Overseas Adventure Travel®

THE LEADER IN SMALL GROUP ADVENTURES SINCE 1978

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



Mediterranean Cultures & Islands: A Voyage from Barcelona to Athens

2026

Overseas Adventure Travel®

347 Congress Street, Boston, MA 02210

Dear Traveler,

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

When you join us, you will enjoy the thrill of off-the-beaten-path discovery coupled with the convenience of unpacking just once. Aboard our privately owned small ship, you will visit lesser-known ports that larger vessels cannot access—and enjoy intimate interactions with local people in your small group of no more than 25 travelers. You will get to know community leaders and try your hand at local trades during your *A Day in the Life* experience, share traditional fare and lively conversation during a Home-Hosted Visit, discuss the Controversial Topics impacting everyday life, and visit sites supported by Grand Circle Foundation.

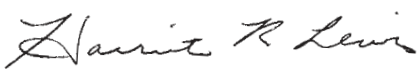
But your personal connections are not limited to your time on land—while onboard, you will enjoy the warm hospitality provided by our friendly, English-speaking crew, as well as the camaraderie of your fellow American travelers. Whether you travel with a partner, sister, friend, or independently, you will feel welcomed and included throughout your journey. And if you do choose to travel solo, you will enjoy an unmatched value, with our FREE or low-cost Single Supplements—just one of the reasons we continue to be the leader in solo travel.

To ensure you experience the true culture and feel supported every step of the way, we provide the services of a local Trip Experience Leader from the beginning of your adventure to the end. Along with introducing you to the history and culture of their homeland, these friendly experts will gladly help you out with any special requests to make your trip even more special. You can also rely on the seasoned team at our regional office, who are ready to help 24/7 in case any unexpected circumstances arise.

Plus, you can put your own personal stamp on your trip, like the, like the **87% of our travelers who customize their experience**. Perhaps you will choose to see more of your destination by adding an optional trip extension to your itinerary. You can also arrive a few days early to explore independently and get acclimated, customize your air itinerary, and more.

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

Warm regards,



Harriet R. Lewis
Chair
Overseas Adventure Travel

CONTENTS

MEDITERRANEAN CULTURES & ISLANDS: A VOYAGE FROM SPAIN TO GREECE

Your Adventure at a Glance:

- Where You're Going, What it Costs, and What's Included 4

Your Detailed Day-To-Day Itinerary 6

Pre-Trip Extension 19

Post-Trip Extension 22

Deck Plans 25

ESSENTIAL TRAVEL INFORMATION

Travel Documents & Entry Requirements 27

Rigors, Vaccines & General Health 30

Money Matters: Local Currency & Tipping Guidelines 33

Air, Optional Tours & Staying in Touch 37

Packing: What to Bring & Luggage Limits 40

Climate & Average Temperatures 46

Aboard Your Ship: Cabin Features, Dining & Services on Board 49

ABOUT YOUR DESTINATIONS: CULTURE, ETIQUETTE & MORE

Cultures of the Mediterranean 53

Shopping: What to Buy, Customs, Shipping & More 65

DEMOGRAPHICS & HISTORY

Spain 68

Italy 70

Sicily 72

Malta 77

Greece 79

RESOURCES

Suggested Reading 82

Suggested Films & Videos 85

Useful Websites 88

Useful Apps 89



The Parthenon, Athens, Greece

Mediterranean Cultures & Islands: A Voyage from Spain to Greece

Small Ship Adventure

Spain: Barcelona | **Sardinia:** The Barbagia, Cagliari | **Sicily:** Mazara del Vallo, Agrigento, Siracusa | **Malta:** Valletta | **Greece:** Assos, Zakynthos Island, Athens

Group size: No more than 25 travelers

19 days starting from **$10,495**
including international airfare
Single Supplement: FREE or Low-Cost

For departure dates & prices, visit **www.oattravel.com/cbh2026pricing**

Step aboard the privately owned, **89-passenger M/V *Clio*** and sail for 14 nights into the waters of the western Mediterranean, where myth and history have swirled together for millennia. Journey to Barcelona, the Sardinian countryside, Sicily, and Malta, before concluding your voyage in Greece, where the turquoise beaches of Zakynthos and the legendary city of Athens await.

IT'S INCLUDED

- 17 nights accommodation, including 14 nights aboard the privately owned 89-passenger M/V *Clio*
- International airfare, airport transfers, government taxes, fees, and airline fuel surcharges, unless you choose to make your own air arrangements
- 47 meals: 17 breakfasts, 14 lunches, 16 dinners—including a Home-Hosted Dinner—plus all onboard house beer, wine, and soft drinks
- 21 guided tours and cultural experiences
- Gratuities for local guides and motorcoach drivers
- All port charges
- Baggage handling for 1 piece of luggage per person, including tips
- 5% Frequent Traveler Credit toward your next trip

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



WHAT TO EXPECT

① **②** ③ ④ ⑤ Moderately Easy

Pacing: 18 days, with 14 nights aboard the M/V *Clio,* one single-night hotel stay, and one two-night hotel stay

Physical Requirements: Walk 2-3 miles unassisted, including over unpaved paths, steep hills, stairs, and cobblestones, and participate in 4-6 hours of physical activities each day. Agility is required to board small tender boats, and two days of the itinerary feature require long motorcoach rides

Flight time: Travel time will be 8-17 hours and will most likely have one connection

View all physical requirements at **www.oattravel.com/cbh**

THE MEDITERRANEAN: THE O.A.T. DIFFERENCE

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

People-to-People Experiences: Learn about **Controversial Topics** affecting the region during candid conversations with locals deeply connected to these issues. We'll learn about the Sicilian mafia from the son of a former mob boss, and hear about corruption in the Maltese government through the story of a reporter who gave her life to uncover it.

O.A.T. Exclusives: Due to our small group size, we'll be able to discover Sicily's rustic windswept heartland, the Barbagia—where we'll share lunch with a local shepherd family and learn about their traditional way of life. Plus, delve into the unique cultures of the Mediterranean as the 89-passenger M/V *Clio* docks in intimate ports like Mazara del Vallo, where we'll enjoy a **Home-Hosted Dinner** with a local family. And enjoy ***A Day in the Life*** of local people in Zakynthos, where we'll visit a village for a hands-on agricultural experience.

ITINERARY SUMMARY

DAYS	DESTINATION
1	Depart U.S.
2-3	Barcelona, Spain • Embark ship
4	Day at Sea
5-7	Sardinia, Italy
8-10	Mazara del Vallo, Sicily • Agrigento
11-12	Valletta, Malta
13-14	Siracusa, Sicily
15	Day at Sea
16	Zakynthos, Greece
17-18	Disembark ship • Itea • Athens
19	Return to U.S.

CUSTOMIZE YOUR ADVENTURE

OPTIONAL EXTENSIONS

Madrid's Art & History
PRE-TRIP: 4 nights from **$1,795**

Athens & the Peloponnese: From Homer to the First Olympics
POST-TRIP: 5 nights from **$1,595**

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 **Madrid** before your Madrid pre-trip extension from **$340** per room, per night
- Arrive early in **Barcelona** before your main adventure from **$210** per room, per night

Mediterranean Cultures & Islands: A Voyage from Spain to Greece

YOUR DETAILED ITINERARY

BEGIN YOUR ADVENTURE WITH AN OPTIONAL PRE-TRIP EXTENSION

4 nights in *Madrid's Art & History*

Day 1 Depart U.S.

Day 2 Arrive Madrid, Spain

Day 3 Explore Madrid

Day 4 Madrid • Explore Segovia

Day 5 Madrid • Optional El Escorial tour • *Flamenco* demonstration

Day 6 Madrid • Barcelona • Join main trip

Day 1 Depart U.S.

Your overnight flight to Spain departs today.

Day 2 Arrive Barcelona, Spain

- Destination: Barcelona
- Accommodations: Sercotel Caspe Hotel or similar

Morning: Arrive in Barcelona, where an O.A.T. representative will meet you at the airport and assist with your transfer to your hotel. Here, you'll meet your Trip Experience Leader, as well as fellow travelers who took the *Madrid's Art & History* pre-trip extension and those who arrived early before their trip began.

Lunch: On your own.

Afternoon: You may join your Trip Experience Leader for an orientation walk of the surrounding neighborhood early this afternoon, with the rest of the day free to spend as you choose.

Dinner: On your own this evening.

Evening: You are free to rest after your overseas flight, or you may venture out to explore Barcelona independently.

Day 3 Explore Barcelona • Embark ship

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

Breakfast: At the hotel.

Morning: Set off on a tour of Barcelona, the capital of Spain's autonomous Catalonia region. Spain's second-largest city has been a vital cultural hub since the Middle Ages, and it retains a unique and independent character which we'll experience on our tour today. The city streets feature an elegant blend of old and new architecture. Scattered throughout the city, we'll find the works of Barcelona's most celebrated architect, Antoni Gaudi, whose

trademark Catalan modernist style has made the city famous around the world and lends the city an enchanted, almost surreal atmosphere.

After, we'll explore the winding lanes of the *Barri Gotic* (Gothic Quarter). Located in the heart of the city, this neighborhood provides a glimpse into medieval Barcelona, with some structures dating as far back as Roman times.

Then, you'll have time to make your own discoveries. Perhaps you'll join your Trip Experience Leader for a discovery walk.

Lunch: On your own. You may wish to sample a traditional *paella*, the one-pan rice dish that features seafood—usually shrimp.

Afternoon: We'll head to the port and board the M/V *Clio*, our home for the next two weeks as we make our way across the sea towards Greece. The ship is staffed by a friendly, English-speaking crew who will be eager to welcome you aboard and show you to your room. The lounge is equipped with cozy couches and chairs, and a topside Sun Deck features ample deck chairs for admiring the scenery.

We'll meet the crew and our captain once we board, and they will lead a safety briefing before we set sail for Italy.

Before dinner, our Trip Experience Leader will present the first in a nightly series of Port Talks, in which we'll learn about the discoveries we can expect to make tomorrow.

Dinner: After the talk, we head for the ship's dining room where we'll enjoy a Captain's Welcome Dinner. In addition to the standard dinner options, you'll enjoy a few more extravagant offerings at this celebratory meal. While the dress code remains casual, some travelers choose to wear a day dress or slacks to the Captain's Dinner.

Evening: At leisure. Feel free to familiarize yourself with the ship's amenities and get to know your fellow travelers in the lounge as we sail for Sardinia.

Day 4 Day at sea • *Crossroads of Cultures* conversation

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

Breakfast: Onboard the ship.

Morning: Enjoy a morning at leisure as our ship makes its way across the sea.

Lunch: Onboard the ship.

Afternoon: Your Trip Experience Leader will lead various onboard activities throughout the afternoon into the evening, including a *Crossroads of Cultures: from the Ancient World to modern-day Migration* conversation conversation for some historic context to the discoveries that we'll be making throughout our trip. Today's conversation focuses on the ancient world: particularly the trade routes of the Phoenicians, Greeks, and Romans who plied these waters thousands of years ago, and the eternal legacy they left behind that we'll encounter during our explorations. Afterwards, join our Trip Experience Leader in the lounge for a Port Talk.

Dinner: Onboard the ship.

Evening: At leisure. Feel free to take advantage of the ship's amenities—including the bar and the lounge—as we continue our overnight voyage toward Arbatax on the island of Sardinia.

Day 5 Arbatax, Italy • Explore Sardinia • Barbagia • Countryside farm lunch • Folk culture discoveries

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

Activity Note: Our tour of Sardinia will last around 9 hours, including multiple stops for discovery to break up our long drive.

Breakfast: Onboard the ship.

Morning: Drive with your Trip Experience Leader to the quaint village of Orgosolo in the Barbagia countryside, where we'll take part in a walking tour and engage with locals there.

Then, we'll get a sense of rural life as we drive further into Sardinia's remote and rustic heartland, where the insular locals stick to old traditions that can be traced back to prehistoric times. We'll get to know the people of the Barbagia, and learn more about their old and isolated culture, with strong ties to sheep herding and farming. Even today, in the more secluded villages, many locals will only speak Sardinian, rather than Italian, and dress in traditional outfits. It's a culture that has deliberately closed itself off from the outside world for a long time—in fact, as late as the 1980s, there have been instances of wealthy travelers to the region who have been kidnapped by local bandits in exchange for ransom money.

Today, however, the people are receptive to travelers. We'll get a sense of their hospitality when we meet a local shepherd family, who will welcome us to their farm, and offer us a taste of traditional rural Sardinian cuisine.

Lunch: Enjoy lunch with the shepherd family.

Afternoon: We'll drive to the town of Fonni to get another glimpse into the ancient culture of Sardinia during a meeting with a local group dedicated to keeping the folk culture alive. We'll learn how this folkloric custom celebrates its agricultural and sheep herding traditions with singing, dancing, heavy fur-lined costumes adorned with bells and masks.

Then, we bid farewell to our Barbagian hosts, and drive back to Arbatax, where our ship awaits.

Dinner: Onboard the ship.

Evening: At leisure. During your free time aboard, you may choose to relax at the ship's bar or take in the views from the window-lined discovery lounge.

Day 6 Explore Cagliari • Launeddas class

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

Breakfast: Onboard the ship.

Morning: We'll dock in Cagliari, Sardinia's historic capital, this morning. We'll disembark for a walking tour of this bustling city by the sea after we dock.

Considered one of the most authentically Italian cities in Sardinia, Cagliari is an elegant mix of Roman remnants marked by ancient ruins and contemporary culture reflected in trendy shops and cafés. We'll make our way throughout the historic city center, stopping in the Castello district to admire Cagliari's iconic citadel that once housed Sardinian royalty. Perched on a hill, the city center provides breathtaking panoramic views as well as an impressive array of museums.

Lunch: At a local restaurant in Cagliari.

Afternoon: The rest of the day is yours to spend at leisure. Your Trip Experience Leader will be happy to provide suggestions for discovery opportunities in the area.

Our Cagliari discoveries conclude onboard with a lesson in how to play the Launeddas—a woodwind instrument played throughout Sardinia in religious ceremonies and traditional dances—followed by a performance.

Dinner: Onboard the ship.

Evening: At leisure. Feel free to spend the evening relaxing in the ship's lounge or head to your cabin for the night.

Day 7 Cagliari • Optional Barumini tour or *Taste of Sardinia* tour

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

Breakfast: Onboard the ship.

Morning: You are free to discover Cagliari on your own, or join your Trip Experience Leader for one of two optional tours.

For a glimpse into centuries past, drive to the commune of Barumini, where history lays bare before you. Upon arrival, a local guide will lead you through the iconic Su Nuraxi, a UNESCO World Heritage complex dating back to the seventeenth century BCE. You'll witness a *nuraghe* here as well as several prehistoric towers and remnants of a civilization long gone. Once your tour of the site concludes, we'll have time to discover the area as well as the quaint town of Barumini independently. Then, drive to a nearby farmhouse, where you'll be greeted by the farmers and witness the unspoiled nature of the region.

Or, if you're looking for a multisensory experience, join the *Taste of Sardinia* optional tour. First, drive to the village of Selargius. Here, you'll meet a local villager who will demonstrate how to decorate Sardinian bread, and you'll have the opportunity to try your hand at these techniques based on centuries of culinary tradition. From there, we'll head back to Cagliari's city center in time for another demonstration.

Lunch: If you are joining the optional tour to Barumini, lunch is included at the farmhouse. On the optional *Taste of Sardinia* tour, savor lunch with a *culurgiones* (rolled stuffed pasta) demonstration.

Otherwise, lunch will be provided onboard.

Afternoon: Travelers on our Barumini optional tour will return to Cagliari and meet up with the rest of our fellow travelers in the mid-afternoon.

