***Sicily: A Literary Guide for Travellers*** by Andrew and Suzanne Edwards (2014, History) Part guidebook, part history, and wholly enjoyable, this literary journey begins in Palermo and works its way counter-clockwise around Sicily, village by village. The authors trace the Sicilian paths

of famous writers from Pindar to Puzo, sharing passages from their work, practical tips, and anecdotes about illustrious visitors like Oscar Wilde, Cary Grant, Winston Churchill, Truman Capote, Marlene Dietrich and more kings and queens than you can shake a scepter at.

***On Persephone's Island: A Sicilian Journal*** by Mary Taylor Simeti (1995, Memoir) An American expert on Sicilian medieval and culinary history describes her life as an expatriate who splits her time between Palermo and managing her family's working farm in the Sicilian countryside. The book is filled with insights into Sicilian food, cooking, and customs; the corrosive influence of the Mafia; and the titular Greek goddess whose dual existence parallels Simeti's own life, and that of Sicily itself.

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

## Malta

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

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

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

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

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

## Suggested Films & Videos

### Italy

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

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

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

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

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

### Sicily

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

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

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

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

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

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

## Malta

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

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

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

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



## Useful Websites

### **Overseas Adventure Travel**

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

### **Overseas Adventure Travel Frequently Asked Questions**

[www.oattravel.com/faq](http://www.oattravel.com/faq)

### **International Health Information/CDC (Centers for Disease Control)**

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

### **Electricity & Plugs**

[www.worldstandards.eu/electricity/plugs-and-sockets](http://www.worldstandards.eu/electricity/plugs-and-sockets)

### **Foreign Exchange Rates**

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

### **ATM Locators**

[www.mastercard.com/atm](http://www.mastercard.com/atm)  
[www.visa.com/atmlocator](http://www.visa.com/atmlocator)

### **World Weather**

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

### **Basic Travel Phrases (80 languages)**

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

### **Packing Tips**

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

### **U.S. Customs & Border Protection**

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

### **Transportation Security**

#### **Administration (TSA)**

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

### **National Passport Information Center**

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

### **Holidays Worldwide**

[www.timeanddate.com/holidays](http://www.timeanddate.com/holidays)

### **History & Culture**

[en.wikipedia.org](http://en.wikipedia.org)

## Useful Apps

### **Flight Stats**

Track departures, arrivals, and flight status

### **LoungeBuddy**

Get access to premium airport lounges around the world

### **Timeshifter**

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

### **GoogleMaps**

Maps and directions anywhere in the world

### **Triposo**

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

### **Rome2rio**

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

### **Flush or Sit or Squat**

Find a clean toilet anywhere

### **Uber**

Ride sharing around the world

### **Visa Plus and Mastercard Cirrus**

#### **ATM locations**

Shows the location of the nearest ATM in your network

### **TunnelBear**

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

### **What's App, Skype, or Signal**

WiFi calling anywhere in the world

### **Duolingo, FLuentU, or Babbel**

Learn dozens of foreign languages

### **Google Translate**

Fast and simple translations

### **XE**

Currency conversions

### **SizeGuide**

Clothing and shoe sizes in all countries

### **Best Units Converter**

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

### **Tourlina**

For women only, it connects you with other female travelers

### **Happy Cow**

Locate vegan and vegetarian eateries in 195 countries

### **Eatwith**

Dine with locals all over the world

### **Meetup**

Connects you with locals who share your interests

### **Skyview**

Identifies constellations and heavenly bodies

### **Travello**

Find travel friends on the road

### **ALIX for One**

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

### **TripWhistle**

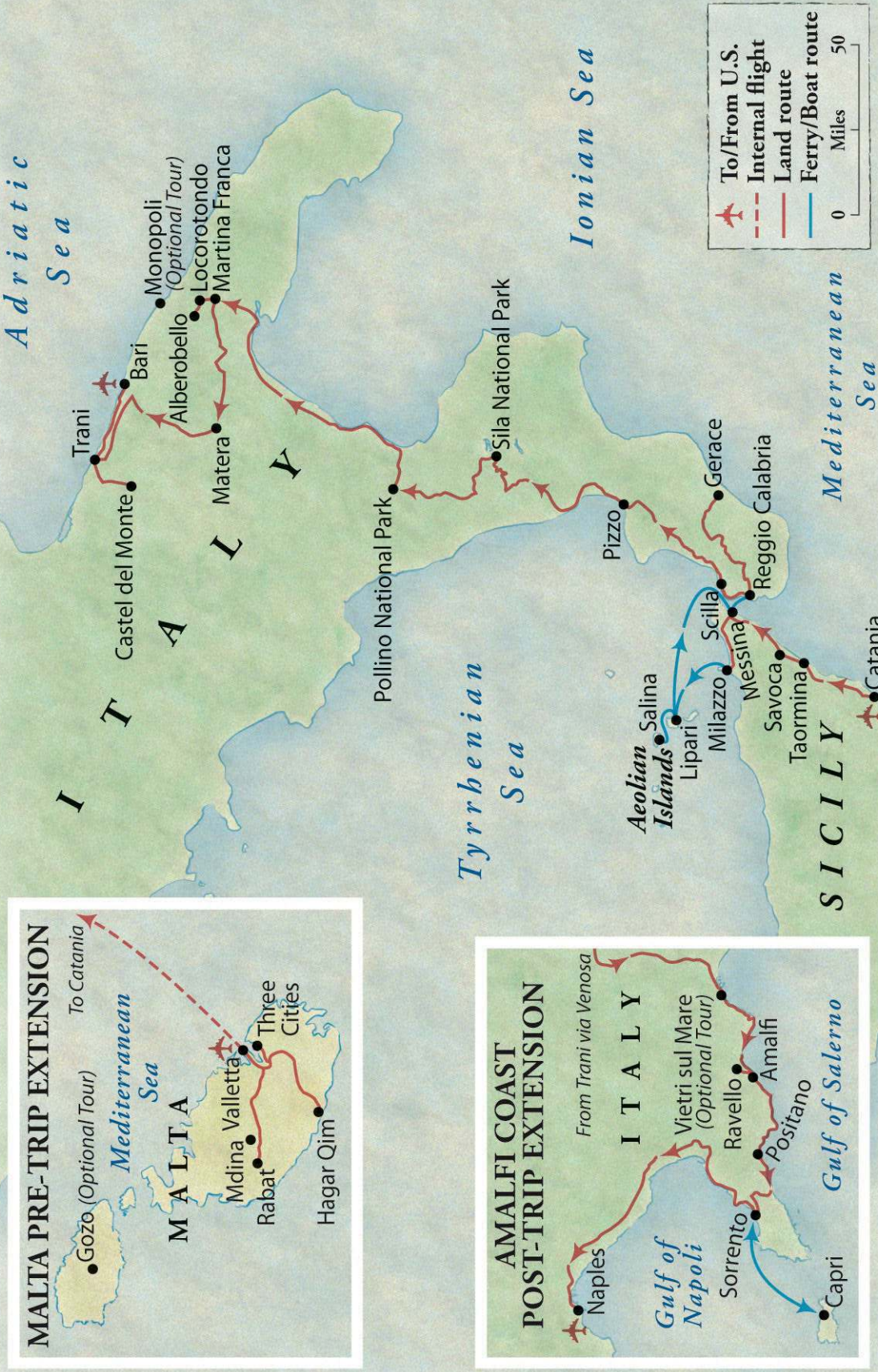
Maps your location and provides emergency numbers for police, medics, and more

### **GeoSure**

Safely navigate neighborhoods around the world

### **Chirpey**

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





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