

Italy, the Deep South & Sicily

28th August 2020



Stay in the Trulli cottages of Alberobello


17 Incredible Days Rome to Palermo with Garry O'Day

Explore the ancient villages and towns of Puglia and Matera before crossing to the glorious island of Sicily. Sleep in the ancient sassi of Matera and the delightful Trulli cottages of Alberobello. Stand on the highest active volcano in Europe, feast in mafia country and cruise to San Vito Lo Capo... 'va bene'!



ROME


Day 1

- Stay 1 night in  Rome
- Meet and get to know your Tour Manager and fellow travellers over dinner

1 ROME

ALBEROBELLO, PUGLIA


Days 2, 3 & 4

- Stay 3 nights in the 'Bee Hive'  Trulli cottages of Alberobello
- Dine in a delightful local restaurant
- Enjoy a walking tour of Alberobello and local wine tasting
- Explore the baroque city of Lecce with a local guide
- Relax in the 'white city' of Ostuni

3 ALBEROBELLO

MATERA


Days 5 & 6

- Stay 2 nights in the beautifully restored  'Sassi' caves of ancient Matera – a truly remarkable experience
- Stand on the Murgia Timone plateau above the 'La Gavina' ravine
- See the thousand-year-old frescoes adorning the walls of the Crypt of the Original Sin
- Gain an insight in to life in a 'Sassi' house when we visit La Casa Grotta
- Enjoy an afternoon to relax and explore extraordinary Matera
- Visit the coastal towns of Monopoli and Polignano a Mare, famous for its gelato

2 MATERA

PALERMO



Days 16 & 17

- Spend your final night in Palermo
- Visit the  Palatine Chapel, in the Palace of the Normans
- Enjoy a special farewell dinner

1 PALERMO

TAORMINA

Days 7, 8, 9 & 10

- Stay 4 nights in the stunning town of Taormina
- Cross Calabria and then catch the ferry across the Straits of Messina to Sicily
- Relax with a completely free day to explore Taormina at your own pace
- Explore the ancient Greek and Roman ruins of  Syracuse
- Visit beautiful Ortigia Island, the historical heart of ancient Syracuse
- Take a dramatic cable car and 4WD bus to stand at the top of  Mount Etna
- Enjoy a sumptuous lunch in 'The Godfather Country'

4 TAORMINA

MARSALA



Days 13, 14 & 15

- Stay 3 nights near Marsala in a converted Baglio farmhouse
- Explore the fishing port of Sciacca
- Enjoy a lunchtime seafood feast at Vittorio's famous beachside restaurant
- Visit the ancient city of Erice and Segesta's romantic temples
- Cruise through the Zingaro marine reserve to San Vito Lo Capo
- Enjoy a Baglio wine tasting

3 MARSALA

AGRIGENTO


Days 11 & 12


- Stay 2 nights in Agrigento, with spectacular views over the  Valley of the Temples which we explore with a local guide
- See the extraordinary mosaics in  Villa Romana del Casale, Piazza Armerina
- Enjoy an olive oil tasting and light lunch at Mandranova Estate


2 AGRIGENTO

AVERAGE 145 KMS PER DAY

 Tour commences

 Overnight stays

 Included excursions

 UNESCO World Heritage Listed visits



Italy intensifies as you plunge deeper

Travel guru Rick Steves once wrote, "If you like Italy as far south as Rome, go further south. It just gets better. If Italy is getting a little overwhelming by the time you get down to Rome, think twice about going further. Italy intensifies as you plunge deeper." Rick is so right! Sicily, of course, stands out, having absorbed a myriad of influences from a long history of invaders, empire builders and exotic sea traders. Turn one corner and find a massive Greek Temple or Roman Amphitheatre. Around the next you will find a delightful baroque square or verdant vineyards springing from the volcanic ash of mighty Mount Etna.

Puglia and Matera are just as evocative. The fresh produce is amazing and endless hills of olive groves testify to Puglia's reputation as the food basket of Italy. When designing the tour I leapt at the opportunity for us to stay in the beautifully converted, white washed, beehive style 'Trulli' town houses. And then there is Matera. Italy's oldest inhabited town where the rock faces are riddled with ancient caves or 'sassi'. Mel Gibson even filmed 'The Passion of Christ' here as many reckon Matera actually looks authentically like Jerusalem would have done 2000 years ago! Ancient? It has been said, "Matera is the only place in the world where people can boast to be still living in the same houses of their ancestors of 9,000 years ago". What an experience!

