

Rome,
the **Amalfi Coast**
and **Sicily**

Tour Itinerary



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*T*imeless architectural beauty and intriguing history...sumptuous Italian gastronomic cuisine... a host of fine wines... sunshine...the warmth of friendly people...the perfect recipe for an unforgettable vacation.

Our journey starts in Rome, the seat of the great Roman Empire, and later the home of the papacy. The Forum, the Colosseum, Palatine Hill, medieval churches, palaces, amphitheatres, fountains and squares all compete for our attention with their elegant columns, carvings and architectural beauty. Not far from Rome is the strikingly beautiful mountainous Amalfi coast, where our base is in



The Amalfi Coast at dusk

the romantic and charming resort town of Sorrento. A visit to the island of Capri and a day in Pompeii will leave you speechless. There is no place on earth where you can so clearly see 2,000 years into the past, watching people going about their daily life in a Roman town.

The ferry takes us to sun-drenched Palermo, Sicily, where the locals say, "We get angry when it rains. It's an insult, and we take it personally."

Sicily, the home of cannolis and a unique cuisine that has a North African twist, is also known for its excellent Marsala, Corvo and Regaleali wines. Siracusa boasts the largest Greek Amphitheatre in existence. The Valley of the Temples represents among the world's best-preserved classical Greek architecture. A trip to Sicily would not be complete without a visit to Sir Winston Churchill's favorite vacation spot, Taormina, the crown jewel of Italy: pastel-colored houses, garden terraces of geraniums, trees laden with oranges and lemons, ancient ruins. Many say it is the most beautiful place in the world! Rome, the Amalfi coast and Sicily— what an experience!

ITINERARY

Day 1

We start our journey in Rome, where our small, elegant hotel is located in a central neighborhood where we can easily walk to many of Rome's architectural and historical treasures. The Roman Forum and the Co-



Our group at the Roman Forum



Inside of the Vatican Museums

losseum are brought to life for us by our local expert guide. Dinner tonight is at a neighborhood restaurant with outstanding Southern Italian specialties.

Day 2

This morning we visit the Vatican Museums, with its rich trove of priceless art treasures, the Sistine Chapel, and St. Peter's Basilica, the largest cathedral in the world, containing the exquisite masterpieces of Botticelli and Michelangelo. In the afternoon we have free time to explore Rome on our own.

Day 3

Leaving Rome, we drive to the charming seaside town of Sorrento, where we stay for the next four nights in a fabulous five-star ocean-front hotel. Borrowing from Greek mythology, the Romans placed the legendary abode of the Sirens—those wicked mermaids who lured seamen to their death by their sweet songs—at Surrentum (Sorrento). After an afternoon exploring this lovely town at leisure, we have a fun-filled

mozzarella-making demonstration and pizza-making lesson at a local farm, where we then feast on our creations. We end our evening with a delicious sampling of limoncello!

Day 4

Today we enjoy a boat excursion across the Bay of Naples to the entrancing Isle of Capri. The main town is



Our private boat ride around the Isle of Capri



Our seaside hotel in Sorrento

views of Anacapri. We see the Gardens of Augustus, a beautiful terraced park of trees and flowers. We look down onto the Bay of Naples and Mt. Vesuvius and shudder at the thought of the Roman Emperor Tiberius throwing his enemies over the cliff. Tonight you may choose from one of Sorrento's many wonderful restaurants.

Day 5

Today we take a full-day driving-and-boat tour along Italy's magnificent Amalfi coast. Our first stop is Positano, where we see how the locals live. We



Our guide, Bart, in Amalfi

then board our boat for an unforgettable trip to Amalfi. Once there, we can visit an authentic paper factory and have an oceanfront lunch at one of the best restaurants on the Amalfi Coast. Our local guide also takes us to the beautiful village of Ravello, where we visit a 13th century villa with elegant gardens and a magnificent panoramic view of the Bay of Maiori and the Gulf of Salerno.



The view from Villa Rufolo, Ravello

Day 6

Today is a totally free day to enjoy and luxuriate in the ease of the Amalfi Coast. Arguably the most scenic and romantic setting in the world, this area embodies the essence of *la dolce vita*. Take your time to sip an espresso at one of Sorrento's many outdoor trattorias, relax and enjoy the complimentary Prosecco and finger foods at our wonderful hotel. If you favor more active pursuits, there are plenty of walking and hiking opportunities to be found with the help of our local guide. And, of course, there is always the pastime of shopping in the local ceramics, leather and other high-end shops! Tonight, we enjoy a dinner and perhaps the local Tarantella music show.