If you're on the *Taste of Sardinia* tour, you have the chance to sample traditional Sardinian desserts at a local bakery, before returning to the ship.

We start sailing towards Mazara del Vallo before dinner.

Dinner: Onboard the ship.

Evening: The evening is free. Continue your dinner conversations over a cocktail in the lounge, admire the moonlit sea from the deck, or retire to your room to be rocked to sleep by the waves.

Day 8 Explore Mazara del Vallo, Sicily • **Controversial Topic:** The Sicilian Mafia • **Home-Hosted Dinner**

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

Breakfast: Onboard the ship.

Morning: Our ship docks in Mazara del Vallo, Sicily this morning, where we'll disembark and head into town for a walking tour with a local guide. Mazara is known for its historic Kasbah quarter, where some 3,000 Tunisians and other Maghreb Arabs live and work. We'll learn more about Mazara's unique blend of cultures during our guided explorations.

After our tour, we'll have some free time to explore independently.

Lunch: Onboard the ship.

Afternoon: Gather onboard the ship for a conversation about a **Controversial Topic**: the influence of the Sicilian Mafia, also known as *Cosa Nostra*. We'll get an overview of the Mafia's history and inner workings—from its 19th century roots that sprung from cynicism and distrust of public institutions, to its rise and spread to America during World War II, and the shadow it casts over Sicilian business, politics, criminal justice, and day-to-day life today. Our guest speakers will be two men who are intimately familiar with the Mafia: One who was forced to flee Sicily as a child after a family member was murdered by members of the organization, and another who is the son of a former crime boss. While this experience will reveal ugly truths about Sicilian history and culture, it offers a personal perspective that no newspaper or history book can provide—made possible by O.A.T.'s local connections in Sicily.

After our conversation, we'll have rest of the afternoon free to explore independently. Later, we'll join our Trip Experience Leader for a Port Talk about our next destination.

Dinner: We'll break into smaller groups and drive to enjoy a **Home-Hosted Dinner** with local families in Mazara del Vallo. With our small group size, we'll have a rare opportunity to connect closely with our hosts and enjoy intimate conversation.

As Sicilians take their cuisine very seriously, the meal we share together is likely to be a highlight of your trip. Our dinner will be chosen by our hosts, and will reflect the type of meal that locals of this region would typically share in their day-to-day lives.

Evening: The rest of the evening is free. Perhaps you'll observe the sea and the stars from on deck or from your cabin's outside window.

Day 9 Mazara del Vallo • Explore Mozia Island

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

Breakfast: Onboard the ship.

Morning: Drive to Saline Ettore Infersa—the natural phenomenon of Sicily's salt pans, which began to form nearly 3,000 years ago and make for dramatic landscape views and a glimpse at the neighboring Egadi Islands.

Next, we'll drive out to Stagnone Lagoon, where we'll board small boats for an included tour of Mozia Island. Nearly 3,000 years ago, Mozia was one of the most important Phoenician ports, and served as a bustling hub of trade for the old inhabitants of the Mediterranean. In

ancient times, Roman engineers constructed a mile-long road connecting the island with the rest of Sicily to facilitate commerce.

Once we land, we'll walk among the ruins of the settlement, and then visit the Whitaker Museum, which houses artifacts from Mozia's past—including an elegantly carved Greek statue of a charioteer, one of the finest pieces of sculpture to ever be rescued from the Mediterranean's depths.

Lunch: After our tour, we'll enjoy a picnic lunch near the museum.

Afternoon: We'll board our boat back to the mainland and drive to the Mazara del Vallo port, where our ship awaits. Spend the rest of the afternoon at leisure, perhaps enjoying a nap onboard or spending some more time in Mazara del Vallo.

Dinner: Onboard the ship.

Evening: At leisure as we sail to Porto Empedocle, Sicily.

Day 10 Porto Empedocle • Agrigento's Valley of the Temples

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

Activity Note: Today's tour of the Valley of the Temples will involve about 3 miles of walking over steep slopes and loose, uneven terrain. The walk will last for around 3 hours in duration.

Breakfast: Onboard the ship.

Morning: We'll dock in Porto Empedocle just in time for breakfast. Drive to the extraordinary Valley of the Temples in Agrigento, a UNESCO World Heritage Site. These are among the greatest Greek ruins in the world, and the splendor of the temples—seven in the Doric style, built during the fifth and sixth centuries BC—rivals those in Athens. Here we'll see the Temple of Juno, with its excellent views of the entire valley, and the Temple of Concordia, beautifully preserved. The oldest ruin is traditionally named the Temple of Heracles, which includes the remnant of a large altar.

Lunch: Onboard the ship.

Afternoon: At leisure onboard. You might participate in a hands-on cooking lesson on the ship, led by a Sicilian chef, and learn some traditional recipes and cooking tips to take back to the U.S. with you. We'll begin sailing for Valletta, Malta just before dinner.

Dinner: Onboard the ship.

Evening: The evening is free. Continue your dinner conversations over a cocktail in the lounge, or admire the moonlit sea from the deck as we sail.

Day 11 Explore Valletta, Malta • Controversial Topic: The bombshell reporting of late journalist Daphne Caruana Galizia

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

Activity Note: Our tour today involves more than two miles of walking on paved roads, including some steep hills. St. John's Co-Cathedral closes at noon on Saturdays, and is closed on Sundays and during public holidays. An alternate activity will be provided by your Trip Experience Leader if your visit falls during one of these times.

Breakfast: Onboard the ship.

Morning: Our ship docks in Valletta, where we'll head out for an included walking tour of the Maltese capital. From our ship, we'll walk to the base of the Old Town, where we'll ride a

glass elevator to the Upper Barracca Gardens, a beautiful display of Baroque architecture overlooking the city's Grand Harbor. Other highlights of our tour include St. John's Co-Cathedral, a high Baroque church that hosts the painter Caravaggio's masterpieces, *The Beheading of St. John* and *Saint Jerome Writing* in its oratory, and a visit to a local bakery to chat with the owners and sample *pastizzi*, a hot, flaky pastry for which Malta is known.

Lunch: Onboard the ship.

Afternoon: Gather in the ship's lounge to discuss the **Controversial Topic** of anti-corruption activism in Malta—more specifically, the life of Daphne Caruana Galizia, a former investigative journalist, columnist, blogger, and anti-corruption activist. To facilitate our discussion, we'll be joined by an individual who was very close with Daphne, but for their protection, we are not at liberty to disclose their name.

Our conversation will cover a broad range of topics, from insatiable financial power and a culture of impunity to the dangers of investigative journalism. But at the heart of our conversation, we will reflect on a brilliant and brave woman who—against all odds—wrote truth to power and strove to dismantle a powerful political bubble bankrupt of ethics. Her story is a reminder of the lengths journalists often must go to unveil the truth and the sacrifices they make to do so.

Dinner: Onboard the ship.

Evening: The evening is free. You may enjoy a cocktail and conversation in the lounge or retire to your cabin for the night.

Day 12 Valletta • Optional Hagar Qim & the Three Cities tour • Optional Mdina, Rabat & Vittoriosa tour

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

Activity Note: Both of today's optional tours will involve about 3 miles of walking through archaeological sites with steep slopes and loose, uneven terrain. The walks will last for around 3 hours in duration.

Breakfast: Onboard the ship.

Morning: Spend the day discovering Valletta at your own pace. Or, join your Trip Experience Leader on your choice of one of two full-day optional tours: Hagar Qim and the Three Cities, or Mdina, Rabat & Vittoriosa.

Travelers on our Hagar Qim and the Three Cities optional tour will begin at Hagar Qim, one of Malta's best-known prehistoric temples. This megalithic temple complex, whose name translates to "free-standing boulders," 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.

If you join our Mdina, Rabat & Vittoriosa optional tour, you'll start the morning with a drive to Mdina. This ancient walled city represents nearly 3,000 years of history, part of which you'll discover as you make your way through its narrow cobbled lanes with your Trip Experience Leader and local guide. We'll also make our way through nearby Rabat, the quaint

village neighboring Mdina. After our walking tour, you'll have about a little time to explore independently before driving to Vittoriosa.

Lunch: Both optional tours include lunch at a local restaurant in Vittoriosa. Otherwise, lunch is onboard the ship.

Afternoon: After your optional tour concludes, you'll return to the ship and greet the rest of your fellow travelers.

Dinner: Onboard the ship.

Evening: The evening is free. You may enjoy a cocktail and conversation in the lounge or retire to your cabin for the night as we begin sailing for Siracusa.

Day 13 Explore Siracusa, Sicily

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

Breakfast: Onboard the ship.

Morning: Of all the Greek cities of antiquity that flourished outside of Greece, Siracusa was the most important in all of the Mediterranean, and a formidable seafaring power nearly equal to Athens. In the heyday of its power, it dared to take on both Carthage and Rome. At one time, its wealth and size were unmatched by any other city in the ancient world, and today it is one of the richest historical sites in Europe.

Our guided tour of Siracusa begins in Ortigia, the historical gem of the city. Admire the architectural splendor of ancient medieval streets, Baroque structures, and the cathedral—which was fashioned out of an ancient Greek temple. We'll also tour the Giudecca, or Jewish quarter, where Sicilian Jews lived harmoniously alongside their neighbors until the Spanish decree of expulsion in 1492.

After our tour ends, we'll have some time to explore on our own before lunch.

Lunch: Onboard the ship.

Afternoon: The rest of the afternoon is free to explore Siracusa on your own.

Tonight, we'll join our Trip Experience Leader for a Port Talk about our next destination before dinner.

Dinner: Onboard the ship.

Evening: Enjoy a performance of Sicilian folk music when local musicians come aboard. The rest of the evening is at leisure. Perhaps you'll take advantage of the ship's amenities as you share a nightcap in the lounge with your fellow travelers.

Day 14 Siracusa • Optional *Baroque Heritage of Sicily* tour

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

Breakfast: Onboard the ship.

Morning: Today is yours to explore Siracusa on your own. Perhaps you'll visit the Temple of Apollo, the oldest known Doric temple in western Europe, or the legendary Fountain of Arethusa. Maybe you'll take the day to stroll and see where your discoveries take you.

Or, discover the *Baroque Heritage of Sicily* on a full-day optional excursion, where we'll witness some of the best examples of the Sicilian Baroque architecture in a region of southeast Sicily known as Val di Noto—part of a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

Our day begins with a drive to the *Ragusa Ibla* (Ancient Ragusa). There, we'll tour the majestic Church of Saint George and the surrounding area.

Then, drive to the city of Modica, a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Next, we'll head to a local chocolate shop and discover the rich, decadent flavors of local chocolate during a tasting.

Lunch: If you're joining the optional tour, enjoy lunch at a local restaurant, included with the tour. Otherwise, you'll savor lunch onboard.

Afternoon: Today's optional tour concludes this afternoon, as we drive back to Siracusa.

Dinner: Onboard the ship.

Evening: At leisure as we begin sailing towards Zakynthos.

Day 15 Day at sea • *Crossroads of Cultures* conversation

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

Breakfast: Onboard the ship.

Morning: We begin our day at sea by continuing the conversation about *Crossroads of Cultures: the Ancient World to Modern-Day Migration* led by our Trip Experience Leader.

Lunch: Onboard the ship.

Afternoon: Spend the rest of the day at sea as we make our way across the Mediterranean toward Greece. Perhaps you'll spend time in the ship's lounge, relax at the bar, or take in the views from the Sun Deck.

Dinner: Onboard the ship.

Evening: At leisure as we continue sailing towards Greece.

Day 16 Explore Zakynthos, Greece • ***A Day in the Life*** of a Zakynthos village

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

Breakfast: Onboard the ship.

Morning: Today we dock at the island of Zakynthos, where a dramatic chapter of Jewish history unfolded. In 1944, the Nazis sent a demand to the bishop and mayor of Zakynthos to surrender the names of every Jewish resident on the island. Instead, the courageous city officials sent warning to the locals of the impending danger, and the community came together to hide their Jewish neighbors from the Nazi soldiers. For months, the Nazis searched the island but the community was defiant, and in the end, not one of the 275 Jewish residents of Zakynthos was surrendered or abducted.

Here, we'll set out on our ***A Day in the Life*** experience. We'll get an intimate view of traditional life here when we split into smaller groups to enjoy one of four different—but equally enriching experiences. During our visit, our activities may range from learning about the wine-making process to experiencing what it's like to produce olive oil, or other similar activities. We'll also have the opportunity to meet the community members of the village you visit.

Lunch: Join the family at their table to enjoy lunch together, prepared from farm fresh, locally-sourced ingredients. Our hosts will choose the menu, but we'll likely savor typical Mediterranean dishes such as stuffed grape leaves, pita bread, roasted eggplant spread, and rice.

Afternoon: We'll take our time after lunch, sipping coffee with our hosts, and enjoying intimate conversation about daily life in

rural Greece. In a village as small as this, relationships are close, and friendly rivalries and jealousies are common (summarized neatly by a local saying: "If you like your neighbor, you can't wait to see his goat dead"). As we'll learn, however, our host family is a universally beloved pillar of the community, by virtue of the work they've done to help the village grow.

After we make our farewells, we return to town in Zakynthos where our ship is docked.

Dinner: We'll share an included Farewell Dinner in the ship's dining room.

Evening: At leisure. We'll sail to Patras overnight.

Day 17 Disembark ship in Patras • Explore Delphi • Athens

- Destination: Athens
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner
- Accommodations: Athenian Callirhoe Exclusive Hotel

Activity Note: The drive to Delphi will be approximately 3 hours. The drive to Athens will be approximately 2.5 hours. Your included tour in Delphi will involve steep uphill walking over rocky terrain.

Breakfast: Onboard the ship.

Morning: Bid a final farewell to your ship's crew as you disembark in Patras this morning and head to Delphi and the Delphi Archaeological Museum, which we'll explore with a local guide that will meet us once we arrive. The unmatched holdings here include the larger-than-life bronze Charioteer, dating to about 470 BC and one of the finest surviving bronze works of antiquity. The museum is filled with other masterpieces from the Archaic, Classical, and Roman periods, including scenes of the gods watching the Trojan War, a nine-statue family monument from the fourth century BC, and a sculpture of Roman Emperor Hadrian's beloved friend Antinoos.

Then, discover the archaeological site itself. Absorb the majesty of ancient Delphi, including the Temple of Apollo where the oracle once prophesied. This ancient sanctuary is beautifully set at the foot of a mountain with a vista over olive groves stretching to the Bay of Itea. Those entering the sanctuary of Apollo in ancient times first purified themselves with the water of the Castalia Fountain, situated in the area. As you approach the Temple of Apollo, you'll walk the Sacred Way used by ancient Greeks such as the historian Plutarch, who was a priest of Apollo at Delphi. See treasuries built here by the Athenians, the Thebans, the Corinthians, and the Syracusans—the great powers of their day—including the theater, built to seat 5,000 people, from which it's possible to get an impressive view if you climb to the top row.

Lunch: At a local restaurant.

Afternoon: After lunch, we'll head to our Athens hotel.

Dinner: At a local restaurant.

Evening: At leisure.

Day 18 Explore Athens

- Destination: Athens
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Dinner
- Accommodations: Athenian Callirhoe Exclusive Hotel or similar

Activity Note: Your included tour in Athens will involve steep uphill walking over rocky terrain.

Breakfast: At the hotel.

Morning: Drive to the ancient Acropolis, crowned by the majestic ruins of the Parthenon. The Greek word *acropolis* means "top of the

city" or "upper city," and many of the ancient Greek cities are built around a higher acropolis where the inhabitants could flee during invasions and sieges, and where most temples and other important structures are located.

