



ANCIENT ISLANDS: SICILY

CROSSROADS OF THE MEDITERRANEAN

OCTOBER 22ND - 30TH 2021

Half way between Europe and Africa and commanding the passage between the east and west parts of the Mediterranean Sea, the island of Sicily has always been at the crossroads of history. Settled by Greeks, Phoenicians, Carthaginians, Romans, Vikings and Normans, the island has an unparalleled mixture of cultural heritage.

We'll enter into the life of this gorgeous and mysterious island in the capital, Palermo, and then stay in Agrigento and Taormina, a lovely seaside town on the east coast of Sicily. From here, we'll explore the surrounding countryside and visit a stunning collection of medieval towns that each vies for the title of "Most Beautiful." Here, architecture recalls a multitude of times and places: Agrigento, with its dramatic ancient ruins, the world-famous 4th-century mosaics at Piazza Armerina, and the magnificent site at Syracuse—all dominated by majestic Mount Etna, looming over the island landscape.

With a balance of guided excursions and leisure time to explore at your own pace, you'll have an opportunity to experience Sicily's winding medieval streets, glittering beaches, and the rare and unique ecosystem at Mount Etna. Take in the view from the outstanding Greek amphitheatre in Taormina—with the mountain, sea, and sky above, it is one of the most beautiful vistas to be seen on an island of incomparable beauty.

Although in full view of mainland Italy, even Sicilians talk of "going to Italy," and consider their island an extraordinary land apart.



TAORMINA



THE FOUNTAIN OF SHAME, PALERMO

THE COST OF THIS ITINERARY, PER PERSON, DOUBLE OCCUPANCY IS:

LAND ONLY:	\$3970
SINGLE SUPPLEMENT:	\$ 760

Airfares are available from many U.S. departure cities. Please call for details.

THE FOLLOWING SERVICES ARE INCLUDED:

- HOTELS:** 7 nights' accommodation in first-class hotels, including all taxes and service charges
- COACHING:** All ground transportation as detailed in the itinerary
- MEALS:** Breakfast daily, 4 dinners
- GUIDES:** Discover Europe tour guide throughout
- EXPENSES:** Porterage of one large suitcase per person
- ENTRANCES:** Entrance fees to all sites included in the itinerary

OPTIONAL MALTA EXTENSION: The cost of the Malta Extension is \$1480 per person, double occupancy (single supplement: \$450). This includes the one way flight from Catania to Valletta, 3 nights' accommodation at a first-class hotel, breakfast daily, 2 dinners, your Discover Europe tour guide throughout, local guides, all entrance fees, ground and ferry transportation as detailed in the itinerary, baggage handling of one large suitcase per person.

Please note that travel insurance is not included on this tour. Insurance information will be mailed to each registrant on receipt of deposit.





FRIDAY, OCTOBER 22ND - Departure from your chosen US gateway city. **OVERNIGHT: PLANE**

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 23RD - On arrival at Palermo, you will be met for the transfer to our hotel. There will be time to unpack and relax before your tour guide gives you an orientation to the neighborhood. This evening, enjoy a welcome dinner party at the hotel. **(D) OVERNIGHT: PALERMO**

SUNDAY, OCTOBER 24TH - A morning panoramic tour with a local guide introduces Palermo, a vibrant city whose glorious past is visible everywhere in its rich collection of monuments, including the 12th-century Arab-Norman Capella Palatina and the 18th-century gardens of Parco della Favorita e Giardini della Palazzina Cinese. This afternoon we'll take an excursion west of the city to visit Monreale's outstanding 12th-century cathedral, with 6,000 square yards of 12th- and 13th-century mosaics depicting the complete cycle of Old and New Testaments, and the Benedictine Cloisters. The evening is free in Palermo to sample Sicilian cuisine at a local restaurant. **(B) OVERNIGHT: PALERMO**

MONDAY, OCTOBER 25TH - Leaving Palermo, we head to Segesta to view one of the most impressive Greek temples in the world, overlooking a valley of wild fennel. We'll stop to visit the remains of a Greek theater with views of the sea, then continue to the medieval town of Erice with its narrow, cobblestone streets. After free time for lunch, we'll continue around the coast to Selinunte, where an array of Greek temple ruins overlooks the Mediterranean. We'll check in to our hotel with time to relax before dinner. **(B, D) OVERNIGHT: AGRIGENTO**