"There are so many memories I will cherish. It was such a divine experience staying in the sassi caves of Matera and in a trulli cottage in Alberobello." Paul



Stay 2 nights in the breathtaking city of Matera

DAY 1 - Friday 28 August 2020 Rome welcome

Your tour commences this evening in the eternal city of Rome. Join us tonight for a welcome drink before dinner. This is an ideal chance to meet, and get to know, your Tour Manager and fellow travellers. Meals: D

Your Rome hotel – Hotel Victoria

This 4 star hotel is centrally located close by the Villa Borghese gardens. The air-conditioned guest rooms feature classic décor.



DAY 2 - Saturday 29 August 2020 To Alberobello in the Puglia region

Driving across the spine of Italy – the Apennine Mountains – we continue deep into the Puglia region to the remarkable city of Alberobello where we stay three nights. This is one of the most unusual towns you will ever see. The whole city centre is a mass of whitewashed 'bee hive' type houses called 'Trulli' which date back hundreds of years. Puglia is known as Italy's bread basket and is also justifiably famous for its olive oils, wine and local produce. Dinner tonight is included in a local restaurant. Meals: B,D

Your Alberobello accommodation – 'Trulli cottages' scattered around town

Shunning conventional hotel accommodation we have leapt at the chance of offering an amazing touring experience. We have selected to stay in a number of beautifully renovated Trullo (stone houses with the conical shaped roof) or Cummerse houses (stone houses with barrel vault ceiling), set amongst the winding backstreets of this UNESCO Heritage Listed old town. Bursting with character each one offers all the amenities you would expect of a high quality, self-contained studio or town house. Each house is unique and varies in size, shape and layout. No two have the same furnishings or décor. Portage is naturally all taken care of and breakfasts are all taken together in a centrally located restaurant. www.charmingtrulli.com/en



DAY 3 - Sunday 30 August 2020 Ancient Lecce and the white city of Ostuni

Driving down into the Salentine Peninsula – the 'heel of Italy' – we spend the morning exploring the city of Lecce on a walking tour with our local guide. Dating back to the early Greek empire, the city boasts numerous baroque monuments and also has a Roman amphitheatre on the central square. Later we visit 'La Città Bianca' (the 'white city') of Ostuni. Perched on a hill, with views down over the coast, we enjoy time at leisure amongst the winding streets and white washed alleys. Meals: B

DAY 4 - Monday 31 August 2020 Alberobello sightseeing, 'My Time' and wine tasting

This morning we are joined by a local guide who will take us on a walking tour of this remarkable 'bee hive' town. In the afternoon we will enjoy a relaxing tasting of local wines. The rest of your afternoon and evening are at leisure. Meals: B



Image taken by Albatross traveller, B. West



Spend time at leisure in Polignano a Mare

DAY 5 - Tuesday 1 September 2020**Polignano a Mare and ancient Matera**

Passing hamlets and typical Pugliese 'masserie' (fortified large estate-farms), we reach the port of Monopoli. Later we continue to the nearby coastal town of Polignano a Mare. Built directly on the cliffs over the sea, Polignano is famous for its gelato and ice cream parlours and makes a perfect lunch stop. Crossing to the 'ankle' of Italy we reach the extraordinary city of Matera. On arrival we visit the Murgia Timone, a huge rock plateau riddled with ancient man made stone caves or 'Sassi', to take in the views directly over the 'la Gravina' ravine to the old town. Reputed to be the oldest inhabited settlement in Italy, your view encompasses rock churches and numerous Sassi (including the cave complex hotel we will be staying in) with the more 'modern' baroque town on top of the hill. We also visit the Crypt of the Original Sin*, located inside one of the many natural caves, adorned with thousand-year-old Biblical frescoes and nicknamed 'The Sistine Chapel of Rupestrian Art'. Your next two nights will be memorable! This evening we dine al fresco style on the terrace of our cave hotel. **Meals: B,D**

*Closed Mondays

**Your Matera 'Albergo Diffuso' – Le Grotte della Civita**

A hotel experience you will never forget. Your rooms are a series of 'Sassi' or caves, dating back into pre-history, beautifully renovated and with exceptional appeal. Each are large in size and reminiscent of the 'Flintstones', but with luxury and all modern conveniences. Your breakfast is served in a converted rock church featuring classical music. It is impossible to paint the full picture of this truly unique experience.

DAY 6 - Wednesday 2 September 2020
Matera sightseeing and 'My Time'

This morning we are joined by a local guide who will show us around this extraordinary town from the ancient rock hewn churches to the baroque city above. We have included entrance to La Casa Grotta – a typically furnished cave dwelling, to gain an insight in to how families lived in their 'Sassi' houses. Your afternoon and evening are free to relax and explore. **Meals: B**

DAY 7 - Thursday 3 September 2020**Cross the Straits of Messina to Sicily**

Driving across Calabria and down the toe of Italy we reach the Mediterranean, where we catch the ferry across the Straits of Messina to Sicily. Following the coast we arrive at the stunning town of Taormina where we stay the next four wonderful nights. **Meals: B,D**

**Your Taormina hotel – Hotel Excelsior Palace**

Built with a Moorish style, this 4 star hotel offers sweeping views along the Taormina coast. To one side is the coastline of the Ionian Sea, and on the other panoramic views of Mount Etna and the hillside village of Castelmola.

