

Overseas Adventure Travel®

THE LEADER IN CUSTOMIZED SMALL GROUP ADVENTURES SINCE 1978

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



Undiscovered Adriatic: Eastern Italy,
Venice, Puglia & Malta

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

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Undiscovered Adriatic: Eastern Italy, Venice, Puglia & Malta Small Ship Adventure

Italy: Venice, Ravenna, Tremiti Islands, Monopoli | **San Marino | Sicily:**

Siracusa | **Malta:** Valletta, Mdina, Hagar Qim

Small groups of no more than 25 travelers, guaranteed

18 days starting from \$9,695

including international airfare

Single Supplement: **FREE or \$1,495**

For departure dates & prices, visit www.oattravel.com/vma2026pricing

Spend 11 nights aboard the **50-passenger M/V Athena or M/V Artemis**, cruising across the Adriatic and Ionian seas to discover what life is like in six of Italy's lesser-known regions—as well as the tiny island of Malta. Throughout your voyage, you'll explore destinations that are truly undiscovered, like the white-washed port towns of Monopoli and Otranto or the cone-shaped *trulli* dwellings of Alberobello. Plus, this itinerary is now enhanced with an additional night in Venice.

IT'S INCLUDED

- 16 nights accommodation, including 11 nights aboard the privately owned 50-passenger M/V *Athena* or M/V *Artemis*
- International airfare, airport transfers, government taxes, fees, and airline fuel surcharges, unless you choose to make your own air arrangements
- 40 meals: 16 breakfasts, 11 lunches, 13 dinners—including 1 Home-Hosted Dinner—plus all onboard house beer, wine, and soft drinks
- 22 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.

Undiscovered Adriatic: Eastern Italy, Venice, Puglia & Malta



WHAT TO EXPECT

① ② ③ ④ ⑤ Moderate

Pacing: 17 days, with one 3-night hotel stay, one 2-night hotel stay, and 11 nights aboard a 50-passenger small ship.

Physical requirements: Walk 3-5 miles unassisted and participate in 6-8 hours of physical activities each day, including stairs. Good agility, balance, and strength is needed for boarding motorboats and possible rough seas.

Flight time: Travel time will be 8-20 hours and will most likely have one connection

View all physical requirements at www.oattravel.com/vma

EASTERN ITALY & MALTA: THE O.A.T. DIFFERENCE

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

People-to-People Experiences: Join a family for a **Home-Hosted Dinner** in the village of Monopoli to sample eastern Italy's rustic cuisine and learn firsthand about life here. Plus, experience **A Day in the Life** of a family owned and operated farmstead in the countryside of Ortona, learning about the farm's daily activities, helping to feed the animals or harvest some produce before sitting down to a meal with the family.

O.A.T. Exclusives: Travel by small ship to see a side of Italy most Americans miss, and make local connections that are only possible with O.A.T. As you travel, you'll talk with local experts about **Controversial Topics**, like the MOSE dam project in Venice.

ITINERARY SUMMARY

DAYS	DESTINATION
1	Depart U.S.
2-4	Venice, Italy
5	Venice • Embark ship
6-12	Coastal Italy
13-14	Siracusa, Sicily
15-17	Valletta, Malta • Disembark ship
18	Return to U.S.

CUSTOMIZE YOUR ADVENTURE

OPTIONAL EXTENSIONS

Ljubljana & Trieste: World War II to the Present

PRE-TRIP: 5 nights from **\$1,495**

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 **Ljubljana** before your Ljubljana & Trieste pre-trip extension from **\$230** per room, per night
- Arrive early in **Venice** before your main adventure from **\$540** per room, per night

Undiscovered Adriatic: Eastern Italy, Venice, Puglia & Malta

YOUR DETAILED ITINERARY

BEGIN YOUR ADVENTURE WITH AN OPTIONAL PRE-TRIP EXTENSION

5 nights in *Ljubljana & Trieste: World War II to the Present*

Day 1 Depart U.S.

Day 2 Ljubljana, Slovenia

Day 3 Explore Ljubljana

Day 4 Explore Postojna Caves •
Trieste, Italy

Day 5 Explore Trieste, Italy • *Foiba Massacres* conversation

Day 6 Trieste • Optional *Villages of Istria* tour

Day 7 Trieste • Winery visit • Venice •
Join main trip

Day 1 Depart U.S.