Pericles, the ancient Greek leader noted for advancing democracy, ordered the building of the Parthenon and other main buildings on the Acropolis of Athens in the fifth century BC. The immense Parthenon took 15 years to complete, and was designed to house a giant statue of Athena. It began as a temple to the goddess, then in later eras spent time as a Christian church and a Muslim mosque. Soldiers of the occupying Ottoman Empire used it to store gunpowder, and the structure was blown up when Venetians bombarded it in 1687. Although still technically a "ruin," much of the great building has been restored or pieced back together, and it is an impressive sight, boasting a commanding view of the city below.

Our tour continues at the Plaka, the oldest part of the city. This area contains many archaeological sites, including the famous Tower of the Winds that is a part of the ancient Roman Agora. We'll end our walk in Monastiraki Square, perhaps Athens' most popular shopping district, where you may enjoy some free time to explore.

Lunch: On your own in Athens. Your Trip Experience Leader would be happy to provide suggestions for local fare.

Afternoon: Continue exploring independently. Your Trip Experience Leader can recommend activities.

Dinner: Gather with your fellow travelers for an included Farewell Dinner at a local restaurant.

Evening: Free to spend as you please.

Day 19 Return to U.S. or begin your post-trip extension

- Included Meals: Breakfast

Breakfast: At the hotel. A boxed breakfast will be available for those whose flights depart early.

Morning: Drive to the airport for your flight home. Or begin your *Athens & the Peloponnese: From Homer to the First Olympics* post-trip extension.

END YOUR ADVENTURE WITH AN OPTIONAL POST-TRIP EXTENSION

5 nights in *Athens & the Peloponnese: From Homer to the First Olympics*

Day 1 Athens • Explore Mycenae • Transfer to Olympia

Day 2 Explore Olympia

Day 3 Olympia • Explore Nafplion

Day 4 Nafplion • Explore Epidaurus • Athens

Day 5 Explore Athens

Day 6 Athens • Return to U.S.

OPTIONAL TOURS

During your trip you will be able to book optional tours directly with your Trip Experience Leader. They 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.*

Taste of Sardinia

(Day 7 $157 per person)

On this optional tour, engage your senses with a number of Sardinian specialties. First, drive to the village of Selargius. Here, you'll meet a local villager who will demonstrate how to bake and decorate bread, and you'll have the opportunity to try your hand at these techniques based on centuries of culinary tradition. Back in Cagliari's city center, savor a traditional lunch wherein you'll sample a stuffed pasta called *culurgiones* and learn how it is made. Finish up your tour at a local bakery for a dessert tasting.

Barumini

(Day 7 $185 per person)

Travel into the depths of Sardinia's history at the UNESCO World Heritage site of Su Nuraxi Barumini. This complex dates back to the seventeenth century BCE, and includes an ancient stone *nuraghe*, a cluster of towers, and a village dating back to the thirteenth century BCE. A local guide will walk you through the sprawling remains of a thriving civilization, and then you'll get the chance to stroll through the quaint commune of Barumini on your own. Afterwards, savor an included traditional lunch at a nearby family farm.

Hagar Qim & the Three Cities

(Day 12 $155 per person)

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.

After lunch at a local restaurant (included in the cost of the optional tour), you'll have some free time for independent discovery in Vittoriosa before returning to the ship in the mid-afternoon.

Mdina, Rabat & Vittoriosa

(Day 12 $155 per person)

Join a full-day optional excursion to Mdina, Rabat, and Vittoriosa. Begin with a walking tour of Malta's ancient capital of Mdina, also known as "The Silent City." Surrounded by thick imposing walls, and limited access allowed to traffic, this medieval city abounds with peaceful winding streets. Continue to Rabat for a tour of this historic city, then depart for Vittoriosa for an included lunch in a local restaurant and a walking tour of the 16th-century, fortified city with a local guide.

Baroque Heritage of Sicily

(Day 14 $150 per person)

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

PRE-TRIP

Madrid's Art & History

INCLUDED IN YOUR PRICE

- » Accommodations for 4 nights at Princesa Plaza Madrid or similar
- » 7 meals: 4 breakfasts, 1 lunch, and 2 dinners
- » Guided tours with personal headsets: Madrid · Prado Museum · Segovia & the Jewish Quarter · Lavapiés
- » Services of our local Trip Experience Leader
- » Gratuities for local guides and motorcoach drivers
- » All transfers

PRE-TRIP EXTENSION ITINERARY

Life pulses through the heart of Spain in Madrid where an appreciation for world-class art, innovative cuisine, and historic architecture is part of the cultural fabric. Legends like Diego Velazquez, El Greco, and Miguel de Cervantes found inspiration in Spain's capital city, and while Madrid doesn't boast one defining architectural piece, it's home to a plethora of spectacular architectural treasures—from the baroque Basílica de San Francisco El Grande to the extravagant Royal Palace. Discover why this vibrant city inspired the phrase, de Madrid al cielo, *or "Madrid is next to Heaven."*

Day 1 Depart U.S.

Depart today on your flight to Madrid, Spain.

Day 2 Arrive Madrid, Spain

- Destination: Madrid
- Accommodations: Princesa Plaza Madrid or similar

Morning: Arrive in Madrid today. You'll be met at the airport and assisted to the hotel, where your Trip Experience Leader will greet you.

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

Afternoon: Join a short orientation walk around the neighborhood of your hotel with our Trip Experience Leader later today.

Dinner: Your Trip Experience Leader will be happy to provide you with suggestions on where to enjoy dinner on your own. Perhaps you'll seek out a restaurant that serves *cocido madrileño*, or a traditional stew made with chickpeas, vegetables, and chorizo, or you may search for a savory Spanish omelette made with eggs, potatoes, and spices.

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

Day 3 Explore Madrid

- Destination: Madrid
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Dinner
- Accommodations: Princesa Plaza Madrid or similar

Breakfast: At the hotel.

Morning: We'll immerse ourselves in European art and history during a tour of Madrid's highlights, including the world-renowned Prado Museum. Constructed in the 18th century under the royal order of King Charles III, the gallery's initial purpose was to serve as a natural science museum. However, upon its completion in 1819 the museum's focus shifted to royal paintings and sculptures. Today, the Prado houses works by artists like Bosch, Raphael, and Velázquez.

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

Afternoon: At leisure. Perhaps you'll stroll around Plaza de Cibeles where you'll pass the magnificent plaza's architectural treasures.

Dinner: Tonight, we'll gather for dinner in 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 4 Madrid • Explore Segovia

- Destination: Segovia
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch
- Accommodations: Princesa Plaza Madrid or similar

Breakfast: At the hotel.

Morning: After breakfast, we'll depart Madrid for Segovia, a UNESCO World Heritage Site known for its impressive first-century Roman aqueducts. After arriving later this morning, we'll set off for a guided walking tour of Segovia's Jewish Quarter. Within the neighborhood's seven 15th-century gates, we'll explore the narrow streets and visit one of the city's old synagogues while learning about the history of Segovia's Jewish population—the first Jewish people were believed to have settled in the city in 1215.

Lunch: After the conclusion of our tour, we'll gather for lunch in a local restaurant before heading back to Madrid.

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

Dinner: On your own—your Trip Experience Leader can recommend a restaurant in the city.

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

Day 5 Madrid • Optional El Escorial tour • *Flamenco* demonstration

- Destination: Madrid
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Dinner
- Accommodations: Princesa Plaza Madrid or similar

Breakfast: At the hotel.

Morning: Enjoy the day at leisure. Perhaps you'll explore the tree-lined paths of the 350-acre Retiro Park. Discover the park's glass treasure—the Palacio de Cristal. This intricately decorated pavilion, under the ownership of the Queen Sofia National Center of Art Museum, holds a small collection of sculptures. Or, you may join us for an optional El Escorial tour, where we'll learn about Madrid's religious history.

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

Afternoon: We'll get an authentic glimpse of Spain's famous *flamenco* dance accompanied by traditional music. Discover the rhythms of the *cante*, or song, and passion and precision of the *baile*, or dance. Perhaps you'll be inspired to try this dance style for yourself.

Dinner: Enjoy an included dinner before returning to 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 6 Madrid • Barcelona • Join main trip

- Included Meals: Breakfast

Breakfast: At the hotel.

Morning: We'll head to the train station where we'll depart Madrid for Barcelona aboard one of Spain's famous AVE trains, which can reach speeds of up to 193 mph.

Lunch: Our train will feature a dining car, which you may visit for lunch on your own.

Afternoon: In Barcelona, we'll join our group of travelers on our *Mediterranean Cultures & Islands: A Voyage from Spain to Greece* Small Ship Adventure.

OPTIONAL TOUR

El Escorial

(Day 5 $130 per person)

Embark on a half-day tour of the municipal town of El Escorial for a glimpse into Madrid's religious history. Start with a guided visit to the sprawling Royal Monastery and Palace of San Lorenzo de Escorial, a UNESCO World Heritage Site. After enjoying some free time to explore this quaint village, take in the towering beauty of the Valle de los Caidos (Valley of the Fallen), a Catholic basilica and Francoist monument.

POST-TRIP

Athens & the Peloponnese: From Homer to the First Olympics

INCLUDED IN YOUR PRICE

- 5 nights accommodation
- 8 meals: 5 breakfasts and 3 dinners
- Guided tours with personal headsets: Mycenae · Olympia · Nafplion · Epidaurus · Acropolis Museum
- Services of our local Trip Experience Leader
- Gratuities for local guides and motorcoach drivers
- All transfers

POST-TRIP EXTENSION ITINERARY

Journey far back in time to the Peloponnese—a peninsula south of mainland Greece steeped in ancient myths and enveloped in rugged scenic beauty. Discover the Neo-Classical splendor of Nafplion, the Bronze Age culture of ancient Mycenae, and the sanctuary of Zeus in Ancient Olympia, home of the first Olympic Games. Discover the ancient Greek world with a two-night stay in Athens.

Day 1 Athens • Explore Mycenae • Transfer to Olympia

- Destination: Mycenae
- Included Meals: Dinner
- Accommodations: Hotel Europa or similar

Morning: Depart for Mycenae this morning, a UNESCO World Heritage Site. A destination linked to Homer and his tales of glory and war, Mycenae was a sophisticated Bronze Age culture that occupied the region from about 1700 BC until it mysteriously vanished after the Trojan War in about 1180 BC. Its actual location was thought to be lost until the amateur archaeologist Heinrich Schliemann found a treasure trove of gold masks, jewelry, and weapons here in 1874. The ruins of the fortified palace complex of Mycenae begin at the Lion Gate, the grand entrance to the city. Highlights of the ruins include a series of *tholos*, or beehive-shaped tombs where Mycenaean kings were buried with their golden treasures and ornamented weapons and enough food and drink for their journey to the underworld.

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

Afternoon: We'll board our bus for the three-hour transfer to Olympia, arriving this evening to check into our hotel.

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 2 Explore Olympia

- Destination: Olympia
- Included Meals: Breakfast
- Accommodations: Hotel Europa or similar

Breakfast: At the hotel.

Morning: This morning, embark on a tour of Olympia, a sanctuary of ancient Greece dedicated to the worship of Zeus. In 776 BC, Olympia played host to the first Olympian Games, forerunner of our modern Olympic Games. Plato, Socrates, Alexander the Great, and Nero are just a few of the historical figures that watched or participated in the games. After a visit to the original site of the games, we'll explore the vast holdings of the Archaeological Museum which features a wealth of exhibits spanning Greek prehistory up to the Roman era, including the statue of Hermes and the infant Dionysus.

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

Afternoon: Free for your own discoveries in Olympia. Your Trip Experience Leader can point you in the direction of excursions that match your interests.

Dinner: On your own—your Trip Experience Leader will be familiar with the area restaurants and can recommend a good option for tonight's meal.

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

Day 3 Olympia • Explore Nafplion

- Destination: Nafplion
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Dinner
- Accommodations: Ippoliti Hotel Nafplio or similar

Breakfast: At the hotel.

Morning: After breakfast, drive to Nafplion. A lovely seaside town nestled between the mountains and the Gulf of Argolis, Nafplion features charming Venetian homes and a picturesque harbor dominated by citadels. While the fortresses attest to a checkered military history, after independence from the Ottomans early in the 19th century, Nafplion became the first capital of liberated Greece.

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

Afternoon: Free for your own discoveries—your Trip Experience Leader can recommend independent exploration activities.

Dinner: At the hotel.

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

Day 4 Nafplion • Explore Epidaurus • Athens

- Destination: Athens
- Included Meals: Breakfast
- Accommodations: Athenian Callirhoe Exclusive Hotel or similar

Breakfast: At the hotel.

Morning: Depart for Epidaurus, a UNESCO World Heritage Site and one of the most famous ancient sites in Greece. Since early Greeks recognized Epidaurus as the birthplace of Asklepios, the god of healing, the entire site was renowned for its extensive medical facilities and healing treatments from the sixth century BC until about AD 200. Today Epidaurus is perhaps more famous for its well preserved fourth-century theater, which we'll visit. Renowned for its near-perfect acoustics, a coin dropped at the center of this 14,000-seat structure can easily be heard from its farthest reaches.

After our tour, drive to Athens.

Lunch: On your own en route to Athens.

Afternoon: We check in to our hotel early this afternoon, and then set out for a short discovery walk.

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 5 Explore Athens

- Destination: Athens
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Dinner
- Accommodations: Athenian Callirhoe Exclusive Hotel or similar

Breakfast: At the hotel.

Morning: After breakfast, enjoy a visit to the Acropolis Museum. This sprawling complex is home to every object that has been found to-date at the Acropolis archaeological site, and on the slopes of the rock atop which the site sits. During our time at this award-winning museum, we'll witness everything from mighty sculptures to everyday objects like jewelry and cookware, and even have a chance to peer into the site itself.

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

Afternoon: The rest of the afternoon is yours to spend as you please.

Dinner: Tonight, we'll meet for dinner 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 6 Athens • Return to U.S.

- Destination: Athens
- Included Meals: Breakfast

Breakfast: At the hotel.

Morning: After breakfast, transfer to the airport for your flight home.