TUESDAY, OCTOBER 26TH - Surrounded by olive trees, Agrigento's Valley of the Temples was described by the poet Pindar as "the most beautiful city built by mortal men." The temples comprise one of the most impressive classical sites in Italy. After a morning tour of the site and the Archaeological Museum with a local guide, there is time for lunch at a beach-front restaurant. In the afternoon, relax, enjoy the pool area, or explore the town of Agrigento. The evening is free - why not try a restaurant overlooking the Valley of the Temples, which are illuminated at night. **(B) OVERNIGHT: AGRIGENTO**

WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 27TH - Our morning visit to the charming Baroque town of Caltagirone, famous for its ceramics, allows time for shopping and a relaxing cappuccino. From here, we travel to Villa Romana del Casale in Piazza Armerina for a visit. This exceptionally well-preserved example of a luxurious Roman 4th-century villa contains some of the finest mosaics of the Roman world. We continue to Taormina, with time to check in and freshen up before we gather for dinner. **(B, D) OVERNIGHT: TAORMINA**

THURSDAY, OCTOBER 28TH - Taormina, proclaimed "the greatest work of art and nature" by Goethe, affords a spectacular view of the sea below and Mount Etna, looming on the skyline. After breakfast, we depart on an excursion to the mountain, one of the world's major active volcanoes and the largest and highest in Europe. We return to Taormina with time to explore the town's famous Greek theater. The evening is free. **(B) OVERNIGHT: TAORMINA**



MT. ETNA

FRIDAY, OCTOBER 29TH - Today we travel south along the Ionian Sea to Siracusa, once rivaling Athens in splendor and power, with its ruins of a fine Roman Amphitheater. At Siracusa's southern end, on the medieval island of Ortygia, we'll visit Piazza Archimedes' spectacular fountains and Piazza del Duomo, one of Italy's most beautiful piazzas. You're free to lunch at a lovely harbor side restaurant before we return to Taormina. There will be time to relax before gathering for dinner at the hotel. **(B, D) OVERNIGHT: TAORMINA**

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 30TH - Morning transfers to Catania Airport for returning flights to the US - or stay on to visit Malta.

Key to included meals: B - breakfast, D - dinner

OPTIONAL MALTA EXTENSION:

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 30TH - This morning, we board a direct flight to Malta where we will be met for the transfer to our fabulous hotel in the city center. After time to unpack and relax, we will gather for a walking tour of Valletta with a local guide, we'll wander along Republic Street, past the Auberge de Castille and then onto the Upper Barrakka Gardens where you can marvel at the view. We'll include visits to the Grand Master's palace, the National Museum of Archeology and St. John's Co-Cathedral. The rest of the afternoon is free to explore the city or relax at the hotel. Dinner is included at the hotel this evening. **(B, D) OVERNIGHT: VALLETTA**

SUNDAY, OCTOBER 31ST - Our full day excursion begins with a visit to the Three Cities. Cospicua, Vittoriosa and Senglea are three fortified towns that collectively claim to be the cradle of Maltese history. Our next stop is the charming, traditional fishing village of Marsaxlokk and on our way back to our hotel we'll visit the Neolithic Temple of Hagar Qim, believed to have been a fertility shrine, and well known for the 'Venus of Malta' statue. We return to our hotel in Valletta for a free evening. **(B) OVERNIGHT: VALLETTA**

MONDAY, NOVEMBER 1ST - Today brings an excursion to the neighboring island of Gozo, a short 20 minute ferry ride away. We'll visit the Xaghra plateau and the temples of Ggantija, at 5,500 years old they were, until recently, claimed to be the oldest free-standing stone structures in the world. We continue on to the Citadel, a fortified city that was the administrative capital of the independent Roman province of Gozo. Our farewell dinner will be at a local restaurant this evening when we return to Valletta. **(B, D) OVERNIGHT: VALLETTA**

TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 2ND - Morning transfers to Valletta Airport for return flights to the US. **(B)**