

Sicily and the Amalfi Coast

The Sun and Sea of Southern Italy

Taormina, Cefalu', Agrigento, Piazza Armerina, Siracusa, the ruins of Pompeii, Positano, the island of Capri and Naples



A TWELVE DAY ITALIAN JOURNEY

May 9th – May 20th, 2017

KEYROW TOURS

60 Georgia Road Trumansburg, New York 14886 Tel: 315.491.3711

Day#1: Departure for Sicily

Tuesday: May 9th, 2017

In conjunction with AAA Travel (Ithaca, NY), Keyrow Tours is pleased to make all flight arrangements, including primary flights originating anywhere in the United States and international flights.

We we will depart from a major international airport located on the east coast of the United States [usually JFK (NY) or Philadelphia (PA)] and fly into Catania, Sicily with international layover.

Transportation to and from your primary airport of departure is each person's responsibility.



“What is the fatal charm of Italy? What do we find there that can be found nowhere else? I believe it is a certain permission to be human, which other places, other countries, lost long ago.”
~ Erica Jong

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Day #2: “Welcome to Taormina”

Wednesday: May 10th, 2017

Continental Breakfast

Arrival at Catania’s Fontanrossa International Airport

After collecting our luggage, private minivans will carry us to our first fabulous Sicilian destination: Taormina! The 40-minute drive is a scenic orientation to the North East coast of Sicily.

Taormina

Taormina is a charming town on the east coast of Sicily in the Province of Messina, about midway between Messina and Catania. This breathtaking destination overlooks the turquoise blue waters of the Ionian Sea. The area around Taormina was inhabited by a group of people called the “Siculi” even before the Greeks arrived on the Sicilian coast in 734 BC. Many centuries later after the fall of the Western Roman Empire, Taormina was under Muslim rule from 902 AD-1078 AD. It was subsequently captured by the Normans, and then later by the French. Mama mia, what a complex history! During the early 20th century the town became a colony of expatriate artists, writers, and intellectuals including D. H. Lawrence who stayed here from 1920 to 1922, and Truman Capote from 1950-1951.

A.) The Corso Umberto I

B.) The Church of San Domenico

C.) The Ancient Theatre of Taormina

The "Teatro antico di Taormina" is an ancient Greek theatre that was built in the seventh century BC. One of the most celebrated ruins in Sicily, it has a diameter of 120 metres and therefore stands as the second largest of its kind in Sicily after that of Syracuse. Today the theatre is still frequently used for operatic and theatrical performances, and for concerts.

Back to hotel

Day’s recap

Cena! (dinner... Sicilian style!)

*“For us to go to Italy
and to penetrate into Italy
is like a most fascinating act of self-discovery—
back, back down the old ways of time.
Strange and wonderful chords awake in us,
and vibrate again after many hundreds of years
of complete forgetfulness.”*

~ D.H. Lawrence

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Day #3: “Castelmola and Mount Etna”

Thursday: May 11th, 2017

Breakfast on the terrace with view of Mount Etna!

A.) Morning departure for Castelmola

Castelmola in Sicily is a beautiful village perched high above Taormina. This lovely hamlet is considered one of the most beautiful villages in all of Sicily. Warm, friendly people and spectacular panoramas characterize the village. Castelmola is a kind of “balcony” over Taormina and the bay of Giardini Naxos, framed by the mysterious and beautiful active volcano, Mount Etna. Its narrow winding streets and old world charm make Castelmola a destination for anyone wishing to experience the enchanting beauty of Sicily. Don't forget to enjoy a glass of Vino di Mandorla (sweet almond wine) at Bar Turrisi and be delighted by this bar's unique décor and friendly staff.

