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## 2016 Tour of Sicily and Malta Itinerary 28 April to 18 May

**Day 1 Thu 28 Apr Palermo** Transfer from the airport to the GRAND HOTEL ET DES PALMES, right on the edge of the old city. After 'siesta' the late afternoon and early evening could well be spent getting a feel for this vibrant city by exploring the main thoroughfares of the Old City, Via Roma and Via Maqueda or, close to the hotel, the New City and the Giardino Inglese. We will stay 2 nights in Palermo.

**Day 2 Fri 29 Palermo** There is a lot to see in Sicily's most populous city. Our first stop is Norman Palermo with the Palazzo dei Normanni and its Capella Palatina decorated by the most glorious mosaic in Europe. In the same part of the city the 12<sup>th</sup> Century Cathedral is well worth a visit. We will also travel to Monreale Cathedral founded by Norman King William II in 1174, one of the wonders of the medieval world. Then there is the Ballaro, a bustling market. **DINNER**

**Day 3 Sat 30 Milazza and Lipari** Travel to Milazza before boarding a hydrofoil to the **Aeolian Islands**. We will stay 4 nights on Lipari at the GATTOPARDO PARK HOTEL. The town is charming with many shops and restaurants where you can order fresh seafood and sample the local Malvasi wines. **Walk 1 Castello di Lipari Grade 1**

**Day 4 Sun 1 May Stromboli** The morning is free but make sure you visit the Museum. Weather permitting, then we will join an excursion by boat to Panarea and Stromboli, an active volcano. After dinner we will observe the spectacular eruption before a late return to Lipari. If the seas are too rough to get to Stromboli we will switch Day 3 and Day 6 ... climb Vulcano today and try Stromboli on Tuesday (space and weather permitting)

**Day 5 Mon 2 Lipari** A day to relax at the hotel and/or explore Lipari town and nearby beaches. In the cool of the afternoon we will set off on a local coastal walk with great views **Walk 2 Lipari back country Grade 2**

**Day 6 Tue 3 Vulcano** Catch the ferry to Vulcano **Walk 3 the summit of Vulcano Grade 3**  
This will be one of the signature walks of the tour. A steepish climb through the ash and lava fields will bring us to the crater rim to enjoy spectacular views of the sea and islands. A further climb will take us to the summit. The mainland of Sicily can be seen with Mt Etna brooding in the far distance. Then comes the descent before a swim in the Tyrrhenian Sea with hot bubbles. You can even take a volcanic mud bath. We will return to Lipari for lunch and relaxing by the pool. **DINNER**

**Day 7 Wed 4 Taormina** We catch the hydrofoil back to Milazza then drive past Messina to Taormina. We will be staying at HOTEL VILLA GRETA in Taormina for 3 nights. An evening stroll along Corso Umberto I is popular with locals and tourists alike.



Agrigento



Valle dei Templi

**Day 8 Thu 5 Mt Etna** Drive towards Catania then to south Mt Etna. From there we take a gondola and an all terrain vehicle to travel as close as possible to the summit of Europe's most active volcano. Once out of the vehicle we should be able to walk around some of the subsidiary craters. However this is an active volcano and access is determined by conditions on the day. We will not compromise safety. After the trip back down to the car park we will return to the hotel and have dinner on the terrace with a superb view of Etna. **DINNER Walk 4 Mt Etna summit craters Grade 2+**

**Day 9 Fri 6 Taormina** A stay in Taormina must include a visit to the **Greek Theatre**. Other attractions include the Public Gardens, Mazzaro Beach and the beguiling, Isola Bella. If you like steps, the climb to Castelmola will interest. There is also a bus. There may be a concert tonight at the Greek Theatre or an Opera recital.

**Day 10 Sat 7 Agrigento** We drive south to Catania then west to Piazza Armerina for lunch. After lunch we will visit **Villa Romana del Casale**, a marvellous, excavated Roman villa. This is one of the finest Roman sites in Europe. Then we will head south west to Agrigento to stay at the COLLEVERDE PARK HOTEL for 2 nights. The city was founded by the Greeks in 480BC and later conquered by the Carthaginians and the Romans.

**Day 11 Sun 8 Agrigento** Today you will be taken to the **Valle dei Templi** to look at the ruins. The nearby **Archaeological Museum** is also open on Sunday mornings. A walk from the hotel will also take you to the **Centro Storico** or

Day 12 **Mon 9**                      **Siracusa**                      Drive north east to stop for lunch at the surprising **Sicilia Outlet Centre**. All the labels at cheap Sicilian prices. Then onto to Siracusa to stay on Ortigia for 2 nights in the I SANTI CORONATI HOTEL. In the late afternoon we will set off to explore Ortigia visiting Castello Maniace, the Temple of Apollo, the Duomo and Fonte Aretusa..  
**Walk 6 Ortigia Grade 2**

Day 13 **Tue 10**                      **Siracusa**                      After breakfast we will visit the Parco Archeologico with its magnificent **Greek Theatre, the Ear of Dionysius and Roman Amphitheatre**. After a quick lunch a walk will take us to the **Archaeology Museum** with some impressive collections. A good stretch of the legs will take you back to Ortigia or you can splash out on a taxi.

