

Southern Italy and Malta

Boutique Journeys for Solo Travellers

Fully escorted small group tour with a maximum of 12 passengers
13 June to 11 July 2020 – 29 days

Come along with us on an exceptional journey through Malta, Sicily and Sardinia. Perfectly positioned in the Mediterranean Sea with one of the best climates in Europe these three destinations have so much to offer. Rich in history, beautiful towns and villages, ancient Greek architectural gems to rival Greece, active volcanoes and some of the best beaches in the world are just some of the many wonders you will see on this tour. Our tours are exclusively for solo travellers 50+ so come and share the joy of travel with people just like you.

\$22,500 per person twin **\$28,500** per person single

ENQUIRE FOR COSTS TO UPGRADE TO BUSINESS CLASS

Tour inclusions:

- Return economy class airfares from Auckland on Emirates
- Internal flights in Italy and Malta
- Luxury accommodation
- Travel in luxury minibus
- 3 Lunches
- Gratuities
- All taxes and levies
- Sightseeing as specified
- Breakfast Daily
- 2 Dinners
- Services of a Tour Leader



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Level One, 2 Walton Street, Remuera, Auckland
Phone 09 520 5600 www.boutiquejourneysforsolotravellers.co.nz



Dubai

Itinerary

Saturday 13 June

After checking in at Auckland International Airport enjoy some relaxing time at the Emperors Lounge. Tonight we depart Auckland at 8.30pm and fly to Dubai.

Sunday 14 June

Early this morning we arrive in Dubai and are transferred to our hotel for immediate check-in. Rest of the day at leisure. One night Palace Hotel Downtown (Palace Lakeview Room), overlooking Burj Khalifa Lake and adjacent to Dubai Mall.

Monday 15 June

Early this morning we are transferred to the airport for our 7.55am flight to Malta. On arrival at 2.10pm we are transferred to our hotel. Four nights Phoenicia Malta Hotel (Executive room with balcony), situated in 7.5 acres of mature gardens at the entrance to Valletta, the capital city. The Phoenicia's architectural beauty is classed as one of the sights of Malta .

Tuesday 16 June

This morning we enjoy a guided walking tour of Valletta. Valletta, Malta's capital and a World Heritage site, is nothing short of an open-air museum and is a living experience of Baroque architecture. Throughout the years, Valletta has welcomed emperors, heads of state, artists and poets and is now the permanent seat of the Maltese government. Dotted with quaint cafés and wine bars, the city is today one of Malta's main tourist attractions. Enjoy entry to the majestic St John's Co- Cathedral and the Grand Masters Palace, and Upper Barrakka Gardens which provides a stunning snapshot of Malta's Grand Harbour, often described as the most beautiful in the Mediterranean. Rest of the day at leisure.



Valletta

Wednesday 17 June

Today is a full day of cruising the waters of the Mediterranean on a luxury catamaran. Our first stop will be either the Crystal Lagoon or Blue Lagoon in Comino where you may like to have a swim. Crystal lagoon got its name from its crystal clear water, with a colour spectrum from sapphire to aquamarine. The bay is surrounded by caves and over 50m high cliffs. Our next stop will be the island of Gozo, Malta's smaller sister island, where we first visit the village of Xaghra located in the north of the island. Here one finds the Ggantija Temples (the oldest free standing monuments in the world) and the famous Calypso Cave. Drive to the west of Gozo and visit the venerated church Ta' Pinu and the neighbouring Dwejra Bay. The Azure Window, the Inland Sea and the Fungus Rock are all natural rock formations located here. Optional Boat Ride into the caves of the area. Continue to the heart of the island, the capital city Rabat and its castle known as 'The Citadel'. Back on board we head back to Malta.