YOUR M/V *CLIO* SMALL SHIP

Explore aboard our privately owned, 89-passenger small ship

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



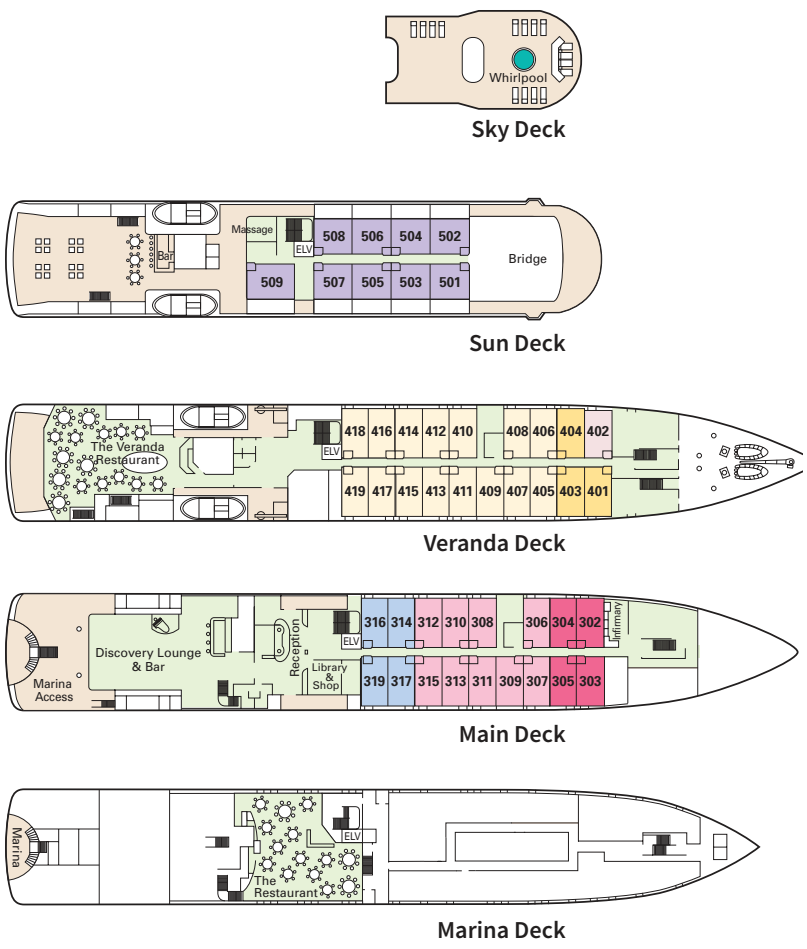




SHIPBOARD FEATURES

- **Two dining areas with single, open seating:** Savor regionally-inspired dishes or American favorites during all buffets and table-service meals in the ship's dining room or indoor/outdoor veranda.
- **Comfortable lounge:** Relax with old friends and new, and participate in onboard discussions and lectures.
- **Complimentary beverages:** Enjoy house beer and house wine—as well as soft drinks—at any time of day while onboard.
- **Complimentary wireless Internet access:** Connect online in cabins and common areas. ***Please note:*** *Connectivity may be limited at certain points throughout your cruise.*
- **Outdoor common areas:** Relish coastal views from your seat in the indoor/outdoor veranda, Sun Deck, or whirlpool on the Sky Deck.
- **English-speaking crew:** Enjoy dedicated attention from our international staff throughout your voyage. Plus, all shipboard announcements are made in English for your convenience.
- **Zodiac crafts & tenders:** These onboard crafts are available to take you to shore in the most remote ports.
- **Elevator service:** An elevator serves the first four passenger decks (must use stairs to access the Sky Deck).

M/V *CLIO*



CABIN CATEGORIES

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

Registry: Malta

Length: 328 ft.

Beam: 46 ft.

Draft: 11 ft.

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

Number of Cabins: 45

Passenger Capacity: 89

Entered Service: 1998

Refurbished in: 2016

International crew: 60

Passenger Decks: 5

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

Elevator service to first four passenger decks

This ship complies with the latest international and U.S. Coast Guard safety regulations and is outfitted with the most current navigational and communications technology. It has retractable fin stabilizers to help reduce discomfort during rough seas.

CABIN FEATURES

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



Cabin on the Veranda Deck

TRAVEL DOCUMENTS & ENTRY REQUIREMENTS

Your Passport

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

Need to Renew Your Passport?

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

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

Recommended Blank Pages

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

- **Main trip only:** You will need 2 blank passport pages.
- **Pre-trip extension to Madrid, Spain:** No additional pages are needed.
- **Post-trip extension to Greece:** No additional pages are needed.

Visa Required

We'll be sending you information with detailed 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 (Spain, Italy, Sicily, Malta, Greece):** U.S. citizens will require an online visa-waiver to enter countries in the European Union. There is no set timeline for when this requirement will start – O.A.T. will contact all impacted travelers before their departure once the start date is confirmed.

Traveling Without a U.S. Passport?

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

Traveling With a Minor?

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

Travel Protection Required:

For new bookings starting 10/7/25, Overseas Adventure Travel requires all travelers purchase travel protection with Medical Evacuation coverage of at least $200,000 and Medical Expense coverage of at least $50,000, due to the remote nature of your adventure.

O.A.T. Travel Protection:

If you **purchase your Travel Protection Plan** through O.A.T., no further action will be needed, as the Medical Evacuation coverage and Medical Expense coverage meets these requirements.

Your Own Travel Protection:

If you purchase your own travel protection, we recommend you review the plan to ensure Medical Evacuation coverage of at least $200,000 and Medical Expense coverage of at least $50,000 is included. Once you confirm your plan meets the requirements, you will need to email the following information to **TravelCoverage@oattravel.com:**

- Traveler Name(s)
- Reservation Number
- Trip Protection Provider
- Policy Number
- Date of Purchase
- Copy of your Policy Documents

You can also contact our Travel Counselors at **1-800-221-0814** to review this policy. You will be required to provide proof of coverage by 60 days prior to departure at the latest.

Emergency Photocopies of Key Documents

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

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

Overseas Taxes & Fees

This tour may have taxes and fees that cannot be included in your airline ticket price because you are required to pay them in person onsite. All taxes are subject to change without notice and can be paid in cash (either U.S. or local currency).

RIGORS, VACCINES & GENERAL HEALTH

Is This Adventure Right for You?

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

GROUP SIZE

- This adventure has a maximum group size of 25 travelers with a local Trip Experience Leader exclusive to O.A.T.

PACING

- 18 days, with 14 nights aboard the M/V *Clio,* one single-night hotel stay in Barcelona, and one two-night hotel stay in Athens

PHYSICAL REQUIREMENTS

- Walk 2-3 miles unassisted and participate in 4-6 hours of physical activities each day
- Agility and balance are required for possible rough seas
- Not accessible for travelers using wheelchairs or scooters
- Travelers using walkers, crutches or other mobility aids will not be able to board the *Clio*
- We reserve the right for Trip Experience Leaders to restrict participation, or in some circumstances send travelers home, if their limitations impact the group's experience
- You may encounter animals on this trip. We make every effort to keep these encounters safe, however animals may behave unpredictably or dangerously at times. Please use caution when interacting with animals on this trip: Keep a safe distance, stay alert, and respect the animals

TERRAIN & TRANSPORTATION

- Uneven surfaces, including unpaved paths, steep hills, stairs, and cobblestone
- Visits to most of the ancient archaeological sites on this trip will require around 3 miles of walking over steep slopes, and loose, uneven terrain. These walks will be approximately 3 hours in duration
- Agility required to board small boats for tour of Mothya Island
- Two days of the itinerary involve long motorcoach rides: There will be two 2-hour rides to and from the Barbagia, and for the transfer between Athens and our ship dock in Patras
- Gangway incline can be steep when docked at a pier

- Travel by 89-passenger small ship and 25-passenger coach
- You must be cleared by a country's local port authorities before disembarking
- Weather conditions and tides may require adjustments to your itinerary

CLIMATE

- Daytime temperatures range from 59-80°F during cruising season

Steps to Take Before Your Trip

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

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

No Vaccines Required

Recommended Vaccines

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

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 is safe to drink on this trip; however, it may be processed differently than your tap water at home, so you might not like the taste or it may feel "heavy" in your stomach.
- Bottled water is widely available for sale. Another option is for you to bring a reusable water bottle and fill up on board the ship.

MONEY MATTERS: LOCAL CURRENCY & TIPPING GUIDELINES

Top Three Tips

- **Carry a mix of different types of payments**, such as local currency, an ATM card, and a credit card.
- **Traveler's checks are not recommended.** They can be difficult to exchange and the commission fee for cashing them is quite high. It's more practical to view them as a last resort in the event of a special situation.
- **In general, you will not be able to pay with U.S. dollars on this trip**; you will need local currency instead.

Local Currency

For current exchange rates, please refer to an online converter tool like **www.xe.com/currencyconverter**, your bank, or the financial section of your newspaper.

Euro Countries: European Euro (€)

How to Exchange Money

If you want to exchange money before your trip, you can usually do so through your bank or at an exchange office. Your departure airport in the U.S., a travel agent, or an AAA office are also possible outlets. Or you can wait and change money on the trip instead—but it might be helpful to arrive with some local currency in case you run into a bank holiday or an "out of order" ATM.

On your trip, the easiest way is to withdraw funds from a local ATM. The ATM will give you local money and your bank at home will convert that into U.S. dollars.

You can also exchange cash at some hotels, large post offices, and money exchange offices. To exchange cash, you'll usually need your passport and bills in good condition (not worn, torn, or dirty). New bills (post 2017) are best.

ATMs

When using the ATM, keep in mind that it may only accept cards from local banks, and may not allow cash advances on credit cards; you might need to try more than one ATM or more than one card. Many banks will charge a set fee or a percentage fee each time you use a foreign ATM. We recommend that you check with your bank before you depart. Don't forget to memorize the actual digits of your card's PIN number (many keypads at foreign ATMs do not include letters on their keys—they only display numbers.)

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

Greece: ATMs are common throughout Greece.

Credit & Debit Cards

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

Spain: Visa and MasterCard credit cards are fairly common in Spain, but may not be accepted for small purchases or in the markets. American Express is not commonly accepted.

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.

Greece: Credit cards are widely accepted in Greece, but street vendors will require cash. Some small shops and restaurants may also require cash so it is always good to ask before making a purchase.

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

On Board Ship: Two Separate Bills Will be Issued

- **Shipboard account:** This bill is for any on board purchases (drinks, souvenirs, etc.). You can pay this bill by cash or credit/debit card only. For cash, we accept U.S. dollars or Euros (on itineraries in Europe). For credit/debit cards, we accept MasterCard and Visa. Other forms of payment, such as checks, Discover, or American Express are not accepted.
- **Optional tour account:** This bill is for any optional tours taken during the trip and is calculated in U.S. dollars. You can pay for this bill by credit/debit card only; other forms of payments such as cash and checks are not accepted. For more information on optional tours—including which cards we accept for payment—see the "Preparing for Your Trip" chapter.

Please note: Payments made by credit card may take up to three months to process. We ask that you use a credit card that will not expire until three months after your trip ends. Because our headquarters are in Boston, the charges may appear to be from Boston or might be labeled as "OPT Boston" (depending on your credit card company).

Exchange Services

Due to international banking laws, we are not able to exchange money onboard the ship. If you need to obtain local currency, please see the "How to Exchange Money" section for helpful tips and information.

Tipping Guidelines

Of course, whether you tip, and how much, is always at your own discretion. But for those of you who have asked for tipping suggestions, we offer these guidelines:

- **O.A.T. Trip Experience Leader:** It is customary to express a personal "thank you" to your Trip Experience Leader at the end of your trip. As a guideline, many travelers give $10-$14 USD (or equivalent in local currency) per person for each day their Trip Experience Leader is with them. *Please note that these tips can only be in cash. If you are taking any of the optional extensions, your Trip Experience Leader during the extension(s) may not be the same as the one on your main trip.*
- **Shipboard Crew:** We recommend a flat tip of $16-$18 U.S. per traveler, per day. You'll give this tip once—at the end of your cruise—and it will be pooled among the entire crew. ***Policy Update:*** *Due to international banking laws, we are no longer able to process crew tips on a credit card; crew tips can only be in the form of cash.*
- **Housekeeping Staff at Hotels:** We recommend $1-$2 per traveler, per day. (This is for hotels only; on the ship Housekeeping are part of crew, so you don't need to tip them separately.)
- **Included in Your Trip Price:** Gratuities are included for local guides and motorcoach drivers on your main trip, extensions, and all optional tours.

Time at Leisure

When you are exploring on your own, it's useful to know when to tip and how much, because local customs often differ from the U.S. Here are a few helpful guidelines for the most common services a traveler might use:

- **Taxis:** The practice of tipping taxi drivers in Spain varies from city to city in some cities it is expect and in others it is discretionary. Our local staff can advise you what the practice is in each area that you visit. In Italy and Greece, tipping is not customary, but many locals will round up the fare and let the driver keep the change. But a 10% tip for helping you with heavy luggage is appreciated.

- **Restaurants, cafes, and bars:** In Spain, restaurants do not normally include service charges on bills and it is customary to leave a 5%-10% tip (10% in a better restaurant, less in a humbler establishment). When ordering snack foods or menus del dia, round the bill off to the nearest euro; if you've received exceptional service, leave more at your discretion. The waiters in a hotel cocktail lounge can expect a tip of about 60 euro cents. In cafés and bars, leave small tips for barmen and waiters; a few small change coins—less than one euro—is sufficient. Throughout the rest of Europe, the tip for the waiter or bartender is usually included in the prices or added on as a service fee. In Italy, you may see *servizio incluso* and *coperto* on the bill, which refers to a cover charge for use of the table, not an included tip for the server. It is customary to leave a tip of 5-10% for the server, depending on the quality of service. A tip of 5% can be appropriate in a cafe or a family-run *trattoria*, while 10% is more suitable at a restaurant. In Malta and Greece, a tip of about 10% is customary.
- **Public Restrooms:** Most public restrooms in Europe have attendants that take care of cleaning and supplies. It is customary to leave a small tip for them—usually half a euro—so hold on to those coins! Some restrooms are pay-toilets; you pay the staff at the entrance to the restroom or drop the appropriate coin into the slot on the stall door. Many restaurants, cafes, and shops offer only pay-toilets or reserve their restrooms for patrons only.

AIR, OPTIONAL TOURS & STAYING IN TOUCH

Land Only Travelers & Customized Air

Quick Definitions

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

Air Inclusive Travelers

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

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

Airport Transfers Can Be Purchased

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

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

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

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

Optional Tours

Optional tours are additional add-on tours that allow you to personalize your adventure by tailoring it to your tastes and needs. And if you decide not to join an optional tour? Then you'll have free time to relax or explore on your own—it's about options, not obligations.

What You Need to Know

- All optional tours are subject to change and availability.
- Optional tours that are reserved with your Trip Experience Leader can be paid for using credit/debit cards only. We accept MasterCard, Visa, and Discover credit cards; we can also take MasterCard or Visa debit cards as long as the card allows you to sign for purchases. (You won't be able to enter a PIN.)
- To ensure that you are charged in U.S. dollars, your payment will be processed by our U.S. headquarters in Boston. This process can take up to three months, so we ask that you only use a card that will still be valid three months after your trip is over. The charge may appear on your credit card statement as being from Boston, MA or may be labeled as "OPT Boston".
- Your Trip Experience Leader will give you details on the optional tours while you're on the trip. But if you'd like to look over descriptions of them earlier, you can do so at any time by referring to your Day-to-Day Itinerary (available online by signing into My Account at **www.oattravel.com/myaccount**).

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 is

"unlocked", meaning it can accept a local SIM card. If your cell is "unlocked" then you will be able to purchase a local SIM for it and then buy minutes with "Pay as You Go" cards, so that you have a local contact number for your friends and family.

Calling Apps

Another option is to use a smartphone app like 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 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 & 1-800 Numbers

When calling the U.S. from a foreign country, a prepaid calling card can be useful because it circumvents unexpected charges from the hotel. Calling cards purchased locally are typically the best (less expensive, more likely to work with the local phones, etc.). One reminder: Do not call U.S. 1-800 numbers outside the continental United States. This can result in costly long distance fees, since 1-800 numbers do not work outside the country.

How to Call Overseas

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

Spain: +34

Italy: +39

Sicily: +39

Malta: +356

Greece: +30

PACKING: WHAT TO BRING & LUGGAGE LIMITS

Luggage Limits

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

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

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

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.

Checked Luggage

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

Carry-on Bag

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

Locks

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

Clothing Suggestions: Functional Tips

- **Travel light.** A good rule of thumb is to gather together everything you want to bring; then take half of that. Eliminate all but the essentials and start packing a few days before you leave. That way, you'll have time to think—not fret—about what you might be forgetting. We recommend you pick pack color-coordinated separates that can be mixed to create different outfits.
- **Plan to dress in layers on shore excursions.** Be prepared for a variety of weather conditions: warm days with sun, chilly temperatures with showers, and evenings that could dip into the 40s or 50s, depending on your travel season.
- **Good walking shoes are essential:** For your comfort, you'll need supportive walking shoes that offer good traction. Water-resistant shoes can be handy in case of a heavy downpour.
- **Rain gear:** Regardless of your month of travel, rainfall is certainly a possibility. We suggest you bring a folding umbrella and waterproof shell. Water-resistant walking shoes are advantageous in case heavy downpours pass through.

