



Are We There Yet?, LLC

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Sensational Southern Italy & Sicily

Enjoy *la dolce vita* as we visit ancient ruins and amazing cathedrals from Palermo and Sorrento to Rome and the Vatican. Plus, take a hydrofoil to Capri and tour the ruins of Pompeii!

Sept 10-22, 2018

Monday, Sept 10, 2018 – We are on our way!

Meet your tour directors Dea and Declan at the Saint Louis Airport for our overnight flight to Palermo, located in the golden basin of Sicily. Get some sleep on the plane – we'll wake up in Italy! **(Meals on plane)**

Tuesday, Sept 11, 2018 – Welcome to Sicily!

Welcome to sunny Italy! Morning arrival at Palermo Airport. Upon arrival, our Tour Escort will warmly greet us and transfer to our hotel to drop off our belongings. This afternoon we enjoy an orientation of the city, discovering the highlights of the Sicilian town. This evening, we enjoy a welcome dinner at a local restaurant. Overnight in Palermo. **(Breakfast on Plane, Dinner and Drinks)**

Wednesday, Sept 12, 2018 – Palermo Exploration



After breakfast this morning, we meet our guide and begin our **Walking Tour of Palermo**. We visit the heart of the historic **U Capu Market**, the center of commerce and trading for centuries. While at the market, we will visit the **Church of the Immaculate Conception** Known for its amazing marble inlaid art and baroque style, the Church of the Immaculate Conception dates back to 1575, when the city was ravaged by plague and the citizens prayed to the Virgin Mother Mary. It is the only surviving part of a Benedictine Monastery that was demolished first for the Palace of Justice and later by Allied bombing during 1943.

Our next stop is the **Norman Cathedral** is a combination of multiple styles, each telling the history of Sicily. The main church was erected in 1185 by the Anglo-Normans on the site of a Byzantine Basilica, which itself had been converted to a mosque by the Saracens who conquered Palermo in the 9th century. As the church was built over the next 600 years, elements of Gothic, Renaissance and Neo-Classical architecture are present in this unique Cathedral.



We then continue to the gardens of **Villa Bonanno**, the ancient ruins of the **Paleopolis**, and the **Royal Palace**, which served as the seat of the Kings of Sicily and now is where the Sicilian Regional Assembly meets. It also houses over 3,000 years of Sicilian history, while the splendid mosaics and architecture of the Palatine Chapel will leave you speechless. We'll continue walking along the ancient fortifications for a photo stop at **San Giovanni degli Eremiti**, or St. John of the Hermits, which blends the numerous influences from the 6th century to the 1880s. We continue through the medieval quarters, Spanish facades and courtyards of the historic mansions on a surprise visit that will introduce you to the Hebrew Palermo.

We then arrive at the **Quattro Canti** (Four Corners), an octagonal piazza in the Baroque style which was one of the first examples of town planning in Europe. We will visit **St. Joseph of the Theatines**, built in the 17th century and with an immense amount of Baroque Art some of which were damaged in WWII but later restored to their former glory. Our last stop on our tour today is the famous **Benedictine Abbey of Monreale**, a 12th century cathedral with its outstanding mosaics depicting highlights of Old and New Testaments, and the Cloisters. Dinner on our own and overnight at our hotel in Palermo. (B)



Thursday, Sept 13, 2018 – Greek Ruins and Agrigento Farms

Enjoy breakfast before we check out of the hotel and head to Agrigento. Along the way, we visit a **Sicilian farm** for a **Cheese Making Demonstration and Tasting**. The farmer will lead us through all the numerous steps in making cheese, from the milk all the way to the finished product.



This afternoon we visit the majestic **Valley of the Temples**. Consisting of seven temples in the Doric style, the buildings date to the 5th century BCE, with the **Temple of Concordia** being the most notable edifices of Greek Civilization existing today. Other structures include the **Temple of Olympian Zeus**, built in 480 BCE to celebrate the city-state's victory over Carthage, and the **Tomb of Theron**, which is thought to be a monument to the Romans killed in the Second Punic War. Our **Guided Tour** will point out all the details of these ruins and provide a greater understanding of the Greek influence on Sicily. We then overnight in Agrigento, with dinner on our own. **(B)**

Friday, Sept 14, 2018 – The Mosaics of the Roman Villa Del Casale

After breakfast, we check out of our hotel and head through the island to Piazza Armerina, where we view the extraordinary mosaics of the **Roman Villa Del Casale**. Considered the largest and finest collection of Roman mosaics in the world, the villa was most likely owned by a member of either the senatorial or imperial families, and sprawled a massive 22 acres! Abandoned after a landslide in the 12 century, the ruins were excavated in the late 19th century, with some of the most amazing mosaics discovered in the late 1950s. We then continue onto Taormina, where we spend the next 3 nights. **(B)**



Saturday, Sept 15, 2018 – Honey, Oil and Wine Tasting on the slope of Mount Etna



Enjoy breakfast at the hotel before we head to **Tour Mount Etna**, the tallest active volcano in Europe. The Greeks believed that Zeus trapped the deadly monster Typhon under the mountain, while the Romans believed it to be the workshop of the master blacksmith Vulcan, from which the term Volcano derives. It's not all fire and brimstone, however, as during the winter, visitors ski down the slope! We will explore the slope with our guide, seeing the wooded craters and the most recent lava flow.