B.) Mount Etna tour (Pranzo: lunch included)

Mt. Etna volcano is one of the world's most active volcanoes, and the most active one in all of Europe. To the ancient Greeks, Mount Etna was the realm of Vulcan, god of fire, and home of the one-eyed monster known as the Cyclops. Etna offers skiing in the winter months and breathtaking hikes during the summer. We will begin today's tour by exploring old lava flows. We will ascend to 7000 ft. and take a walk to visit the “Silvestri” craters and new lava flows and craters from 2001/2003. Enjoy the desert moon atmosphere! On the way, we will also stop and visit a family farm where it is possible to taste local Etna wine, a selection of natural honey (orange, lemon, eucalyptus, strawberry...), almond pastries, olives and extra virgin olive oil. We will also stop at one of the best known Sicilian vineyards: "Tenuta San Michele del Murgò" where we will taste some of their local wines. We end the day with a visit of the charming village of Giardini Naxos by the sea, the first Greek colony in Sicily, before returning to Taormina.

Day's recap

Cena! (Dinner on your own)



“All journeys have destinations of which the traveler is unaware.” ~ Martin Buber

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Day#4: “Sant’Agata di Militello and the Treasures of Cefalù”

Friday: May 12th, 2017

Breakfast on the terrace

Morning departure for Cefalù

Pranzo!

Our first stop en route to Cefalu' is the town of **Sant'Agata di Militello**. Located in the province of Messina, legend has it that sailors from Catania were shipwrecked here and built the village under the name of their patron saint. The town's history is centered around the "Tower of the Navy," a coastal lookout structure built in the thirteenth century. After lunch we'll enjoy a stroll through town and some in our group will even re-connect with their historical roots as the village of their ancestry. Welcome home!

Cefalù

Dating back to the 5th century BC, the town of Cefalu' contains elements of Arab, Norman, Roman and Greek civilizations. Cefalù is located on the northern coast of Sicily, on the Tyrrhenian Sea. The name “Cefalù” first appears in historical accounts from 396 BC. In 858 it was conquered by the Arabs, and for centuries it was part of the Emirate of Sicily. In 1063 the Normans captured the town and built a beautiful cathedral.

A.) The Cathedral

Construction of the Cathedral was begun in 1131, in the style of Norman Architecture. The exterior is well preserved, and is largely decorated with interlacing pointed arches. On each side of the façade is a massive tower. The interior of the cathedral includes fine specimens of the Byzantine art (1148). Most noteworthy is the figure of the Pantocrator (“Christ the Teacher”): like a Norman Viking, Christ appears with blond hair and blue eyes... Hmmm!

B.) The “Lavatoio” Wash House

The Saracen wash-house, called the Lavatoio, is a sight worth seeing. Located in the center of town, this is a precursor to the modern public laundromat. Far below the city, a little river called the Cefalino runs beneath the town's houses and buildings and empties into the sea. An ancient Greek myth says that the water is actually the tears of a river nymph who is still crying for the death of her beloved husband. An elegant lava staircase leads to basins carved in the rocks where the water flows through 22 vents, 15 of which have the form of lion heads. The Lavatoio was used by women until recent times, who knelt to wash their clothes by hand on the stone scrubbers. Need to do your laundry? This is an economical way to go!

C.) Free time in Cefalu’

Cefalu's is a scenic fishing village that is perfect for easy walking, shopping, and people watching....

Day's recap

Dinner on your own

“Thou paradise of exiles, Italy!” ~ Percy Shelley

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Day #5: “Inspired by Cefalù”

Saturday: May 13th, 2017

Continental breakfast

A.) Morning hike to “La Rocca”

La Rocca is a real mix of natural and ancient history. “The Rock” was known by the ancient Phoenicians as the Fortress of Hercules. It is a massive 900 foot high crag of stone, and the ancient Greek inhabitants thought it resembled a gigantic head: In the local dialect, “Cefalù” means “head” ... hence the town's name.

The remains of the Cefalù Castle, dating back to the 13th-14th centuries, sit atop La Rocca. Near the ruins are the remnants of the Temple of Diana, a megalithic building which dates back to the 9th century BC. It is believed to have originally had a sacred function connected with local water worship; there is a cistern well which also dates back to the 9th Century BC.

B.) Personal time for beach, shopping and exploring

Day’s recap

Cena! (Group dinner)



“Travel does what good novelists also do to the life of the everyday, placing it like a picture in a frame or a gem in its setting, so that the intrinsic qualities are made more clear. Travel does this with the very stuff that everyday life is made of, giving to it the sharp contour and meaning of art.”