Style Hints

- **Pack casual clothes:** Comfortable, informal apparel is acceptable at each of your destinations. At dinner, you will not need to wear "dressy" clothing; men do not need jackets or ties and women do not need fancy dresses. You may want one or two "smart casual" outfits for the Welcome Reception or Farewell Dinner, but it's completely up to you.
- **Dress modestly:** Some religious sites, like Orthodox churches, strongly prefer that visitors of both genders dress modestly. In this context, "modestly dressed" usually means covered from shoulders to below the knees—no shorts, no sleeveless shirts, no low or revealing necklines, and women may be required to wear skirts below the knee.
- **In many Orthodox churches, local women will cover their hair with a scarf**; as a visitor you are usually not required to do the same, but doing so would be a nice way to show respect.

Recommended Packing Lists

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

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

Essential Items

- ❑ Daily essentials: toothbrush, toothpaste, floss, hairbrush or comb, shaving items, deodorant, shampoo/conditioner, shower cap, body soap, etc.
- ❑ Spare eyeglasses/contact lenses and your prescription
- ❑ Sunglasses with a neck strap
- ❑ Compact umbrella
- ❑ Wide-brim sun hat or visor
- ❑ Pocket-size tissues
- ❑ Photocopies of passport, air ticket, credit cards
- ❑ Rubber or waterproof shoes

Recommended Clothing

- ❑ Shirts: A mixture of short and long-sleeved shirts to layer

- ❑ Trousers, jeans, or skirts
- ❑ Comfortable walking shoes and/or water resistant shoes
- ❑ Light rain jacket/windbreaker with hood
- ❑ Sleepwear
- ❑ Socks and undergarments
- ❑ A jacket or sweater, depending on the time of year

Medicines

- ❑ Your own prescription medicines
- ❑ Vitamins
- ❑ Cold remedies: Sudafed/Dristan
- ❑ Pain relievers: Ibuprofen/naproxen/aspirin
- ❑ Laxatives: Senokot/Ex-Lax
- ❑ Stomach upset: Pepto-Bismol/Mylanta
- ❑ Anti-diarrheal: Imodium
- ❑ Band-Aids, Moleskin foot pads
- ❑ Antibiotics: Neosporin/Bacitracin

Electricity Abroad

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

Voltage

Electricity at hotels in Spain, Italy, Malta, and Greece is 220-240 volts. In the U.S. it is 110 volts. Most of the things a traveler will want to plug in—battery chargers, smartphones, tablets or computers—can run off both 110 and 220-240. But you should check the item or the owner's guide first to confirm this before you plug it in. Plugging a 110V U.S. appliance into 220/240V 50/60Hz service will ruin the motor. If you have something that needs 110 volts—like a shaver or a hairdryer—you can bring a transformer to change the current. (But transformers tend to burn out, so it might be better to leave whatever it is at home.)

Aboard the ship, cabins are equipped with both 110-volt and 220-volt outlets.

Plugs

Aboard ship, the plugs are standard American plugs.

In hotels, the shape of plugs will vary from country to country, and sometimes even within a country depending on when that building was built. To plug something from the U.S. into a local socket you'll need an adapter that fits between the plug and the socket. Because you'll need multiple adapters 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:

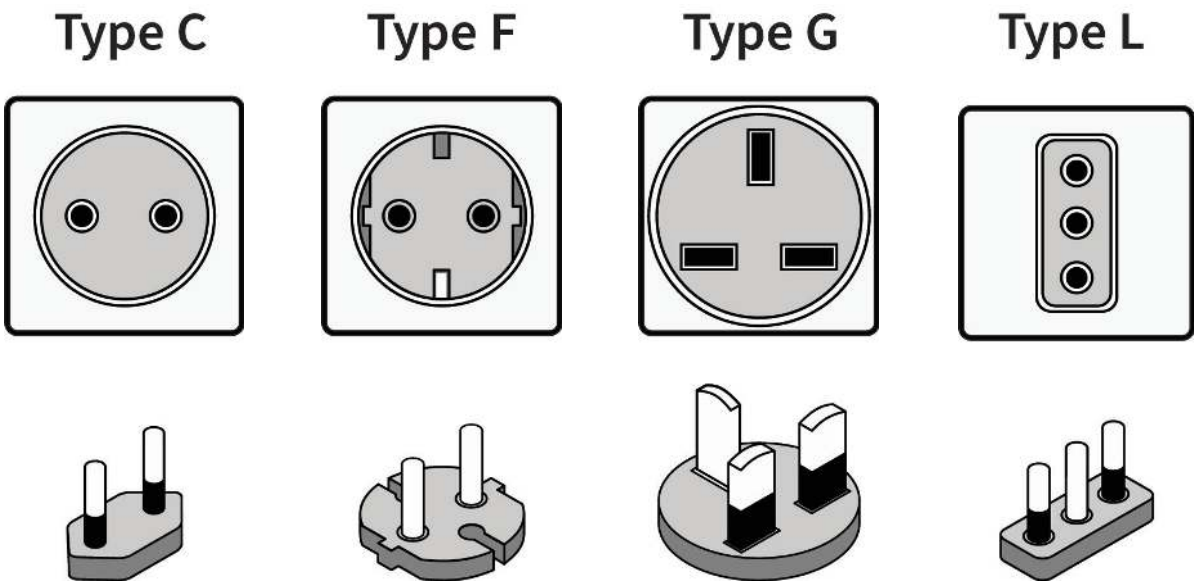
Spain: C and/or F

Italy: C, L, or F

Sicily: C or F

Malta: G

Greece: C, D, E and F



CLIMATE & AVERAGE TEMPERATURES

Barcelona, Spain: Barcelona has mild, humid winters and warm, dry summers. Located on the east coast of the Iberian Peninsula Atlantic winds often arrive in Barcelona with low humidity, producing little rain. Barcelona winters tend to be mild. The coldest months are December, January and February; average daily winter temperatures range from 50 to 63 °F. The summer season lasts about six months, from May to October. July and August are the hottest months, with average temperatures around 82 °F during the day. May, June, September and October the average daily temperature is around 74 °F.

Sardinia, Italy: Sardinia has a Mediterranean climate with mild, wet winters and hot summers. Winter temperatures typically range from lows in the 40s to highs in the high-50s to low-60s while average summer highs may reach into the high-80s or low-90s. The island of Sardinia enjoys a coastal breeze which is especially strong from October through April.

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

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.

Greece: The coastal regions of Greece have an almost ideal climate—plenty of sunshine and dry air most of the year. During spring and early fall, days are generally very comfortable. Although temperatures usually range from 60 to 80 degrees, occasionally they reach extremes of warm

and cold. From May to July beaches are less crowded than during the heart of the summer and the water can be warm enough for swimming. In spring, Athens' surrounding hills come to life with gentle hues of green and colorful wild flowers. Coastal breezes often moderate summer heat, but on calm summer days, Athens can be very hot.

Madrid, Spain: The climate of Madrid fits into that of the interior of Spain. Rainfall is generally rather low over most of the interior. In late summer much of this area has a burnt and barren appearance after the long summer drought. Summers are generally hot. Spring and early summer tend to be the wettest seasons in many places, but the rainfall is light and not very effective as it often falls in short, heavy showers. Winters have frequent cold spells with biting winds blowing off the snow-covered sierras. Dust and hot winds are the most unpleasant features of the summer weather, but low humidity makes the heat more bearable. Sunshine amounts are quite high throughout the year, ranging from an average of five hours a day in winter to as much as twelve hours in midsummer.

Climate Averages & Online Forecast

The following charts reflect the **average** climate as opposed to exact weather conditions. This means they serve only as general indicators of what can reasonably be expected. An extreme heat wave or cold snap could fall outside these ranges. As your departure approaches, we encourage you to use **www.weather.com** for a more accurate forecast of the locations you visit.

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

MONTH	BARCELONA, SPAIN			CAGLIARI, ITALY (SARDINIA)		
	Temp. High-Low	% Relative Humidity (am-pm)	Average # of Days with Rainfall	Temp. High-Low	% Relative Humidity (am-pm)	Monthly Rainfall (inches)
JAN	56 to 40	82 to 65	8	58 to 42	91 to 70	1.8
FEB	58 to 42	82 to 63	8	59 to 43	90 to 67	2.2
MAR	61 to 44	84 to 64	9	61 to 45	90 to 66	1.7
APR	64 to 47	84 to 66	10	65 to 48	89 to 65	1.5
MAY	69 to 54	86 to 70	10	72 to 54	89 to 62	0.9
JUN	76 to 60	85 to 68	9	80 to 61	87 to 56	0.4
JUL	82 to 66	82 to 66	6	85 to 66	86 to 56	0.1
AUG	82 to 67	84 to 66	8	86 to 66	87 to 58	0.3
SEP	78 to 62	86 to 66	8	80 to 63	90 to 63	1.2
OCT	71 to 55	85 to 66	10	73 to 57	92 to 67	2.2
NOV	63 to 47	84 to 66	9	65 to 49	91 to 70	2.2
DEC	58 to 42	81 to 64	8	59 to 44	91 to 71	2.2

MONTH	PALERMO, SICILY			VALLETTA, MALTA		
	Temp. High-Low	% Relative Humidity (am-pm)	Monthly Rainfall (inches)	Temp. High-Low	% Relative Humidity (am-pm)	Average # of Days with Rainfall
JAN	59 to 50	77 to 72	2.8	60 to 49	80	17
FEB	59 to 50	77 to 71	2.6	59 to 49	80	13
MAR	61 to 52	78 to 71	2.3	88 to 66	80	11
APR	65 to 55	77 to 71	1.7	88 to 71	75	10
MAY	71 to 61	80 to 73	1.0	95 to 75	75	6
JUN	77 to 68	77 to 71	0.5	98 to 85	70	3
JUL	83 to 73	76 to 70	0.2	112 to 90	65	1
AUG	84 to 75	77 to 71	0.5	112 to 90	70	3
SEP	80 to 71	76 to 69	1.6	98 to 85	75	8
OCT	73 to 64	76 to 68	3.9	76 to 64	80	11
NOV	67 to 58	75 to 68	3.7	69 to 57	80	15
DEC	61 to 53	76 to 71	3.1	62 to 52	80	19

MONTH	ATHENS, GREECE			MADRID, SPAIN		
	Temp. High-Low	% Relative Humidity (am-pm)	Monthly Rainfall (inches)	Temp. High-Low	% Relative Humidity (am-pm)	Monthly Rainfall (inches)
JAN	57 to 45	75 to 63	1.9	50 to 37	89 to 62	1.8
FEB	57 to 45	75 to 62	1.6	54 to 39	87 to 57	1.7
MAR	60 to 47	76 to 60	1.6	60 to 42	83 to 47	1.5
APR	67 to 53	75 to 58	1.0	64 to 45	83 to 48	1.8
MAY	76 to 60	73 to 54	0.6	71 to 51	82 to 44	1.6
JUN	100 to 68	68 to 48	0.2	80 to 59	76 to 38	1.0
JUL	105 to 74	58 to 41	0.2	88 to 65	67 to 30	0.4
AUG	105 to 74	58 to 41	0.3	87 to 65	68 to 31	0.4
SEP	90 to 70	64 to 47	0.4	79 to 59	75 to 38	1.2
OCT	74 to 60	71 to 57	1.9	66 to 50	85 to 51	1.8
NOV	66 to 54	76 to 64	2.2	56 to 43	89 to 60	2.5
DEC	59 to 48	76 to 65	2.5	50 to 39	89 to 66	1.9

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

M/V Corinthian & M/V Clio

Cabin Amenities

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

Cabin Assignments

You will receive confirmation of your deck and/or cabin category upfront in writing; it will be on your invoice and online in My Account at **www.oattravel.com/myaccount**. However, your cabin number may not be assigned until you arrive onboard the ship. (This is normal procedure for many small ships.) If there's no cabin number on your invoice or online, you can presume it will be assigned later and communicated to you when you board.

Dining

All meals are taken in the onboard restaurant, which acts as the ship's dining room. Meals will be a mix of regional specialties and familiar American standards, and will feature a variety of entrée options including vegetarian. Complimentary beer, wine and soft drinks are served with lunch and dinner. A selection of fine wines is also available for purchase, starting at approximately $20-30 per bottle (prices vary according to vintage). Travelers may also bring a bottle of their own favorite wine to dinner to enjoy at their table. Should you care to avail yourself of this service, there will be a corkage fee of approximately $10 per bottle, charged to your cabin account.

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

Electricity

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

Getting Ashore

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

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

Headsets

On European cruises, complimentary headsets (often called "whisper receivers") will be provided on most included and optional tours, so that you can hear better over ambient noise. If you use a hearing aid or have a strong preference for a particular type of headphones, we highly encourage you to bring your own headphones/ear buds with you. The plug size is usually the same as that used by smartphones, computer jacks, etc. Headsets will also be available during the pre- and post-trip extensions in Europe, but not on the transfer day to/from the main trip. On cruises to the Middle East, South America, or Antarctica whispers may not be available or may only be available in certain locations—your Trip Experience Leader will let you know onsite.

Internet Access and Email

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

Laundry Services

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

Medical Services

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

Recreational Facilities

Our ship features a library, a lounge with a bar, a dining room, and a sun deck. The bar is open from approximately 11 am to 11 pm, and features both complimentary drinks (soft drinks, house beer, house wine, and non-alcoholic cocktails/beer) and drinks for purchase (spirits, alcoholic cocktails, bottled beers, and a selection of wines).

Bicycles

We're pleased to offer complimentary bicycle rentals onboard your ship for use during free time, including all of the necessary safety gear, such as a helmet, brightly-colored safety vest, and a lock. Because there is a limited supply of bicycles available, they will be offered on a first-come first-served basis. For more information or if you are interested in using one of the bicycles, please speak to the Front Desk staff or Hotel Manager onboard your ship.

Shipboard Payments

Payment for shipboard expenses can be made by cash or credit/debit card only. For cash, we accept U.S. dollars or Euros (on itineraries in Europe). For credit/debit cards, we accept MasterCard and Visa. Other forms of payment, such as checks, Discover, or American Express are not accepted.

Ship-to-Shore Communications

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

Smoking Policy

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

Wheelchairs

The ship is not built to accommodate wheelchairs.

Lost & Found

Any lost or forgotten items found on board the ship will be held for 90 days from disembarkation. After 90 days, all unclaimed items will be discarded or donated.

Ship Specifications

M/V *Corinthian*

- **History:** Built in 1990; purchased in 2014
- **Size:** 290x50 ft
- **Capacity:** 98 passengers, 56 crew members
- **Layout:** 49 cabins, 5 decks; Elevator-yes

M/V *Clio*

- **History:** Built in 1998; purchased in 2015
- **Size:** 328x46 ft
- **Capacity:** 89 passengers, 60 crew members
- **Layout:** 45 cabins, 5 decks; Elevator-yes

ABOUT YOUR DESTINATIONS: CULTURE, ETIQUETTE & MORE

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

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

Cultures of the Mediterranean

Your adventure visits several Mediterranean nations whose traditional cultures and modern lifestyles share some common geographic, climactic, and historic threads. Even so, each place has its own character.