Then it's off to a **Farm Visit and Tasting**. They raise bees for their honey, and we will tour the "Honey Laboratory" where they created various types and tastes of honey. Then it's off for the tasting, but not only honey – we also will **taste wine, olives, various oils** with wood oven baked bread, **pesto, pate** and **Liqueurs**, including a liqueur derived from rose petals called **Rosolio**. We then return to our hotel in Taormina. **(B)**

Sunday, Sept 16, 2018 – Catania and Taormina, the Pearl of the Ionic Sea

Enjoy breakfast at the hotel before we set out to Catania, in the shadow of Mt Etna. While the earthquakes and eruptions have often been a curse, it also blesses the area with incredibly fertile soil. Founded by the Greeks in around 730 BCE, it was one of the first cities to submit to Roman rule. The city was annexed by numerous groups throughout the centuries, from the Vandals, the Byzantine Empire, the Saracens, the Normans, the Spanish, and finally brought in as part of the newly unified Italy in the 1860s. In addition to surviving such invasions, the city has also been buried under lava 17 times in recorded history. The city's symbol is the elephant, carved from lavic stone, as in prehistoric times dwarf elephants lived in Sicily, and their skulls may be the origin of the Cyclops myth.



This afternoon, we explore Taormina, with such amazing sights as the Duomo, the Corso Umberto I and the Palazzo Corvaia, the seat of the first Sicilian Parliament. We visit the 2nd century Greek theater, with a stunning background of both Mount Etna and the seaside coast providing a breathtaking backdrop. We then return to the hotel for dinner on our own. **(B)**

Monday, Sept 17, 2018 – Leaving Sicily for Sorrento.

After breakfast, we fly to Naples. When we arrive, we travel to nearby Sorrento, a charming town famous for their citrus fruits such as lemons and oranges and our home for the next 3 nights. This afternoon we have a orientation tour before our a **Lemoncello Tasting**. This traditional liqueur is flavored with lemons and is a staple throughout southern Italy. **(B)**

Tuesday, Sept 18, 2018 – Ravello and the Amalfi Coast



After breakfast at the hotel, enjoy panoramic views of the enchanting towns along the scenic Amalfi Coast. Our first stop is **Positano's** beautiful terrace, where we gaze upon the distinctive white Moorish homes. We continue on this legendary road overlooking the Mediterranean to reach the coastal town of **Amalfi**, and continue to **Ravello**, an enchanting town high above the coast. We have an orientation tour of the cities via motor coach and foot, as we explore the steep streets, narrow alleyways, sidewalk vendor stalls and boardwalk cafes. We also enjoy a **light lunch**

at a local farm on the Amalfi Coast. Return to our hotel in Sorrento, where you are free to dine on your own. **(B, L)**

Wednesday, Sept 19, 2018 – The Resort Island of Capri

Enjoy breakfast before we head to the docks to board our jet boat that will take us to Capri. We visit the upper city, or **Anacapri** with time to explore the charming shops and chic boutiques that fill the narrow streets. We continue to **“La Piazzetta,”** the center of life on Capri. It served as a market square for centuries until 1938, when a bar began adding outdoor seating and turned the square into the most fashionable meeting place. It is famous with international celebrities, so make sure you keep an eye out! We then enjoy a tour of the island, and, if weather permits, an optional tour to experience the **Blue Grotto**, a symbol of Capri. Sunlight passes through an underwater cavity and illuminates the grotto with a blue light. **(B)**



Optional visit to the Blue Grotto – Board a small 4 person rowboat to enter the grotto, the entrance of which is only 3-feet high and requires visitors to lie flat on the bottom of the boat as the oarsman uses a metal chain attached to the wall to guide the boat. Entrance requires calm seas and low tides to pass through the opening. Not recommended for those who are claustrophobic. Pay the grotto operator directly.