Gozo

Thursday 18 June

Today we explore the island of Malta with our guide. First we drive to the quaint fishing village of Marsaxlokk and enjoy some free time to explore the market place and take photos of the colourful Maltese fishing boats. Next we drive to the Blue Grotto and stop for a panoramic view of the impressive natural rock structures. You may enjoy a boat ride or you could swim or wander around the little harbour where you will find various cafes, restaurants and souvenir shops. We then drive to Wied iz-Zurrieq and see the Hagar Qim Temples. The Megalithic Temples of Malta are among the most ancient religious sites on Earth, described by the World Heritage Sites committee as "unique architectural masterpieces." We then head to the Dingli Cliffs and take in the breathtaking views overlooking the small terraced fields below, the open sea, and Filfla, the small uninhabited island just across from the mainland. We then carry on to Rabat and Mdina, where we walk along the narrow winding streets with our guide. Used in the Arab Period - hence their names, you will see Baroque churches and Nobles' palaces and the commoners' homes together with museums and catacombs at Rabat.

Friday 19 June

Today we say goodbye to Malta and hello to Sicily. Depart Malta early afternoon for Palermo. On arrival in Palermo we will be transferred to our hotel in Cefalù, a picture postcard town alongside one of Sicily's finest beaches. Two nights Hotel Calette No. 5 (Deluxe Rooms), located a short distance from the town and seafront and offering fine views over the sea.

Saturday 20 June

Today is free to enjoy Cefalù town and the facilities of our hotel.

Sunday 21 June

Early this afternoon we are transferred to our hotel in Palermo, the capital of Sicily. Three nights Grand Hotel Wagner (Superior rooms), located in the historic centre of Palermo. The hotel is named after the famous German composer Richard Wagner who lived in the namesake street with his family between 1881 and 1882.

Monday 22 June

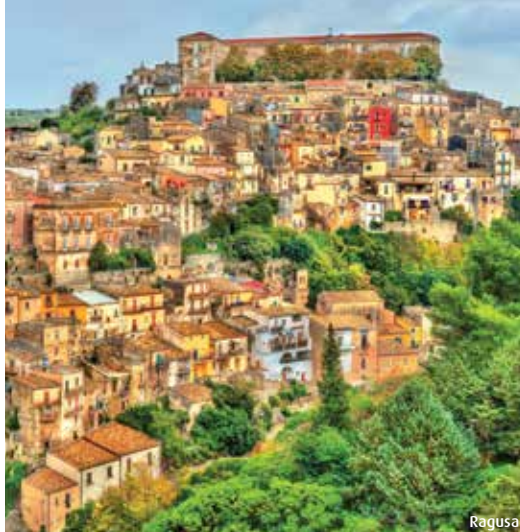
This morning enjoy a walking tour of the city. We will visit the old town, starting from the Palatine Chapel, walking along the main street Corso Vittorio Emanuele, visiting the Cathedral, the 4 Corners, the Pretoria Fountain and the Church of Santa Caterina. Learn about the Arabic-Norman style, the baroque, the Renaissance and all the most important historical periods of the city. Palermo is a place with more than 2, 800 years of history. Once home to a Phoenician settlement, a Roman province, an Arab emirate, a Norman kingdom, and more, traces of ancient conquerors can still be found in the elegant architecture and gastronomic delights. After lunch we take a short drive to Monreale to see the stunning cathedral.

Tuesday 23 June

Today we spend the day at the Elymian archaeological site of Segesta and the hilltop medieval village of Erice. At Segesta we visit the Doric temple and the Ancient Theatre and in Erice admire the majestic Castle of Venus and enjoy the charming maze of narrow cobbled streets.



Palermo



Ragusa



Neapolis

Wednesday 24 June

This morning it is time to say goodbye to Palermo and make our way to Agrigento, famous for the archaeological site of the Valley of Temples with its impressive remains of Greek Doric temples. On the way enjoy a winery visit, tasting and lunch. We will also visit Scala dei Turchi with its stunning white cliffs made of a soft limestone and blinding white marl. Two nights Villa Athena (mixture of rooms), located within the Archaeological Park of the Valley of the Temples, which UNESCO has declared a World Heritage Site, with an exclusive direct entrance.