In **Spain**, each region has a unique identity and in **Catalonia** (where your cruise begins in Barcelona), it's quite distinct from mainstream Spanish culture. Catalonia is an autonomous community with its own language, cuisine, and traditions. One of those traditions, bullfighting, originated here and spread to the rest of Spain. But in 2010, when Catalonia became the first region in Spain to ban bullfighting, the Spanish court overturned the ruling, causing ongoing tension. Other Catalan customs are quite quirky, such as the human towers formed by groups of *castellars* who stand atop one another during *fiestas*. You might also see figurines wearing distinctive red caps with their trousers pulled down. They are *caganers, or* "crappers," and these diminutive defecators are beloved Catalan Christmas icons (said to bring luck.)

Otherwise, Catalonians don't trust much to luck and are famously self-driven: they have a reputation for being hard-working, business-minded, and successful. Given the work ethic, it's no surprise that the Spanish tradition of the midday *siesta* (nap) is almost nonexistent here.

The culture of **Sardinia** arose in geographic isolation, and is quite different than that of the Italian mainland. Self sufficient and hardy, the Sardinians were fiercely resistant in the face of repeated invasions. The Romans found them exasperating, and the Saracens could never gain a foothold here. Even today, people consider themselves Sardinians first, Italians second. They are strongly attached to old traditions, which find expression in village murals, a distinctive cuisine, and folk costumes that are proudly worn during festivals (and which connote one's hometown.) Though Sardinians speak and understand Italian, the local Sardu language is widely used.

Mainland Italians have accused Sardinians of being stubborn, old fashioned, and touchy. Sardinians in turn eschew the flamboyance of their mainland brethren and are quiet, modest, and warmly welcoming. Interestingly, Sardinia boasts a larger-than-average population of centenarians, so there may be something to their low-key, Mediterranean lifestyle.

The people of **Sicily** also consider themselves Sicilian first, Italian second. By 750 BC, the island hosted Greek and Phoenician colonies, followed by Carthaginians, Romans, Ostrogoths, Vandals, Arabs, Normans and a host of Europeans. 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. Family is the bedrock of Sicilian society, and to reflect well on it one is expected to dress well, behave modestly, and be dutiful. While men reign, Sicilian women keep the household running. They lag behind their European sisters in terms of political, social and economic equality, but this is beginning to change.

For millennia, Sicily has been battered by wind, waves, volcanoes and invaders. So it's no wonder that it's language has no future tense. On the surface, 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.

Malta is a land of fascinating contradictions. The people tend not to see their nation as European, but as a bridge between Europe, North Africa, and the Middle East. That makes sense given the archipelago's geographic location at the crossroads of these entities. But even though Malta has historically been ruled and influenced by other cultures, the Maltese perceive themselves as culturally if not ethnically homogenous. They celebrate their home's Megalithic roots, and speak a language whose foundation is North African. But their national identity is deeply aligned with the culture that arose after Christian conversion. Four hundred years of control by a Christian religious military order, the Knights of St. John, helped to reinforce that.

Malta is small and densely populated, so the people are used to living communally. They are gregarious, sociable, welcoming, and very expressive—often rendering strong opinions in a very voluble way, especially about politics and sports. There is a closely related, age-old concept here called *pika*, which is a (mostly) friendly rivalry that spurs friends, families, and entire towns to outdo one another. Sometimes that competitive spirit has turned vitriolic. But as a visitor, you may reap the benefits of *pika* in the form of over-the-top Baroque architecture, exuberant village *festas*, showstopping fireworks, and elaborate feasts.

Greece is the birthplace of Western civilization, the place where philosophy, democracy, science, and intellectual activity were cultivated as never before. And while it's tempting to think that those glories were all in the past, modern Greeks still place a high value on rational discourse and thoughtful reflection. Intellect is respected and often a determinant of social status, and well-reasoned debates (called *kavgádes)* are encouraged in everyday life. It is not uncommon to see people engaging in impassioned discussions in public squares or cafes, or during the early evening *volta*, a traditional, leisurely stroll down the town promenade.

Though the Greek style of communication may be animated, the way of life is famously easygoing. Schedules are not tightly organized, people devote considerable time to personal interactions, and it is normal to enjoy an afternoon nap. Because much of this happens in the public eye, hurtful misconceptions about the Greeks being "lazy" have arisen, especially since the country's recent economic difficulties that required EU assistance. But nothing could be further from the truth: according to a study by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, Greeks work more hours than any other Europeans.

Work ethic notwithstanding, in good times and bad times the Greeks do everything to infuse their lives with *kefi. This* important concept refers to the joy, contentment, and bliss one feels when a moment is so pleasurable, it is transporting. Think Zorba the Greek. *Kefi* can happen during an engaging conversation, while enjoying a lusty dance, in a tender exchange with a loved one, as you ingest a particularly satisfying meal, or during a revealing moment of discovery. May you have plenty of *kefi* during your time with O.A.T. in Greece.

Religion and Religious Observance

In **Spain,** though 68.5% of Spaniards identify as Catholic, only 14% attend mass on a weekly basis. But religious traditions are still embedded in Spanish culture. There's a church in every neighborhood, and each region or city has a patron saint who is celebrated with processions and *fiestas*. Even those who are not observant may attend mass on holidays, have religious weddings, or baptize their children. The second largest religious group are Muslims, who comprise 4% of the population. Many are first- or second-generation immigrants from North Africa, and they're more likely to be active worshippers than their Catholic counterparts.

Sardinia is also predominantly Roman Catholic, and while only 21.9% of the population are active churchgoers, religion still informs daily life. Every village has one or more churches, and nearly all of them host wildly popular local celebrations (*feste*) honoring the town's patron saint. Sardinia is dotted with small chapels called *chiese novenari* that are only open during the town's saints' day celebrations. They are often attached to *cumbessias* (or *muristenes*) which are hostels. Originally they were built for religious pilgrims who came to venerate the saint; today, the guests may not necessarily be devout, just happy to join the revelry.

On a day-to-day basis, the influence of religion is even more pronounced in **Sicily** than in the rest of 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 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. Sicily also has a small but growing Muslim population, comprised mainly of North African immigrants.

In **Malta**, 93.9% of the people identify themselves as Catholic, which the Constitution has established as the state religion (while also guaranteeing freedom of religion.) While fewer than 40% of Maltese attend mass on a weekly basis, people still turn to the church for major life events such as weddings, baptisms, and funerals; and nearly everyone participates the festive saints' day celebrations that take place in every town. There are about 365 churches across the islands, one for every day of the year.

In **Greece**, some 98% of the people identify as Greek Orthodox Christians, but only about 17% attend church regularly. This is not necessarily an indicator of faith; most Greeks say religion is important to them, more than a third say they pray regularly, and religion informs many holidays and family events. Greeks do, however, believe firmly in the separation of church and state: the nation is officially secular, and about 82% of the people do not think the government should

provide any financial support for the church. Don't forget that the dates of religious festivals in Greece may not be the same as in the U.S. Some holidays may follow a lunar calendar, and therefore can vary from year to year.

Visiting Places of Worship

In all the countries visited on this trip, most places of worship have a dress code, even if it is only loosely enforced. Nonetheless, it is considered polite to be modestly dressed when visiting any religious building, be it a church, mosque, synagogue, or monastery. Modestly dressed usually means covered from shoulders to below the knees—no shorts, no sleeveless shirts, and no low or revealing necklines. At Greek Orthodox monasteries, women are asked to wear a long skirt instead of trousers or slacks. We suggest that you throw a light sweater or cover-up into your daypack. A pashmina-type shawl is ideal for this.

Hotel Courtesy in Spain

Like in many other European nations, manners are more formal in Spain than the U.S. Hotel staff will likely address you as "señor" or "señora" and may be caught off guard if you ask a question without greeting them with a quick "hello" or "good day" first. Local staff (and other visiting Europeans) will generally make an effort to be quiet in hallways and common rooms, which are normally used for reading, relaxing, or quiet conversation. For this reason, eating and drinking in any common rooms other than the bar or restaurant is frowned on. If you have any laundry to dry, please keep it inside your room (and not on the balcony).

Hotel Courtesy in Italy

Italian hotels do not allow food and beverages to be taken from their breakfast rooms, nor is it courteous to eat or drink food or beverages purchased elsewhere in hotel common rooms. In conformity with municipal laws to promote urban decorum, hotels do not allow hanging laundry on room balconies. Travel clotheslines, used in your bathroom, are a more private and effective solution.

Hotel Courtesy in Greece

Greek 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.

Taking Photographs

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

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

Safety & Security

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

Spanish Cuisine

The 21st century's culinary firmament is lit by a galaxy of superstar chefs from Spain. Among them are the legendary Ferran Adría (whose former restaurant, El Bulli, launched the "molecular gastronomy" trend), Carme Ruscalleda (the only female chef to be awarded five Michelin stars), octogenarian Juan Mari Arzak (the father of the "New Basque" cuisine), and Jose Andrés, (credited with bringing small plate dining to America). Even if you do not dine in one of their restaurants, they have influenced Spanish chefs in even the humblest establishments, where you might find traditional classics like these:

- **Gambas al ajillo**: Shrimp cooked with Garlic and Chilies
- **Gazpacho**: A chilled soup that hails from Andalusia
- **Jamón Iberico**: A Spanish ham that is dry-cured and hung on the rafters of local bars and restaurants
- **Txangurro**: A baked spider crab stuffed with onions, tomatoes, leeks, brandy, and parsley, topped with breadcrumbs.
- **Pastel Vasco**: A slice of vanilla custard cream with a crunchy crust.

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 in to 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:

- **Apertivo:** A glass of sparkling prosecco or spumante white wine or Spritz.
- **Antipasto all'Italiana:** Raw vegetables served with various cheeses salami and Speck
- **Crostini** Fried polenta squares topped with sauces or pâtés,

- **Bagna Cauda:** A hot dish made with garlic and anchovies, dipping sauce for vegetables typical of Piedmont

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

- **Polenta:** A dense cornmeal porridge can be served with various toppings, like tomato meat sauce or a "white" sauce of sausage and mushrooms.
- **Canederli:** A large gnocchi dish made with stale bread soaked in milk, eggs, and smoked bacon, flavored with butter and cheese.
- **Risotto alla Milanese**: A simple and creamy risotto with the perfect combination of simple ingredients like butter, white wine, parmesan, and saffron
- **Pizzoccheri**: Long noodles, made from a dough of wheat and buckwheat, is served with potatoes, butter, Casera cheese and stewed savoy cabbage from Lombardy

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

- **Cotoletta alla Milanese:** A tender veal cutlet coated in crunchy breadcrumbs fried in butter
- **Osso Buco**: Braised veal shanks crusted with a citrus zest mixture called gremolata.
- **Vitello Tonnato**: A dish of cold, sliced tuna

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

- **Tiramisu:** A layered confection of sponge cake, mascarpone cheese, coffee and liqueur.
- **Sbrisolona:** A crumbly almond cake from Lombardy.
- **Strudel di Mele:** Similar to the German apple strudel, this is a flaky pastry stuffed with apples.
- **Castagnaccio:** A gluten-free cake, baked with chestnut flour mixed with olive oil, walnuts, pine nuts, raisins, and rosemary for a slightly savory taste

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.
- **Pasta alla Norma:** Pasta with fresh tomato sauce, fried eggplant, and shaved dry, salty ricotta cheese. A dish that is famous on the east side of Sicily and that takes its name from the Opera, written by the classical composer Vincenzo Bellini.
- **Involtini di pesce spade**: 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.

Greek Cuisine

A perfect Mediterranean climate. More than 6,000 islands and no mainland location more than 90 miles from the sea. Bountiful (and mostly organic) olive groves, fruit orchards, pastures, and vineyards. With all this richness, Greece has had no reason to change or complicate its cuisine in thousand of years. Here, it is the quality and freshness of simple ingredients that makes every dish a flavorful standout. So, let's start as the Greeks do, with *mesethes*, or ***mezes***. These are frequently described as appetizers and though a specific *meze* may be offered as a first course, for most Greeks *mezes* is a separate event in and of itself. One goes out for *mezes* with friends and family, sharing various small plates of food, drinks, pastries, and conversation. You might be served one of the flavorful dishes below:

- **Pasta elias:** An olive paste to spread on breadsticks.
- **Feta:** A Greek brined white cheese that is soft and made from sheep or goat milk.
- **Kasseri:** A Greek hard cheese.
- **Sea bream:** A white fish with a rich flavor that is not too fishy. It is often served as a fillet and accompanied by baby potatoes or seasonal herbs.
- **Keftedes:** These are seasoned meatballs also accompanied by a dip.
- **Kolokythokeftedes:** Also known as zucchini fritters. These are often accompanied by ***tzatziki*** (yogurt, cucumber, and garlic dip), or ***melitzanosalata*** (eggplant dip), or ***fava*** (bean dip).
- **Dolmathakia or dolmas:** Are grape leaves rolled and stuffed with rice, pine nuts, meat, or other seasonings.
- **Moussaka:** A layered casserole of eggplant, ground lamb, tomato sauce, and potatoes covered in béchamel sauce and cheese, and spiced with cinnamon.
- **Pastitsio:** A lasagna-like dish made with pasta and ground beef or lamb, béchamel, cheese, cinnamon, and nutmeg.
- **Gyros and souvlaki:** These chunks or slices of seasoned grilled meat (usually lamb or pork) with chopped tomatoes and onions in pita bread, with lashings of *tzatziki* are sold in stalls everywhere.
- **Spanakopita**: A phyllo pastry layered with feta cheese and spinach.
- **Kakavia:** A specialty in the Aegean. This rockfish soup is made with cured sardines and various grilled whole fish drizzled with ***ladholemono*** (a lemon and oil dressing).
- **Arni me votana:** A lamb casserole with vegetables, beans, tomatoes, potatoes and herbs.
- **Kaimaki:** A sweet cream topped with nuts and honey that is famous in the Peloponnese

- **Pastitsada:** This signature dish of the Ionian islands is made with savory chicken or beef simmered in wine, cinnamon, garlic and spices. It's often served with *bucatini* pasta, a nod to the area's Venetian past.
- **Glyko kastano:** A chestnut pudding with honey and orange found in western Greece.
- **Revani:** A moist semolina cake with lemon and orange.
- **Eliopsomo:** A traditional Greek olive bread.
- **Tyropita:** This savory pastry is similar to *spanakopita*, but it's filling consists of cheese and eggs.

Barcelona in Brief

City Layout and Details

Barcelona has a style all its own, unmatched anywhere in the world. It seems to re-invent itself daily even as it preserves and maintains the best of its history. If you have time limitations, you'll still be able to take in the prime historic sights by focusing on the ciutat vella, the old town. You can reach the many majors sights from the central Plaça de Catalunya in under a half hour at a leisurely walk. For anything further out, the Metro is convenient, fast, and inexpensive.

The old town is split roughly in two by the tree-lined and very pedestrian friendly Ramblas. To the east you'll find the labyrinthine Barri Gòtic (Gothic Quarter), with the Sant Pere and La Ribera neighborhoods even further out. Going west takes you into El Raval, a district that offers a trendy and bohemian atmosphere. At the foot of the Ramblas you'll find the waterfront, with a newly polished harbor area. East from there you'll find the fishing and restaurant quarter of Barceloneta, city beaches, and the cafés and restaurants of the Port Olímpic. Moving past the old town you'll find L'Eixample (Catalan for "extension"), built when the population grew past the city walls. It is, in contrast with the cramped and historic lanes of the ciutat vella, a wide-open area of fine avenues and 19th-century modernista (Art Nouveau) buildings. It is also the location of the cities most iconic building, the Gaudi's Sagrada Família.

You'll find a cultural vibrancy here that's rare anywhere: from the glorious modernista architecture, and the work of Antoni Gaudí in particular, to the artistic legacy of Catalan artist Joan Miró and the showcase Pablo Picasso museum (one of the city's most popular.) When you're done taking in the sights, join the locals for a market visit, a stroll down the Ramblas, a lazy harborside lunch, lively festival nights, or a visit to the beach.