Day 7

Today is one you will never forget. We visit the most remarkable archaeological discovery ever unearthed: Pompeii. The incredibly preserved houses, streets, shops, even brothels, present a fascinating chronicle of daily life in 79 A.D., when one fateful day the eruption of Mt. Vesuvius froze life in an instant. We stop at a local vineyard for



Archaeological site of Pompeii



Market in Palermo

lunch, where we delight in the freshest pasta and cheeses, and, of course, several types of wine! Our expert guide then takes us to Herculaneum, another Roman town where the volcanic mud from Mt. Vesuvius preserved the houses and streets exactly as they looked 2,000 years ago. At the end of a memorable day we board the overnight ferry to cross the Bay of Naples to Palermo, Sicily. We have dinner on the ferry and sleep in first-class cabins.

Day 8

After breakfast in a local pastry shop in Palermo, we meet our local guide and head for the small hilltown of Monreale, where we see a fine tribute to Arab-Norman art: the cathedral of Monreale. It boasts a remarkable interior with magnificent gold mosaics representing episodes from the Old Testament. We continue on to the beautiful and bustling capital of Sicily, Palermo, and even visit a local market.

For more than 2,000 years, Sicily has inspired the creation of artistic masterpieces, which include the architecture of great cathedrals, paintings, music and poetry. Historically, Sicily's strategic position in the Mediterranean has made it appealing to foreign powers, which resulted in centuries of foreign domination by Greeks, Romans, Arabs, Normans and Spanish. Sicilian culture reflects the architectural, artistic and gastronomic influences of its former invaders. After visiting Pal-

ermo with our delightful local guide, we check into our hotel in the historic district of town. Dinner tonight is at a wonderful neighborhood restaurant that serves the best *antipasti* and local Sicilian specialties!



The group

Day 9

Today we depart for the tiny town of Erice, which offers charming stone

streets, medieval churches and hilltop castles. Weather permitting, we have a picnic at the top of the town, overlooking the rolling hills and the beautiful coastline of northwest Sicily. We continue our journey to

Segesta, an abandoned ancient city and one of the world's best-preserved Greek architectural sites. Segesta's Doric temple stands alone in a natural setting in the country, giving us an unnerving feeling we have stepped back in time more than 2,000 years.



Concordia Temple in Agrigento

Day 10

We say *arrivaderci* to Palermo and head to the archaeological site of the Valley of the Temples, in Agrigento, located in a delightfully natural setting of olive groves and almond orchards. Founded in 582 BC by Greek settlers, the town was described by the Greek poet Pindar as “the most beautiful of those inhabited by mortals.” Here we explore the remains of five of the principal temples built in the 5th century BC, including the massive and majestic Tempio della Concordia (Temple of Concord), which has remained nearly intact for more than 2,000 years. Across the valley is the Tempio di Giove (Temple of Jupiter), whose ruined columns stood 20 meters high and used to “house” colossal statues. A reconstructed statue lies on the ground among the ruins, giving an idea of the immense size of the structure. Driving across undulating low hills, we continue to the east coast, where we check into our beautiful oceanfront 5-star hotel in Taormina. A gourmet dinner awaits us.



The view from our hotel in Taormina

Day 11

Today we head to the still-active volcano Mt. Etna for a guided tour and explanation of this geological marvel. On our way back to our hotel, we have time for a wine-tasting lunch at a local winery. Be prepared to try some delicious cheeses, dried meats, pastas and wines! We return to our hotel in Taormina for free a free evening.

Day 12

For our last day on this enchanted island, we have free time to enjoy beautiful Taormina. Take time to stroll the old alleyways and visit the spectacular Greek theatre in town, or relax on your spacious oceanfront terrace. We convene in the evening for a grand farewell dinner.

Day 13

This morning we drive to the Catania airport for our return flight home.



OLDE IPSWICH TOURS

8 Herrick Drive
Ipswich, MA. 01938
Toll free tel. 877-356-5163
Fax 978-356-0382
Email info@ipswichtours.com
www.ipswichtours.com