Thursday 25 June

This morning enjoy a tour of the Valley of the Temples where we will be guided through the Temple of Juno, the Temple of Concordia, the Temple of Hercules and the ruins of the Temple of Zeus...a tour full of mythology and curiosity. Walk along the sacred hill, among almond trees, agave, prickly pears and centuries-old olive trees. This afternoon is free to visit the town of Agrigento or enjoy the facilities of our hotel.

Friday 26 June

This morning we travel from Agrigento to Ragusa. On the way we travel via Piazza Armerina and enjoy a guided tour of Villa Romana del Casale. Villa Romana del Casale is a large and elaborate Roman palace located about 3 km from the town of Piazza Armerina. Excavations have revealed one of the richest, largest, and varied collections of Roman mosaics in the world, for which the site has been designated as a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Two nights Eremo della Giubiliana (mix of rooms), located in the countryside 13km from Ragusa. It dates back

to the 12th century and in the 16th century was a monastery for The Knights of the Order of San Giovanni.

Saturday 27 June

Today we explore the gorgeous Val di Noto towns of Ragusa and Modica with a guide. Our first stop - Ragusa Ibla is the ancient historic centre of the city of Ragusa. It is world-famous for having over fifty churches and many palaces and examples of the best Baroque art in Sicily. The small hill-top town of Ibla overlooks the surrounding valley, with its little houses and narrow streets dominated by the majestic Cathedral of San Giorgio, the pinnacle of Baroque in Ibla. In recent years, Ragusa Ibla has become one of the top tourist attractions in Sicily. Then we move to Modica. Modica is situated in the dramatic landscape of the Monti Iblei, a range of high ground divided up by deep valleys and surprisingly populous towns. Important in Medieval times, Modica was rebuilt after the great earthquake of 1693 and now boasts fine late-Baroque architecture as well as a medieval old town.

Sunday 28 June

This morning we travel from Ragusa to Syracuse. On the way we stop at Noto for a guided tour of the town. Noto is one of the most beautiful cities for Sicilian art. A splendid historical centre where you can admire many civil and religious monuments like Santa Chiara, SS Salvatore, Cathedral S. Nicolò, Ducazio Palace and Nicolaci Street with its amazing balconies, a must is Cannolo (literally meaning "little tube" a Sicilian pastry dessert) or Granita (a semi frozen dessert). We then make our way to Syracuse. More than any other city, Syracuse

encapsulates Sicily's timeless beauty. Ancient Greek ruins rise out of lush citrus orchards, cafe tables spill onto dazzling baroque piazzas, and honey-hued medieval lanes lead down to the sparkling blue sea. It's difficult to imagine now but in its heyday this was the largest city in the ancient world, bigger even than Athens and Corinth. Its 'Once upon a Time' begins in 734 BC, when Corinthian colonists landed on the island of Ortygia and founded the settlement, setting up the mainland city four years later. Almost three millennia later, the ruins of that then-new city constitute the Parco Archeologico della Neapolis, one of Sicily's greatest archaeological sites. Across the water from the mainland, Ortygia remains the city's most beautiful corner. Three nights Ortea Palace Hotel (mix of rooms), a magnificent building from the early 1900s, which for many years housed the Syracuse Post Office. Located on the island of Ortygia, close to the city's most important monuments, cafés and shops.

Monday 29 June

This morning we will visit the archaeological park Neapolis, with its ancient Greek theatre, Roman amphitheatre, the Altar of Ieron II and the limestone quarries. After the tour of Neapolis enjoy a guided tour of the baroque centre of the Ortygia including the cathedral, the fountain Arethusa and the Apollon temple. Afternoon free to explore more of Ortygia or relax at our hotel.