~ Freya Stark

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Day#6: “Time Travel in Agrigento”

Sunday: May 14th, 2017

Continental breakfast

Morning departure for Agrigento and the Valley of the Temples

Agrigento is a city on the southern coast of Sicily, a pleasant 2 hours drive. Once the site of the ancient Greek city of Akragas, this was one of the leading cities of *Magna Graecia* during the golden age of Ancient Greece. Agrigento was founded on a plateau overlooking the sea. It was established around 580 BC and became one of the richest and most famous of all the Greek colonies.

We will visit the best-preserved ancient Greek temples that Sicily has to offer, all dating back to the years 400-500 BC. These include:

The Temple of Concordia (440-430 BC)

The Temple of Juno (450-440 BC)

The Temple of Hercules (500 BC)

The Temple of Olympian Zeus (480 BC)

Departure for Masseria Mandrascate

Mandrascate is a fortified farm from the 17th century, a typical example of old Sicilian architecture. A member of the Association of Italian Historical Mansions, this farm is located in the heart of Sicily, an area which cultivates wheat, olive trees and vineyards. The guest rooms are decorated in a traditional Sicilian style, complete with antique family furniture. Take a refreshing swim in the pool surrounded by aromatic plants and fig trees. Stroll through the Italian garden, complete with fish pond. We might run into a few geese and chickens which run loose in the courtyard...

Day's recap

Cena (Dinner)

“Traveling forces you to lose sight of all the familiar comforts of home. Nothing is yours except the essential things – air, sleep, dreams, the sea, the sky – all things tending towards the eternal or what we imagine of it.”

~ Cesare Pavese

Day #7: “Piazza Armerina and Siracusa”

Monday: May 15th, 2017

Continental breakfast

Piazza Armerina and the Villa Romana

The Villa Romana del Casale is a Roman villa built in the first quarter of the 4th century and located about 3 km outside the town of Piazza Armerina in southern Sicily. Containing the richest, largest and most complex collection of Roman mosaics in the world, it is one of 44 UNESCO World Heritage Sites in Italy. The villa was constructed as the center of a vast agricultural estate that covered the surrounding area. The owner was probably a member of senatorial class if not of the imperial family itself, i.e., the absolute upper class of the Roman Empire. In part the villa is believed to have been used as a hunting lodge. Many of the mosaics portray hunting scenes from around the world, and the gathering of wild beasts were to be shipped back to the Coliseum of ancient Rome. Besides fabulous hunting scenes, visit the "Chamber of the Ten Maidens," informally called the room of "the bikini girls". These maidens appear in the villa's mosaic artwork as performing sports that include weight-lifting, discus throwing, running and various ball-games. Bravissima!!!

Pranzo! (Optional light lunch)

Departure for Siracusa

The trip to Siracusa is under 2 hours. Siracusa or “Syracuse” was founded in 734 BC by Greek settlers from Corinth. The city is notable for its rich Greek history, culture, amphitheatres, architecture, and as the birthplace of the preeminent mathematician and engineer Archimedes. This 2,700-year-old city played a key role in ancient times, when it was one of the major powers of the Mediterranean world. Syracuse is located in the southeast corner of the island of Sicily and is listed by UNESCO as a World Heritage Site. Syracuse is also mentioned in the Bible in the Acts of the Apostles; in Acts 28:12, we are told that St. Paul stayed in Siracusa on his way to Rome.

The Duomo Cathedral

The cathedral (Italian: *Duomo*) was built by bishop Zosimo in the 7th century over the great *Temple of Athena* (5th century BC), on Ortygia island.

The Church of Saint Lucy

Santa Lucia alla Badìa, has a Baroque edifice and was built after the earthquake of 1693. It houses the famous painting of “The Burial of St. Lucy” by Caravaggio.

Day’s recap

Cena! (Group dinner)

“Traveling is almost like talking with men of other centuries.”
~ Rene Descartes

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Day #8: “Pulling Your Strings in Siracusa”

Tuesday: May 16th, 2017

Continental breakfast

A.) Morning boat tour

Enjoy a one hour boat trip around Ortigia Island. Enjoy the views, the salty air, and explore local sea caves.