Thursday, Sept 20, 2018 – All Roads Lead to Rome, Plus Pompeii

After breakfast, we check out of our hotel and depart for Rome. Along the way, we stop at **Pompeii**, where we enjoy a half day guided visit to one of the best preserved Roman city ruins, including the Temples of Apollo and Jupiter and the Forum. When the nearby Mt Vesuvius erupted, the city was covered in ash six meters deep, while the inhabitants were suffocated by the noxious gas that emanated from the volcano. Many of you have seen the Pompeii exhibits that have toured the US, now you can tour the site in person! We then continue to Rome, our home for the next 2 nights, where the rest of the day is yours at leisure. **(B)**

Friday, Sept 21, 2018 – Rome and the Vatican

After breakfast, we have a full day guided tour, starting at the **Vatican Museums** and the **Sistine Chapel**. The Vatican Museums contain some of the most amazing treasures and artworks in the world, with 20,000 works on display out of a collection of 70,000! Beginning with a statue purchased in 1506, the museum now contains works by Raphael, da Vinci, Caravaggio, Titian, van Gogh, Gauguin, Dali and Picasso, just to name a few. The tour ends with a visit to perhaps the most famous chapel in the world, the **Sistine Chapel**. The site of the Papal conclave, the Sistine Chapel is best known for the frescos that line the interior walls, with Michelangelo's *Last Judgement* and the ceiling as the crowning achievement, spanning over 5,000 square feet of hand painted frescoes!



We then tour ancient Rome, with visits to the **Colosseum** and **Palatine Forum**. Built in a valley between 3 of the 7 hills of Rome, the Colosseum is built upon the site of Emperor Nero's lake, a man made body of water built after the great fire of Rome. Created from stones quarried 20 miles away, it survived numerous fires and earthquakes, as well as looting to create other buildings in Rome, such as the Vatican. Nearby is the Palatine Forum, built upon the center-most hill of Rome and which served as the heart of the city, as a market place, the site of elections and processions, public speeches, trials, gladiatorial matches and more. Eventually falling into ruin, many of the structures were torn down to create feudal castles. Not all was lost, however, and in the 1800s the site was excavated and restored as much as possible. Work continues to this day, and recent discoveries have dated some structures to over a century older than what is considered the traditional date of Rome's founding.

Our Roman journey comes to an end with a **farewell dinner at a local restaurant with wine**. We then return to the hotel to prepare for our flight home tomorrow. **(B, Dinner with Drinks)**

Saturday, Sept 22, 2018 – Return home

After breakfast, we check out of our hotel before heading to the airport for our flight back to Saint Louis, arriving home the same day. Thank you for traveling with us! **(B)**

Tour includes:

- ✓ Round trip airfare plus intra-Italy flight between Sicily and Naples
- ✓ Wonderful accommodations in all cities
- ✓ 14 Meals (11 Breakfasts, 1 Lunch and 2 dinners with included wine)
- ✓ City tours of Palermo, Monrale, Catania, Taormina Sorrento, Capri, Rome and the Vatican
- ✓ Guided tours of Pompeii, Piazza Armerina, Roman Villa del Casale & Valley of the Temples

- ✓ Admission to the Vatican Museum and Sistine Chapel, Colosseum and Palatine Hill in Rome
- ✓ Cheese and Honey Making Demos and tastings, as well as olives, oils, wine, and liqueurs.
- ✓ Visits to many beautiful churches and palaces throughout Sicily and Southern Italy.
- ✓ Jet boat excursion to Capri
- ✓ Tour along the Amalfi Coast
- ✓ All other Activities as indicated
- ✓ Baggage Handling of one suitcase per person
- ✓ Professional Tour Directors Dea Hoover and Declan Rutan, plus an English speaking local tour escort
- ✓ All gratuities including step-on guides, included meals, driver and director

Please note: Any notice of fuel surcharges imposed by carriers and/or attractions will be disclosed at least 30 days prior to tour departure.

\$5,445 per person, double occupancy

\$6,089 per person single occupancy

Save 3% on this tour! Explore Spectacular Southern Italy and Sicily as well as the ruins of Pompeii for \$5,281 pp, dbl occ when you pay with check or money order!

\$5,281 per person, double*

\$5,906 per person, single*

*These prices reflect 3% savings by paying with check or money order

Make your reservation with a \$500 deposit per person. Due to the nature of purchasing airline tickets, the deposit is non-refundable. Once this tour fills, a wait list will be formed. Please send a check, or call with a credit card along with your name, address, phone number, and all roommates' names if you are sharing a room and any dietary or walking restrictions.

We encourage all travelers to purchase travel protection and pay with initial deposit. Please remember that certain benefits are time sensitive. Plans help provide coverage for unexpected circumstances and help protect your trip and your investment.

Please insure that you have a valid form of ID for the flight. You will not be allowed to fly without the proper documents, and travel protection will not cover any expenses due to not having valid travel documents.

Balance on base tour price is due June 10, 2018, and no refunds will be given after that time. If you purchase Travel Protection and need to cancel after June 10, 2018, you must file a claim. If you attempt to book after this date, there may be a substantial increase in price or you may have to arrive on a separate flight.