Entertainment & Recreational Activities

From art openings and concerts to tapas bars, music bars, and clubbing, Barcelona is a great night-time city, and the array of after-dark diversions is huge. You don't have to leave the city center to find more than enough entertainment, but if you do, you'll find the outer districts just as lively. Trendy bars and clubs operate in every major district, and if one closes down, another seems to open the next night. Nightlife here is, however, a late adventure: evenings don't get seriously underway until after 10, bars stay open until 3am, and many clubs don't close until 6am.

From relaxing an evening away in local tascas (taverns), grazing on an array of appetizers at a tapas bar, or a slowly emptying a bottle of wine at a café, you can enjoy an easy and inexpensive way to spend an evening people-watching. If the weather is good (which it frequently is) the city's outdoor squares fill with tables and chairs. Drinking outside is so popular, and sometimes so noisy, that you might find restricted hours in some places.

There's more to the city than history and nightlife. Barcelona has numerous green belts and a busy waterfront, rebuilt with walkways, marinas, beaches, and top seafood eating spots. Outside the city, golf, horse riding, tennis, and swimming are available and within easy reach.

Local Transportation

In central Barcelona comfortable shoes are your best travel buy: it's an eminently walkable city, particularly the old town. For areas further afield:

Metro: Barcelona's underground public transport system is very efficient, and it goes pretty much any place in the city you might want to visit. You'll find five color-coded/numbered lines radiating from the center of the city. Stations are identified by a red diamond-shaped sign with the letter M in the center, maps are widely available, and tickets can be bought ahead of time, or in the station as you travel. Tickets come in a range of flavors – from a simple single ticket to multi-trip and multi-day passes and can be bought from station offices or from touch-screen vending machines (with instructions in English.) The metro runs from 5am to midnight Sunday through Thursday, until 2am on Friday, and is open all night on Saturday. Visit TMB's website (www.tmb.net) for more information on the city's transport system (in English.)

Trams & Buses: Subject to Barcelona's famed traffic snarls, tramvías (trams) work the main streets through the city alongside city buses. Routes are clearly marked at each stop, as are timetables.

Taxis: Yellow-and-black taxis are plentiful and reasonably priced. You can hail one in the street if its green light is on. Taxis have meters, and two stage pricing – cheaper during the day, more expensive after 8pm at night. You'll find a list of prices and surcharges is displayed (by law) on the back passenger window.

Malta in Brief

City Layout and Details

Situated between St Julian's and Valletta, Sliema is part of Malta's main coastal resort area. It's a residential area, having developed from beginnings as a small fishing port into a summer resort for wealthy residents of Valletta. You'll find their villas and town houses on the quiet inner streets, creating a quiet charm. More recently, it has become a major commercial and residential area with several of Malta's burgeoning hotel developments.

Sliema (with St. Julian's) is a center for the island's shopping, dining, and café life. Tower Road, the seaside promenade that runs north to St. Julian's offers shops, restaurants, Internet cafes, and day cruise boats – as well as plenty of seats and lovely views over the open sea. The coastline is studded with two towers: a 17th century watch tower and a British built neo-gothic tower from the 1880s.

Both St. Julian's (you can walk there via the promenade) and Valletta (by bus) are easily explored from Sliema.

Entertainment & Recreational Activities

Golf: There is a par-68 course at the Royal Malta Golf Club, spread across 5,567 yards of ground.

Tennis, squash, mini-golf, billiards, and **swimming** in a freshwater pool are offered at the extensive Marsa Sports Club complex. Visitors may obtain weekly or daily memberships.

Tenpin bowling: Available at the computerized Eden Super Bowl in St George's Bay.

Trotting: Trotting is Malta's most popular spectator sport and regularly attracts crowds of up to 4,000. Often the races are held on Sunday afternoons at Marsa Race Track. The circuit has been there since 1869. Immediately outside the arena, some of the 700 trotters registered with the Malta Racing Club are stabled. Races are usually held from October through March.

Local Transportation

Taxis: Traveling by taxi is not cheap, and fares increase sharply after midnight. Taxis are white (usually Mercedes) with distinctive red number plates. The taxis have no meters but operate on fixed prices; therefore, we suggest you agree on the fare in advance. Taxis are readily available in the main resort areas, but note that they do not cruise the streets in the hope of picking up a fare. They are available at taxi stands and on request at hotels.

Buses: Malta's new bus lines have standardized, modernized travel on the island – while making the charming old yellow buses a thing of the past. The buses operate more frequently, with more routes and stops than before and is inexpensive. A 24 hour pass costs about $3.25 and a full week pass about $15. Buses run along the seafront on either side of Sliema. Routes radiate from the Sliema and Valletta bus terminals to nearly every town, village, and sandy beach on the island.

Karrozzin: The Maltese horse-drawn victoria—the Karrozzin—was introduced in 1856 and is still in use in the larger towns. It is advisable to negotiate the cost before the ride starts. Horse cabs can be found in Sliema on the Promenade.

Athens in Brief

City Layout and Details

Athens has two main centers: Syntagma (Constitution) Square and Omonia Square. Approximately a mile apart, these two squares are connected by two parallel avenues, Stadiou Street and Panepistimiou Street. From Syntagma Square, Mitropoleos Street leads, slightly

downhill, to Monastiraki Square, near the flea market and the Plaka district. From Monastiraki Square, mile-long Athinas Street leads to Omonia Square. In the triangle formed by these three squares—Syntagma, Omonia, and Monastiraki—lies Athens's inner city, its shopping area, the central market, the main department stores, the post offices, banks, and many tavernas and restaurants.

Two helpful orientation landmarks are the Acropolis and Lycabettus Hill (the latter with the small white church and the Greek flag on top). Both are visible from most parts of the city.

Local Transportation

The Athens Metro has been dramatically improved and expanded in the recent years making it one of the most modern and efficient systems in the world. It has 3 lines, which are distinguished by the colors used in maps and signs (green, blue and red). The green line, which is the oldest and for the most part runs on the ground, connects Piraeus to Kifissia. The blue line runs from Piraeus Port to Doukissis Plakentias and the Eleftherios Venizelos International Airport, and the red line from Athoupoli to Elliniko. The first train of the day departs at 5:30 am and the last departs at 12:10 am.

There are many taxis in Athens, which can be recognized by the yellow color of the vehicles. The minimum charge is 5 euros. The taxi fare between the airport and the city center is 40 euros during the day and 50 euros at night. Radio equipped taxis are available for a small extra fee.

Madrid in Brief

City Layout and Details

Madrid's compactness makes it relatively easy for visitors to explore the city on foot. Most of the major attractions are concentrated in the downtown area between the Royal Palace and Retiro Park, barely a mile apart. Clustered within this district are grand museums, winding medieval alleys, broad avenues, stately gardens, and quaint tabernas. The city's principal squares are Cibeles Square, a few blocks north of the Prado Museum and site of one of Spain's most famous fountains; Plaza de España, just north of the Royal Palace; Plaza de Oriente, east of the palace; and Plaza Mayor, located between the Royal Palace and the Puerta del Sol.

Madrid's "museum mile"—which extends along the Paseo del Prado—enables art fans to visit many of the city's best museums without having to travel across the city. Shoppers will want to browse the stores around the Puerta del Sol in the center of town, as well as the upscale shops in the Salamanca district, bounded, roughly, by Serrano, Goya, and Conde de Penalver. South of the city center is the Mercado Puerta de Toledo shopping mall, featuring dozens of designer boutiques.

"Old Madrid"—a labyrinth of narrow lanes that constitutes the oldest part of the city—lies between Puerta del Sol and the Royal Palace. Each street, lane, and alleyway is marked by a sign with its name and a descriptive picture, visual aids originally created in the 17th century for those who could not read.

Entertainment & Recreational Activities

Madrid offers plenty of things to do at night. Theater productions include ballets, operas, operettas, and zarzuelas. World-class jazz, salsa, and classical music concerts are also common events. Castilian dances (pasodobles and chotis) during local festivals and Andalusian dances (flamenco) are performed in tablaos throughout the city, and nightclubs with floor shows stay open until the wee hours of the morning. Almost a dozen movie theaters regularly show undubbed foreign films, the majority of them English-language.

Local Transportation

Bus: Excellent, inexpensive bus service is available in Madrid between 6 am and midnight. Signs clearly marking the routes are at each bus stop. City buses are entered from the front and exited at the rear.

Subway: Madrid's Metro is rapid and efficient. Stops along all thirteen subway lines are clearly marked, and color-coded Metro maps are easy to read. Metro tickets purchased from booths or machines are put into electronic turnstiles as you enter the system. Do not discard your ticket until the end of the ride. Exits are marked salida. The Metro operates from 6 am to 1:30 am, although a few entrances close earlier.

Taxis: Taxis are numerous and can easily be hailed in the street. Available cabs will display a libre sign during the day, a green light at night. The taxi should always run a fare meter and supply a receipt on demand.

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

Spain

Leather goods, from supple suede gloves and elegant calf handbags to wineskins that require careful curing (botas), are excellent purchases. Other good buys are shoes, from classical calf pumps to provincial cloth espadrilles; porcelain by Lladro and pottery by regional craftsmen; and wool rugs made by tapestry makers or simple cotton-rag throws.

Siesta: Throughout Spain, most stores and offices close between 1:30 pm and 5 pm. Then they reopen until 7:30 pm (many close even later). Restaurants generally remain open during siesta. In the larger cities you may find that big department stores will stay open from 10am – 10pm.

Value Added Tax: Known in Spain as the IVA, Value Added Tax is levied on most articles, services, and meals. The IVA ranges from 7% to 21% (luxury items, cars). Depending on how much you spend on certain goods, you may be eligible for a partial refund of this tax. Ask the shopkeeper or salesperson about the VAT at time of purchase. Be sure to save all receipts and forms for Customs.

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 Caltarigione 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.

Greece

Specialties include handicrafts, gold and silver jewelry, embroidered shirts and dresses, fabrics, flokati rugs of fluffy sheep wool, pottery, onyx, marble, jars containing traditional marmalade, herbs (oregano and thyme), honey bars and jars of honey, olive oil, and traditional beauty products made from olives. These are available in the main shopping area downtown around Syntagma, Omonia, and Kolonaki squares as well as in Monastiraki, the flea market, where shopping sometimes involves bargaining. Some of the best jewelry comes from Ioannina, ceramics from Sifnos and Skopelos, and embroidery from Skryos, Crete, Lefkas, and Rhodes. Thessaly and Epirus regions specialize in flokati rugs.

U.S. Customs Regulations & Shipping Charges

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

The top three points to know are:

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

Spain

Facts, Figures & National Holidays

- **Area:** The mainland occupies approximately 195,364.5 square miles. Off Spain's east coast in the Mediterranean are the Balearic Islands (1,936 square miles), the largest of which is Majorca. The capital Sixty miles west of Africa are the Canary Islands (2,808 square miles).
- **Capital:** The capital city of Spain is Madrid. The capital city of the Balearic Islands is Palma de Mallorca. The capital city of the Canary Islands is Las Palmas de Gran Canaria.
- **Languages:** Spanish, Basque, Catalan, and Galician. In resort areas, many people also speak English, French, and German.
- **Geography:** Spain's topography consists of a broad central plateau that slopes to the south and east, crossed by a series of mountain ranges and river valleys. It is a land of both towering peaks and endless beaches, as well as fertile landscapes and high, dry plains. Principal rivers are the Ebro in the northeast, the Tajo in the central region, and the Guadalquivir in the south.
- **Population:** 47,325,360 (estimate)
- **Religions:** Roman Catholic 67.8%, atheist 9.1%, other 2.2%, non-believer 18.4%, unspecified 2.5%
- **Time Zone:** Spain is six hours ahead of U.S. Eastern Time.

National Holidays: Spain

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

01/01 New Year's Day

01/06 Epiphany

05/01 Labor Day

08/15 Assumption of Mary

10/12 Hispanic Day

11/01 All Saints Day

12/06 Constitution Day

12/08 Immaculate Conception

12/25 Christmas

Spain: A Brief History

Spain has been continuously inhabited for 1.2 million years, but the bulk of our knowledge about Spain's earliest people begins around 1100 BC, when Phoenicians established trading colonies along the southern coast. These attracted the Greeks; and around the same time, Celts descended in the north, establishing hill villages known as *castros*, many of which still stand in Galicia and northern Portugal.

The Romans arrived in Spain around 206 BC, but had to defeat the Carthaginians for it. Afterwards, the Romans still had a fight on their hands: The Iberian tribes resisted for 200 years. Today, in places like Mérida, Córdoba, Segovia, and Tarragona, you can see remnants of Roman roads, bridges, aqueducts, temples, and amphitheaters. Towards the end of their dominion, the Romans also brought Christianity. But Pax Romana crumbled as Visigoths and Franks swept over the Pyrenees.

The civilized heights of Rome were not equaled until the Moors arrived from North Africa around 711 AD. The enlightened Islamic civilization they established was called Al-Andalus, and it lasted for nearly 800 years. Islamic cities such as Córdoba, Seville, and Granada flourished. Throughout Al-Andalus, Christians, and Jews lived under some restrictions, but were free to worship, work, own property, and trade. When the rest of Europe was struggling through the Dark Ages, the city of Córdoba became a beacon of enlightenment with a celebrated university, palaces, gardens, observatories, libraries, street lamps, and running water. Mathematics, astronomy, literature, music, and architecture flourished.

Córdoba's star began to dim in the 11th century as the caliphate broke into dozens of small kingdoms. Infighting opened a crack for northern Christians to pry open, and the Christian Reconquest pushed south. The last stronghold of the Moors, Granada, fell to King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella in 1491. They instituted a 300-year campaign of terror, the Spanish Inquisition, which sought to root out heretics through the confiscation of property, imprisonment, torture, and execution. It required Muslims and Jews to convert to Christianity or leave Spain, thereby ending a source of valuable cultural contributions.

But Spain's fortunes continued to rise. In 1492, Christopher Columbus opened up the New World to Spain's imperial ambitions. Spain amassed tremendous wealth and a vast empire through Columbus' conquest of the Caribbean, as well as the conquest of Mexico by Cortes (1519-21) and Peru by Pizarro (1532-33). In 1588, Philip II sent his Armada to invade England, but its defeat cost Spain its supremacy. After centuries of dwindling losses, Spain's overseas empire ended with Cuban independence in 1898.

Spain remained neutral during In World War I, but was unable to avoid the upheavals that arose in its aftermath. Civil war erupted in 1936, pitting right-wing Nationalists under Francisco Franco against socialist, communist, and centrist Republicans. Nazi Germany and Fascist Italy supported Franco with planes, weapons, and 92,000 troops, making Spain a testing ground for WWII. Franco declared the war over in 1939, but there was no peace. In the ensuing years, his regime killed 100,000 intellectuals, teachers, and dissenters. After World War II (which Spain sat out), a UN-sponsored boycott plunged the nation into "years of hunger." They didn't wane until the 1950s, when U.S. aid and tourism infused the economy. When Franco died in 1975, Juan Carlos I took the throne and Spain transitioned to democracy.

When the 2008 global economic crisis plunged Spain's economy, the conservative government enacted harsh austerity measures. Youth unemployment reached 60%, and by 2017 over 87,000 workers left Spain, creating a brain drain. Recently, the government rolled out a "Return Plan" to lure them back. Also in 2017, a referendum in Catalonia backed separation from Spain. Madrid imposed direct rule, though polls show that 68% of Spaniards prefer dialogue with Catalonia.