B.) Outdoor market and Temple of Apollo

The **market** in Ortigia is a small, relaxed farm and fish market with a sense of humor as vendors compete for customers by calling out their wares. Via Benedictus comes to life every morning except Sunday. Different types of fish, all freshly caught that morning, are featured. Lemons and tomatoes are arranged amongst the mussels... tuna is expertly cut into steaks... and sea urchins make a colorful display. There are local fruits and vegetables, fabulous cheeses, meats, bread and wine. Next to the market is the **Temple of Apollo**, a Greek Temple dating back to the 6th century BC.

C.) Free time for rest and personal exploring

D.) Traditional puppet show: late afternoon

Have you ever noticed how the logo for Francis Ford Coppola’s 1972 movie “The Godfather” has a hand holding puppet strings? Some say that it symbolizes the Godfather’s power, like that of a puppeteer controlling his minion of puppets. Puppet plays in Sicily date back to the 15th century as a popular form of entertainment for all classes of people. The subject matter of the “Opera dei Pupi” is derived from Sicilian history, literature, folklore and comedy. Opera dei Pupi features: swordfights, jousts and battles with monsters or sorceresses. When a hero slashes with his sword, limbs may fall from the villain. In some performances the wounds actually bleed (blood is traditionally made from beet juice). Sicily’s history has been turbulent and over the centuries the ferocity has imprinted itself in this most traditional form of entertainment. Popcorn not included...

Day’s recap

Cena! (Closing Banquet)

“You may have the universe, if I may have Italy.”

~ Giuseppe Verdi

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Day #9: “Escape to Paradise”

Wednesday: May 17th, 2017

Flight departure from Catania to Naples Airport (Italy) and minivan transfer to the ruins of Pompeii and Positano

A private minivan will take us to Pompeii, which was first occupied in the 8th century BC. The Etruscans originally dominated the surrounding region... later came the Saminites who turned Pompeii into a Greek town... finally the Romans gained control over Pompeii until its end... that fateful day in 79 AD when Mt. Vesuvius unleashed its fury on the 20,000 inhabitants of this thriving Roman city.

Although this tragic event ended the lives of 20,000 Pompeian residents, the ash that buried the town served as a sort of *mummification* for the entire city. The eruption of 79 AD which buried the city in ash actually captured a special moment in time. Under the ash everything remained as it was at the time of the eruption. Artwork was preserved. Buildings were preserved. Several important clues were left behind. These clues give us a glimpse into the past that will not be soon forgotten.

Afternoon arrival in Positano

Hotel Pupetto is an absolute treat: a beachside resort with black volcanic sand that runs into the turquoise-blue waters of the Mediterranean Sea. Stroll the winding roads of Positano. Take a walk on the beach. There are great ceramic shops, high fashion clothing, and hiking. Positano is not a place to be “busy” seeing things. It is place to relax and allow nature’s beauty to touch us in positive and happy ways. Don’t forget to try a little *limoncello* along the way...

Orientation stroll and free afternoon

Day’s recap

Cena (Group Dinner)



“Sail away from the safe harbor: Catch the trade winds in your sails.

Explore. Dream. Discover.”

~ Mark Twain

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Day#10: "Amazing Amalfi"

Thursday: May 18th, 2016

Continental breakfast

Our hotel in Positano

Our hotel in Positano is an absolute treat: situated in a lemon grove on a private beach, each room has its own balcony facing the turquoise-blue waters of the Mediterranean Sea. The Amalfi Coast is not a place to be "busy" site-seeing. It is place to relax and allow nature's beauty to touch us in positive and happy ways. Don't forget to try a little *limoncello* along the way ☺

A.) Exploring Amalfi in style by private boat

Enjoy a day on the Mediterranean Sea! A private chartered boat will take us from Positano along the southern coastline, providing breathtaking views along the way. Take a swim off the boat along the way...the water will be perfect!

B.) The Emerald Grotto

We will disembark our boat at the "Grotto Smeraldo" or "Emerald Grotto". This is a natural cave in the side of the mainland. Once inside, a smaller boat will navigate us through the cave itself. As the Mediterranean sun shines through the grotto's mouth, it illuminates the water in an incredible display of emerald-blue light.