Tuesday 30 June

Today we enjoy a cruise where we will discover beautiful and unspoilt inlets and bays of the Ionian Sea that would otherwise be unreachable. Our first stop will be at the "Two Brothers Stones" and then sail



Agrigento



Syracuse



Catania



Mt Etna

south toward the marine protected area of Plemmirio. There we will stop for swimming, snorkelling, sunbathing and enjoying lunch.

Wednesday 1 July

Today we travel from Syracuse to Taormina. On the way, we stop in Catania for a guided tour of the town. Catania is a baroque city that was damaged by lava and earthquakes on several occasions. The most representative monuments in the historical centre date back to the XVIII century when Catania and many other towns were rebuilt after the earthquake of 1693. However, the baroque architecture is not the only attraction of Catania. We can see here ancient ruins as well: Roman amphitheatre and Greek - Roman theatre. We will hear stories of people that lived here and whose presence is still very strong in memories and local traditions. We then make our way to Taormina. Taormina is a picturesque small town perched on a slope high above the Ionian Sea. Four nights Grand Hotel Atlantis Bay (Classic and Superior Rooms). This stunning hotel is almost carved into the rock, facing the beautiful sea of the Bay of the Mermaid and on the foot of the Taormina town. The cable car that goes up to the city centre is within easy to reach, just 300 metres away from the hotel.

Thursday 2 July

This morning enjoy a guided walking tour of Taormina where we will explore the pretty resort town claimed by many to be the most beautiful place in Sicily. Our tour will include the main street Corso Umberto, the XVth century Palazzo Corvaja, the Odeon and the Greek Theatre while enjoying the narrow and enchanting streets. The afternoon is free to explore the town or relax at the hotel.

Friday 3 July

Today we will be exploring the incredible Mt Etna. A wonderful day dedicated to

discovering the beauties and the curiosities of this Volcano. Etna represents one of the most active volcanoes in the world and is the highest in Europe. We will explore Etna by an easy walk around one of the lateral craters settled around the Volcano and learn about the volcano's history.

Saturday 4 July

Today is free to either enjoy Taormina, relax or you may like an optional excursion to the Aeolian Islands.

Sunday 5 July

Today we say goodbye to Sicily and hello to Sardinia. Depart Catania early afternoon on Ryan Air to Cagliari. On arrival we will be transferred to our hotel in Villasimius, located approximately one hour from Cagliari and which boasts some of the finest beaches in Sardinia. Three nights Pullman Timi Ama Sardegna Hotel (Classic Bayside Rooms), located in the bay of Villasimius 2km from the lively town of Villasimius.

Monday 6 July

Today is free to enjoy the hotel, the beach, the pool and the town of Villasimius.

Tuesday 7 July

This morning we travel into Cagliari for a guided tour of the city. Cagliari is an old city with a long history, which has seen the rule of

several civilisations. Our tour will begin at the quarter of "Castello" (Castle). Discover the secrets of the medieval quarter among its strong walls, impressive towers, ancient churches, narrow streets, and terraces. Important sites that we will see are - Cathedral, Royal Palace, Elephant Tower, Saint Remy Rampart, Piazza Yenne, Marina district.

Wednesday 8 July

This morning we say goodbye to Sardinia and hello to Rome for a brief stop before commencing our journey home. Depart Cagliari late morning on Alitalia to Rome. On arrival in Rome we will be transferred to our hotel. One night Hotel Raphaël, Relais and Chateaux (Classic Rooms) located in the historic centre of Rome a few steps from Piazza Navona.

Thursday 9 July

This morning is free to enjoy Rome before our flight to Dubai. Depart Rome at 3.25pm and arrive Dubai at 11.25pm. Overnight at the Dubai International Hotel (Executive rooms) located inside the terminal building.

Friday 10 July

Depart this morning at 10.05am to Auckland.

Saturday 11 July

Arrive Auckland 9.50am

Sardinia