Day 14 **Wed 11**                      **Vendicari**                      Drive south to the Vendicari Nature Reserve where we do a walk along the coast through dunes and lagoons. A swim at Sicily's best beach is followed by lunch at a remote but excellent seafood restaurant before we drive to Ragusa and the IBLARESORT HOTEL our home for the next 3 nights  
**LUNCH**  
**Walk 7 Vendicari Wetland Grade 2**

Day 15 **Thu 12**                      **Ragusa**                      Over the next three days we will plan our excursions to the UNESCO listed Baroque towns – **RAGUSA, NOTO, MODICA and SCICLI**. There are two parts to Ragusa; **Ragusa** the “new” town built after the 1693 earthquake and **Ragusa Ibla**. Our hotel is in Ragusa Ibla and there is much to explore. Walking is the best way to do it. The magnificent **Duomo** has a baroque façade that is breathtaking and there are churches, piazzas and narrow streets full of surprises. The gardens are well laid out with excellent views  
**Walk 8 Ibla Guided Town Walk Grade 2.**

Day 16 **Fri 13**                      **Modica**                      Not far from Ragusa is another wonderful Baroque town – **Modica**. It is also divided into two towns; Modica Alta and Modica Bassa and it is spectacular. We will spend the morning here and the climb up to the Duomo and the church of San Giorgio, with its 16<sup>th</sup> century wooden panels depicting scenes from the New Testament, is worth the effort. In the afternoon you will have a choice of **Noto** (Porta Reale, Cattedrale di San Nicolo and San Carlo al Corso) or if you fancy a swim, **Marina di Ragusa**

Day 17 **Sat 14**                      **Pozzallo**                      Today we drive south to the port of Pozzallo where we will spend 1 night at MARE NOSTRUM prior to our voyage to Malta. It is a friendly little town with some good beaches and sitting in the evening watching the *passaggiare* with a spritz in hand, is quintessential Sicily.



Valetta



Ragusa



Vulcano

Day 18 **Sun 15**                      **Valletta**                      A welcome sleep in this morning before taking taxis to the last of our Sicilian hill towns - **Scicli**. Less well known than its illustrious neighbours, some say it is the most pleasant. We can have lunch there. Back in Pozzallo we could have a swim before an included dinner in one of the seafood restaurants in town before the evening ferry trip to Malta. I am sure you will enjoy the 90 minute trip in the first class lounge from Sicily to Malta and when we arrive in Valletta the **Grand Harbour** will astound with its battlements and defences. We will be staying at the GRAND HOTEL EXCELSIOR in the Old Town of Valetta for 3 nights.  
**DINNER**

Day 19 **Mon 16**                      **Comino**                      Today we will travel by boat (Yacht or Cruiser) to Comino. This includes lunch and an optional, open bar. Once the haunt of pirates and corsairs, Comino has a stark beauty. We will do a walk on Comino from the Blue Lagoon to an impressive tower. After the walk you should have a swim in the famous **Blue Lagoon**. Then we will return to Malta and travel back to Valetta.  
**Walk 9 Blue Lagoon Grade 2 LUNCH**

Day 20 **Tue 17**                      **Valletta**                      Our last full day in Malta will give you the opportunity to visit some of the sights: the **Grand Harbour, Mdina and Rabat, Old Valletta** and the **Hagar Qim temples**. There are museums dedicated to the part played by the Maltese in WW2 and shops, cruises and guided tours to entice. Make sure you leave plenty of time to explore Old Valletta. The tour will be by Open Top, hop on – hop off bus  
**DINNER**

Day 21 **Wed 18 May**                      **Valletta**                      tour ends 1000

**INCLUSIONS**

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|---|--|
| • 20 night's accommodation                                      | Breakfast every day + 7 dinners and/or lunches   |
| • Travel by minibus   |  |
| • the services of qualified English speaking guides and drivers |  |
| • 9 guided walks  | Comprehensive travel notes   |
| • ENTRY FEES  | Palazzo Reale, Palermo, Montreale + cloisters, Lipari Museum, Greek Theatre - Taormino, Valle dei Templi, Agrigento, Parco Archeologico – Syracuse or Museum, Castello Maniace, Mdina, Hagar Qim |
| • TOURS   | Half day cruise to Stromboli or Lipari tour, Gondola and all-terrain vehicle Mt Etna,  |
| • EXTRAS  | Mt Etna guides, guided tour Villa Romana del Casale, guided Ibla walk  |
| • CRUISES   | Milazzo to Lipari return, Lipari to Vulcano return, Pozzallo to Malta first class, return cruise to Comino   |
| • FARES   | Open top bus Malta, Taxi to hotel in Valetta, Taxi to Parco Archeologico Syracuse one way  |