Pranzo (Lunch included) Dine like the locals at this family-run restaurant that is only accessible by private boat! As our boat is too large to dock, smaller boats will pick us up to bring us to shore. While the restaurant features local seafood (and is usually filled with local fishermen!) it offers everything edible from both land and sea. Personally, I have never seen tourists dining here, as few tourists have a private boat for a day...

C.) The City of Amalfi

After lunch we will boat to the City of Amalfi. Enjoy free time to explore this beautiful medieval seaside village with it's beautiful cathedral... the final resting place of the Apostle Saint Andrew. Amalfi has cute shops and café's. Enjoy a gelato and watch the world go by...

*"Life for the Italians was what it was, no more and no less,
an interlude between meals."*

~ Abraham Verghese in "Cutting for Stone"

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Day #11: “Amalfi Coast-ing and Naples”

Friday: May 19th, 2017

Free day to explore, shop and relax in Positano. Take a morning public bus to the neighboring city of Ravello or read a book on your private balcony overlooking the Mediterranean Sea....

Pranzo (Lunch on your own)

Mid-afternoon hotel departure for Naples

Our hotel in Naples is situated on the waterfront bay of Naples, offering breathtaking views of Mount Vesuvius and the Castle dell ‘Ovo. After check-in, enjoy a two hour guided walk through the historic district that will include the Cathedral of San Gennaro, the *Via San Gregorio Armeno* (famous for its stalls selling Christmas Nativity scenes), a visit to one of Naples’ great shopping districts and couple of other surprises...

Closing Dinner Pizza Night

*“When the moon hits your eye like a big pizza pie,
that’s amore!”*

The natives of Naples claim that their city is the original home to authentic pizza. The world’s first pizzeria opened its doors in Naples and still remains in business today. Using the simplest of ingredients, Pizza Margherita is a triumph of Neapolitan cuisine... the humble ingredients of fresh San Marzano pomodori (tomatoes), fresh aromatic basil and mozzarella (di bufala) on char-marked dough is all that is required to make this highly-praised and delicious pizza. The colors of red, white, and green represent the official colors of the Italian flag. Fresh, and bubbly-hot straight out of a wood-fired oven... pizza in Naples might change your life!

“Our battered suitcases were piled on the sidewalk again; we had longer ways to go. But no matter, the road is life.”

~ Jack Kerouac

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Day #12: “Arrivederci Italia!”

Saturday: May 20th, 2017

- TBA.... A.) Early morning departure for Naples Airport
- TBA B.) Departure for U.S.A. (with international layover)



*Open my heart and you will see,
Graved inside of it, “Italy.”*

~ **Robert Browning**

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Italy in 2017

“WHAT IS INCLUDED”

Centrally Located Hotels

Double room occupancy in our three-star historic hotels in Taormina, Cefalù, Enna, Siracusa, Positano and Naples are centrally located with private baths. 2 nights in Taormina, 2 nights in Cefalù, 1 night in Enna, 2 nights in Siracusa, 2 nights in Positano and 1 night in Naples.

Meals

Daily continental breakfast
Daily exquisite traditional main meal with local wine (lunch or supper)
Two light meals (lunch or supper)
Plus “The Last Supper”...A closing banquet-extravaganza!

All Ground and Sea Transportation

Round trip Minivan Transportation throughout the trip (no trains)
Boat Ride in Siracusa
Private chartered boat to the island of Capri

All Entrance Tickets

Taormina: Greek Amphitheatre and Mount Etna Volcano Tour with honey and wine tasting
Cefalù: Norman Cathedral tour and “La Rocca” hike
Agrigento: Valley of the Temples tour
Piazza Armerina: The Roman Villa tour
Positano: The Blue Grotto and ruins of Pompeii

Keyrow’s Services

Paolo will serve as your personal full time director. Together with local guides, we offer daily walking tours and sharing in our knowledge of the places and things that we will see together . Please make known any special needs well in advance of the trip.

The Creator made the universe with designs by Michelangelo.

~ Mark Twain

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