**Stand on Europe's highest active volcano**

Mt Etna – some stop far below thinking they are 'there'. Some take the chairlift up to the snow fields and stop. We go even higher including the guided 4WD bus tour up to where the 'internally warmed' earth melts most of the snow, vast horizons unfold and you will stand facing the steaming caldera. (and yes, it is easy and safe!) See Day 10.

DAY 8 - Friday 4 September 2020
'My Time' in Taormina

A totally free day to relax and explore the boutiques, handcraft shops and restaurants which make Taormina so famous. Make sure you visit the Greek Amphitheatre with its striking views and also wander through Villa Comunale, one of the most beautiful little gardens in all of Sicily. **Meals: B**

continued



Relax in delightful Ortoigia



Join a local guide through the Valley of the Temples



Vittorio's, so memorable!

On Day 13 we visit the fishing port of Sciacca, on Sicily's south coast. Earlier that day restaurant owner Vittorio (known locally as the 'wild boar') will have been down at the fish market selecting seafood and fish for his beachside restaurant down the road in Porto Palo. And that's where we go for a leisurely lunch. Featured in the acclaimed BBC2 series 'Sicily Unpacked', Michelin master chef Giorgio Locatelli enthuses over Vittorio's simple cooking style – nothing fancy, but so memorable!



Enjoy 'My Time' in Taormina

DAY 9 - Saturday 5 September 2020 Ancient ruins of Syracuse and Ortigia Island

Driving past Catania we reach the city of Syracuse, where we are joined by a local guide. First stop will be at the temples and massive amphitheatre in the 2500 year old Greek and Roman ruins. We will also visit the overgrown quarries and test the amazing acoustics in the famous 'Ear of Dionysus' cavern. Later we cross onto Ortigia Island, the heart of ancient Syracuse, to wander through the delightful backstreets to the breathtaking architecture of the main square, Piazza del Duomo. Enjoy time to find a quiet café or trattoria for a leisurely lunch. **Meals: B**

DAY 10 - Sunday 6 September 2020 Mt Etna adventure followed by a leisurely lunch

What an adventure today! First we drive up the slopes of Mount Etna to Sapienza Refuge, lying at the south of the crater at an elevation of 1910 metres. Here we board a cable car up to a restaurant and museum at 2500 metres where we meet our local guide who will drive us in a large 4WD bus up to the (usually snow covered) viewing crater area at 2920 metres. You will now be standing on the highest active volcano in Europe with views across to the steaming caldera on one side and the Sicilian coastline far below. All around you will see craters, caldera and petrified lava flow. Following this magnificent experience we descend to the village of Forza d'Agro, just north of Taormina. This area was the setting for some scenes from the film 'The Godfather', and is the perfect location for another leisurely, typically 'Italian style' lunch. The rest of the day and evening is free back in beautiful Taormina. **Meals: B,L**

DAY 11 - Monday 7 September 2020 Piazza Armerina and Agrigento

Cutting through the heart of Sicily we reach Piazza Armerina where a local guide will take us through the opulent Villa Romana del Casale. UNESCO Heritage Listed and one of the great sites of Sicily, this massive 1700 year old Villa was covered by a mud slide in the 12th century which beautifully preserved its breathtaking mosaics. Later we arrive in Agrigento on the south coast, where we stay two nights. **Meals: B,D**

Your Agrigento hotel – Colleverde Park Hotel

Offering spectacular views directly over the Valley of the Temples and the Mediterranean Sea from their beautiful gardens, the Colleverde Park Hotel is located near the city centre of Agrigento. This elegant hotel offers classic style hotel rooms.



DAY 12 - Tuesday 8 September 2020 Valley of the Temples and lunch at Mandranova

This morning we are joined by a local guide who will take us through the famous UNESCO Heritage Listed Valley of the Temples. Originally the ancient city of Akragas, and built out of sandstone tufa, the golden amber hue of the giant complex of ruins and temples blend perfectly with the natural surroundings. This afternoon we will drive east to the farm of Mandranova, to enjoy an olive oil tasting and light lunch. **Meals: B,L,D**

DAY 13- Wednesday 9 September 2020 Sciacca and lunch at the famous Vittorio's restaurant

First stop this morning will be in the fishing port of Sciacca. Encircled by 16th century walls, the fascinating old town is where Arab, Norman and Greek cultures co-existed. We then follow the coast to the beach at Porto Palo where we enjoy a delicious seafood lunch at Vittorio's restaurant (specially mentioned in the acclaimed BBC2 series 'Sicily Unpacked'). Later we continue to our hotel inland from Marsala where we stay the next three nights. **Meals: B,L,D**

Your 'Baglio' hotel – Baglio Oneto

Set on a hill amongst vineyards, with views across to the Egadi Islands, this was originally a feudal dwelling and later a notable farmhouse estate built in the late 18th century. The hotel section has been designed to maintain the architectural integrity of the ancient Baglio.