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 Siciliy, 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:** 59,146,260 (estimate)

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

National Holidays: Italy

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

01/01 New Year's Day

01/06 Epiphany

04/25 Liberation Day

05/01 Labor Day

06/02 Republic Day

08/15 Assumption of Mary

11/01 All Saints' Day

12/08 Feast of the Immaculate Conception

12/25 Christmas Day

12/26 St. Stephen's Day

Italy: A Brief History

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

01/01 New Year's Day

01/06 Epiphany

04/25 Liberation Day

05/01 Labor Day

06/02 Republic Day

08/15 Assumption of Mary

11/01 All Saints' Day

12/08 Feast of the Immaculate Conception

12/25 Christmas Day

12/26 St. Stephen's Day

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 Mothyia.

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 826 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**.

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.

Greece

Facts, Figures & National Holidays

- **Area:** 50,949 square miles

- **Capital:** Athens
- **Population:** 10,775,643 (estimate)
- **Languages:** Greek
- **Geography:** The peninsula that constitutes mainland Greece is surrounded by more than 5000 islands, of which 220 are inhabited—169 have more than 150 inhabitants. The islands are divided into six groups: the Cyclades, the Ionians, the Dodecanese, the islands of the Northeastern Aegean, the Sporades and the Saronic Gulf islands. The two largest islands, Crete and Evia, do not belong to any group. Roughly four-fifths of Greece is mountainous, with most land lying over 1500m (4920ft) above sea level. Epiros and Macedonia, in northern Greece, still have extensive forests, but goat grazing, felling and forest fires have seriously denuded the rest of the country.
- **Religions:** Greek Orthodox 98%, Muslim 1.3%, other 0.7%
- **Time Zone:** Greece is on Eastern European Time, two hours ahead of Greenwich Mean Time (seven hours ahead of Eastern Time). Summer hours operate from the last Sunday in March until the last weekend in October.

National Holidays: Greece

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

01/01 New Year's Day

01/06 Epiphany

03/25 Greek Independence Day

04/12/26 Easter Sunday

04/13/26 Easter Monday

05/01 Labor Day

05/02/27 Easter Sunday

05/03/27 Easter Monday

08/15 Dormition of the Holy Virgin

10/28 The Ochi Day

12/25 Christmas Day

12/26 Synaxis of the Mother of God

Greece: A Brief History

The glory that was Greece reached its pinnacle during the Classical period, between 500 and 300 BC. But the seeds for that golden age, which has stood for centuries as a beacon of Western civilization, were sown at least 700,000 years ago, when humans first appeared in Greece. But it was during the Bronze Age, around 3,000 BC, when three major Greek civilizations emerged.

The Cycladic culture of the Aegean islands was sustained by farming and seafaring. But the small island populations made it hard for larger, more complex societies to organize. Not so for the Minoans of Crete, who created a palace culture, a written system of language, and effective

military and mercantile sectors. Had Crete not been wracked by natural disasters, the Minoans may have prevailed against the mainland Mycenaeans who landed around 1400 BC. But their star faded in 1100 BC, when the Dorians took over, and Greece entered a Dark Age.

Light dawned again around 800 B.C., when the Greeks came into contact with the Phoenicians. The Greeks borrowed their alphabet, which Homer used to record his epics. This was followed by the Persian Wars, which continued from 520 to 480 BC, and prompted some Greek city-states to form an alliance under Athens called the Delian League. When Persia was beaten in 461 BC, the leader Pericles presided over Athens' golden age. He rebuilt the city, including its iconic Acropolis. Aeschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides were writing plays; and Socrates and Plato were teaching. But when the Delian League clashed with the militaristic Peloponnesian League of Sparta, a Peloponnesian war persisted for 27 years, with Sparta prevailing.

Athens was conquered by Philip II of Macedon in 360 BC. When he was assassinated, his son Alexander (the Great) was embraced by Athens. Though Alexander built an empire that reached as far east as India, his death left Greece vulnerable. By 200 BC, Rome had annexed all of Greece, but they venerated the culture. Athens remained an important seat of learning until Justinian closed its philosophy schools in AD 529. Under Byzantine rule (AD 300–1200), many temples were modified to Christian use, and Athens became a provincial backwater.

After the fall of Constantinople in 1453, the Ottomans seized Athens and ruled for almost 400 years, during which time the Acropolis was desecrated. The Ottoman yoke was shaken off with the bloody 1829 War of Independence. Through the intervention of Britain, France, and Russia, Greece became a monarchy whose kings were largely foreigners. This helped to keep Greece out of World War I, but World War II was another story. The country was overrun by Hitler and the civilian population suffered greatly. More than half the nation's Jews were murdered.

In 1944, civil war broke out between the communist and monarchist resistance groups who had helped defeat the Nazis. It lasted for three years and took more lives than the entirety of World War II. A diaspora ensued, with many Greeks fleeing to Australia, the United States, and Canada. Greece joined NATO in 1952 and continued to be ruled as a monarchy until 1967, when former King Constantine fled Greece after a military junta. In 1974, democracy was restored and the monarchy was abolished in favor of a republic. In 1981, Greece joined the European Union.

The focus for 21st century Greece has been its economy. Integration with Europe brought a rising standard of living, but also skyrocketing costs and a serious debt crisis. This threatened to take down the EU, which provided bailouts that required strict austerity. Greeks endured record unemployment, protests, and successive governments. By 2018, Greece's credit rating improved and in 2019, the center-right New Democracy party of Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis won a landslide election, and did so again in 2023.

RESOURCES

Suggested Reading

Sardinia

Bitter Honey: Recipes and Stories from the Island of Sardinia by Letitia Clark (2020, Cuisine) The author, a British-born chef, food writer, and illustrator, moved to Sardinia in 2017, and here shares her reflections on how Sardinia's landscapes and lifestyle helped her rediscover the joy of cooking. There are also dozens of recipes celebrating the island's unique cuisine.

Accabadora by Michela Murgia (2011, Fiction) In traditional Sardinian culture, an *accabadora* is a "midwife to the dying" who administers euthanasia to the terminally ill. They were always women living on the edges of society, both feared and revered. This book, which won numerous literary awards, takes place in the 1950s and tells the moving story of the *accabadora* Bonaria, the villagers who rely on her, and her young adopted daughter, from whom she tries to hide the truth of her life as an "angel of mercy."

Sea and Sardinia by D.H. Lawrence (1921, Memoir) One of Lawrence's four books of travel writing, this one will reveal as much about the author as the island itself. At once clear-eyed and cranky, it includes some striking portraits of Sardinian people, lyrical passages about the landscape, and musings on the act of travel itself.

Reeds in the Wind by Grazia Deledda (1913, Fiction) Set in rural Sardinia, this story deals with a rebellious daughter, a mysterious crime, family honor, and retribution in a society struggling to hold onto its beliefs in the face of modernity. At a time when Sardinian women struggled just to be educated, Deledda became a revered figure and the winner of the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1926.

Spain

A Million Steps by Kurt Koontz (2013, Travel Narrative) Follow the author as he walks the Camino de Santiago—a pilgrimage route in Spain that stretches more than 400 miles—a journey that is both physical and spiritual.

Sister Queens: The Noble, Tragic Lives of Katherine of Aragon and Juana, Queen of Castile by Julia Fox (2011, biography). The daughters of Ferdinand and Isabella each lost positions of power—one to the whims of England's Henry VIII, and the other to madness.

The Shadow of the Wind by Carlos Ruiz Zafon (2005, Fiction) A mix of mystery, romance, and hauntings abound in this international bestseller, set in 1950s Barcelona.

The Last Jew by Noah Gordon (2000, Historical Fiction) A sweeping tale of survival during the Spanish in Inquisition.

Traveler's Tales: Spain edited by Lucy McCauley (1995, Anthology) Incisive, lyrical musings on all aspects of Spain, written by luminaries such as Gabriel Garcia Marquez, Calvin Trillin, and Barbara Kingsolver.

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.

If on a Winter's Night a Traveler by Italo Calvino (1979, Fiction) An experimental, post-modern novel following "you," the reader as you attempt to read a novel—only to be interrupted by one unfinished story after another. The author blends mystery, philosophical questions, and romance, crafting a mind-bending journey that questions reading, writing, and reality itself.

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 a 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.

Greece

The Rise of Athens: The Story of the World's Greatest Civilization by Anthony Everitt (2017, History) This book traces the origins of modern Athens and goes well beyond it, with plenty of entertaining detail about the figures who made it great, as well as those who contributed to its demise.

Ancient Greece: Art, Architecture, and History by Marina Belozerskaya and Kenneth Lapatin (2004, Art/Architecture) A lively guide to the architecture, painting, and sculpture of ancient Greece with color illustrations.

Dinner with Persephone by Patricia Storace (1996, Travel Narrative) An American fluent in Greek, Storace recalls a year of living and traveling there and the complexities, heartbreak, humor, and resilience of a people rooted in their glorious past, yet uncertain of the future.

The King Must Die and ***The Bull From the Sea*** by Mary Renault (1958, Fiction) Modern retellings of the Greek myth of Theseus and the Minotaur. Recommended by travelers.

Mythology: Timeless Tales of Gods and* Heroes** and ***Greek Mythology by Edith Hamilton (1942, Mythology) These classic introductions to Greek and Roman mythology is still used as the standard in high schools and colleges throughout the U.S. From the Olympians to the Trojan War, Hamilton presents the myths and adventure stories of the ancient world in a clear and accessible manner.

Suggested Films & Videos

Spain

Pain and Glory (2019, Drama) Antonio Banderas earned a Best Actor nomination for his portrayal of a legendary director flashing back through his past, and facing a present filled with loss, memory, physical ailments, and imagination. This thinly-veiled autobiographical sketch from director Pedro Almodovar is a rueful reflection on creativity, wrapped up with warmth, humor, and vivid glimpses of life in late 20th-century Spain.

Ocho Apellidos Vascos (released in the U.S. as *Spanish Affair*, 2014, Comedy) Two of Spain's most disparate cultures collide as a jilted bride from the Basque Country goes to Seville, where a skillful Andalusian ladies man is frustrated by his inability to woo her. A fun and warm-hearted look at the differences between northern and southern Spain.

The Way (2010, Drama) A grieving father (Martin Sheen) honors his lost son's desire to finish the journey of a lifetime by competing the historical pilgrimage on the Camino de Santiago. Along the way, he meets other trekkers with their own stories to tell.

Pan's Labyrinth (2006, Fantasy) From director Guillermo del Toro. Following Spain's bloody civil war, young Ofelia enters a world of unimaginable cruelty when she moves in with her new stepfather, a brutal military officer. Armed only with her imagination, Ofelia discovers a labyrinth and a faun who offers her a path to saving herself and her mother. The lines between fantasy and reality begin to blur, and before Ofelia can turn back, she's at the center of a ferocious battle between good and evil.

All About My Mother (1999, Comedy) When her 17-year-old son is tragically killed in a car accident, Manuela sets out to reconnect with her son's father and ends up forging new connections with an outrageous transvestite, a pregnant nun, and her son's favorite actress. This 1999 Oscar winner for Best Foreign Language Film is another from director Pedro Almodovar, whose other acclaimed works include *Women on the Verge of a Nervous Breakdown* and *Volver*.

Italy

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

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

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

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

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

Sicily

The Mafia Kills Only in the Summer (2013, Comedy/Drama). Aspiring journalist, Arturo Giammarresi, grows up in Palermo during the raise 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.

Greece

Mamma Mia! (2008) and ***Mamma Mia, Here We Go Again*** (2018) (Musical Comedy) Yes, there is Meryl Streep and an all-star cast. Yes, there are the bouncy, nostalgic soundtracks based on hits by the 70s supergroup, ABBA. But there are also idyllic Greek islands, and whimsical fantasies about the life you could live there.

Troy (2004, Drama) This may not have been 2004's best film, but it was its highest grossing one, thanks to an all-star cast (Brad Pitt, Peter O'Toole, Brian Cox, Diane Kruger, and Orlando Bloom), sweeping sets, and an epic story based on Homer's *Iliad.* It concerns the motivations of the central characters as they reach their destinies during the historic battle between the Trojans, and the various Greek armies at their gates.

My Life in Ruins (2009, Comedy) A romantic comedy about a tour guide (Nia Vardalos) set among the ruins of classical Greece. Vardalos also wrote and starred in *My Big Fat Greek Wedding.*

Zorba the Greek (1964, Comedy/Drama) This classic still stands the test of time. Anthony Quinn plays the iconic Zorba, a lusty and exuberant musician, who strikes up a friendship with an uptight Englishman (Alan Bates) during a picaresque adventure in Greece.

The Guns of Navarone (1961, Action) Follows six Allied and Greek soldiers as they try to disable the two German guns that are preventing the evacuation of British troops from a Greek island in WWII. But the real heavy artillery is the cast—Gregory Peck, David Niven, and Anthony Quinn all won at least one Oscar each during their distinguished careers.

Useful Websites

Grand Circle Frequently Asked Questions
www.gct.com/faq

International Health Information/CDC (Centers for Disease Control)
www.cdc.gov/travel

Foreign Exchange Rates
www.xe.com/currencyconverter

Basic Travel Phrases (80 languages)
www.travlang.com/languages

Packing Tips
www.travelite.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 or Apple Maps
Maps and directions anywhere in the world

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

Rome2rio
Where to go, what to see, and what to do in more than 160 countries

Flush or Sit or Squat
Find a clean toilet anywhere

Uber or Bolt or Lyft
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
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

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

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

GeoSure
Safely navigate neighborhoods around the world

Tourlina
For women only, it connects you with other female travelers

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

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


SWITZERLAND
AUSTRIA
HUNGARY
SLOV.
CROATIA
BOSN. & HERZ.
FRANCE
ITALY
SPAIN
Barcelona
Balearic Sea
Orgosolo
Arbatax
Barumini (Optional Tour)
Sardinia (Optional Tour)
Cagliari
Tyrrhenian Sea
Ionian Sea
Sicily
Porto Empedocle
Mozia Island
Siracusa
Valletta
MALTA
ALGERIA
TUNISIA
LIBYA
GREECE
TURKEY
Patras
Athens
Zakynthos
Mediterranean Sea
GREECE POST-TRIP EXTENSION
Corinth Canal
Mycenae
Athens
Epidaurus
Olympia
Nafplio
Aegean Sea
MADRID PRE-TRIP EXTENSION
Bay of Biscay
FRANCE
SPAIN
Barcelona
Segovia
Madrid
Balearic Sea
Arrival/ Departure
Optional Extension
Cruise Route
Motor Route
Train Route

SHARE YOUR TRAVEL EXPERIENCES

We invite you to share your videos and photos of your past O.A.T. adventures to help inspire your fellow travelers. Go to **www.oattravel.com/myaccount** to upload your photos or videos.

Most Popular Videos & Photos from our O.A.T. Adventures Created by O.A.T. Travelers



Submitted by Joy & Don Janke,
13-time travelers from Stevensville, MI



Submitted by Julia Schneider,
6-time traveler from Pinellas Park, FL



Submitted by Martin Schwartzman,
32-time traveler from Woodbury, NY



Submitted by Paul Stark, 17-time traveler
from Edina, MN



Submitted by David Fong, 19-time traveler
from Foster City, CA



Submitted by Steven dos Remedios,
31-time traveler from Oakland, CA

Overseas Adventure Travel℠
Since 1978

1-800-955-1925 | www.oattravel.com

CONNECT WITH US:

World's Best
#3 Intimate-ship Ocean Cruise Line

Readers' Choice
#2 Small Ships Category

10Best
#6 Best Educational Tour Companies

Solo Travel
Named one of the "Best Tours"