DAY 14 - Thursday 10 September 2020 Temple ruins at Segesta and Erice

This morning we visit the Temple ruins at Segesta. Later we visit the city of Erice. Standing on top of Mount Erice, 750 metres above sea level and overlooking the port of Trapani, the views out to San Vito Lo Capo and the Aegadian Islands are fantastic. Here you will still find the remains of the ancient Phoenician fortifications and in the old city there are still two castles. Pepoli Castle which dates from Saracen times and the Venus Castle built by the Normans. Time to relax and wander through the quaint old alleys and cobblestoned streets of the old town, and find a trattoria in a peaceful courtyard to enjoy lunch. This evening before dinner we will enjoy a wine tasting. **Meals: B,D**

DAY 15 - Friday 11 September 2020 Zingaro marine nature reserve cruise

After enjoying free time for your morning coffee at the authentic fishing port of Castellammare del Golfo, we board a boat to enjoy a scenic cruise through the Zingaro marine nature reserve, past Scopello and the faraglioni' rocks to San Vito Lo Capo. **Meals: B,D**

DAY 16 - Saturday 12 September 2020 Palermo sightseeing and 'Farewell to Sicily' dinner

On arrival in Palermo we are joined by a local guide for a panoramic tour to explore the palaces and squares of this most Sicilian of cities! Entrance is included to visit the Palatine Chapel, in the Palace of the Normans, which is adorned in extraordinary 12th century mosaics. You will also have time to shop, or sit and enjoy a leisurely lunch. Tonight we will enjoy our 'Farewell to Sicily' dinner in a local trattoria, a short stroll from our hotel. **Meals: B,D**

Your Palermo hotel – Hotel Principe di Villafranca

This 4 star, boutique style hotel, is located in an elegant residential area of Palermo and features a fusion of classic and contemporary décor. The hotel boasts an art collection that is on loan from female Sicilian artists..



DAY 17 - Sunday 13 September 2020 Palermo

Your tour ends today after breakfast. **Meals: B**



See the Sicilian coastline aboard a scenic cruise

Outstanding Value Inclusions

Over \$1,700 value of extras already included

- ALL excursions, scenic drives, sightseeing and entrances as described
- Fully escorted by our experienced Tour Manager
- Travel in a first class air-conditioned touring coach
- 16 nights specially selected hotel accommodation
- Hotel portorage (1 bag per person)
- 29 Meals – including breakfast daily (B), 2 typically 'Italian style' lunches in 'Godfather Country' and Vittorio's at Porto Palo, light lunch & olive oil tasting at Mandranova Olive Oil farm (L), plus 10 dinners (D)
- Tea, coffee and a complimentary beverage with all included dinners
- Welcome drink in Rome, wine tastings in Alberobello and in a Sicilian Baglio
- Hand Selected Albatross Experiences - cable car and 4WD bus Mount Etna, Zingaro cruise
- Local guides as described in the itinerary
- ALL tips to your Tour Manager, Driver and Local Guides
- Personal audio system whilst on tour
- Free WiFi on most coaches and at hotels
- Albatross Tours App
- Albatross Memories Photobook

NO additional 'on tour' costs!

The Albatross difference

- Leisurely 2, 3 and 4 night stays
- Small group sizes – from just 10 to 28
- Genuinely inclusive, NO extra 'on tour' costs
- Stay in authentic, character style hotels
- Easier days with 'My Time' guaranteed!

2020 Dates & Prices

17 days only \$8,847 pp twin share

Single supplement \$2,320

Land only prices in Australian dollars

Starts Rome	Ends Palermo	Starts Rome	Ends Palermo
2 May	18 May	28 August	13 September
14 May	30 May	11 September	27 September
17 June	3 July	18 September	4 October
17 July	2 August	2 October	18 October

Is this tour suitable for you?

Our tours require a moderate level of fitness due to the unique places we visit and stay. This tour is not suited to anyone who has mobility issues. If in doubt, please contact us or visit www.albatrosstours.com.au/suitability

Book our tours with confidence!

If you book and deposit on any of our tours, as long as there are just 10 or more people travelling on our designated group departure, we guarantee it will travel.