Depart today on your flight to Venice, Italy. Please refer to your individual air itinerary for exact departure and arrival times.

Day 2 Venice, Italy

- Destination: Venice
- Accommodations: Palazzo Barocci or similar

Activity Note: You will transfer from the airport to your hotel via water taxi today. Agility will be required to board these small motorboats. Venice is occasionally impacted by flooding—especially during October and November. Waterproof boots are available for purchase throughout the city for \$5–\$10 USD.

Morning/Afternoon: Arrive in Venice this morning where an O.A.T. representative will meet you at the airport and assist you with your

transfer to the hotel. You'll cruise to your hotel along the city's canals aboard a private water taxi—in true Venetian style.

Upon arrival, you'll meet your Trip Experience Leader, as well as travelers who took the optional *Ljubljana & Trieste: World War II to the Present* pre-trip extension. Then, you'll check in and receive your room assignments.

Those travelers who arrive early this afternoon can embark on an optional orientation walk led by your Trip Experience Leader.

Dinner: On your own—your Trip Experience Leader can provide recommendations based on your preferences. Perhaps you'll delve into Venice's seafood scene and try *baccala mantecato*, a popular fish-based antipasto.

Evening: You are free to return to your room to rest after your overseas flight, or you may venture out to experience Venice's famous bridges and dramatic architecture illuminated at night.

Day 3 Explore Venice • Controversial Topic: The impacts of the MOSE Dam with local activists

- Destination: Venice
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Dinner
- Accommodations: Palazzo Barocci or similar

Activity Note: If today falls on a Sunday or holy day, our **Controversial Topic** will be discussed on another day of our adventure. Travelers wishing to visit St. Mark's Cathedral during their free time are advised to purchase tickets in advance.

Breakfast: At the hotel.

Morning: Meet your Trip Experience Leader and fellow travelers in the hotel lobby for a Welcome Briefing.

Afterwards, we'll head out of the hotel together and meet our local guide for a walking tour of Venice—a UNESCO World Heritage Site. A highlight of our tour is the famous Piazza San Marco (St. Mark's Square). The city's major attractions are centered here, and it is one of the most photographed squares in all of Europe. Dominated by St. Mark's Basilica, the spacious square is surrounded with outdoor cafés, and is the perfect place to do a little people-watching.

Lunch: On your own—ask your Trip Experience Leader for suggestions.

Afternoon: Following lunch, we'll reconvene as a group to discuss the **Controversial Topic** of the MOSE Dam project with local experts.

Spearheaded in 2003, the construction of this highly controversial barrier has repeatedly been hindered by delays, budget overruns, and scandals, resulting in a series of missed completion deadlines. Nearly 18 years later, it is still finally complete. Activists have been advocating for the long-term preservation of Venice, as well as for local business owners who are suffering as a result of the rising waters. To put this in context, Venice sees nearly 30 million tourists per year, while the permanent population of "The Floating City" is just around 260,000.

As we'll learn during our conversation, the effects of the MOSE Dam project haven't been exclusively positive. The development of the dam has been tainted by severe episodes of political corruption, pertaining to the costs (estimated at nearly \$7 billion), construction, management, and maintenance. The ramifications of building this dam are believed by many experts to be harmful and not nearly as effective as alternative systems employed by neighboring European countries like the Netherlands and England, which also contend with similar issues. Furthermore, from an environmental perspective, experts believe that the dam will have an irreversible impact on the lagoon, permanently damaging the seabed.

Enjoy the rest of your afternoon at leisure. You are free to relax in your hotel room, venture out and explore the city's many shops and cafés, or enjoy sightseeing. Later, we'll walk to a local restaurant with our Trip Experience Leader.

Dinner: A Welcome Dinner at a local restaurant.

Evening: If you want to continue exploring the city this evening, perhaps you'll head back to St. Mark's Square to sip a glass of *vino* and revel in the harmonies of café orchestras.

Day 4 Venice • Explore Burano and Murano

- Destination: Venice
- Included Meals: Breakfast
- Accommodations: Palazzo Barocci or similar

Activity Note: You will take a water taxi ride today to reach Burano and Murano. Agility will be required to board these small motorboats.

Breakfast: At the hotel.

Morning: Board a private boat and ride to the island of Burano. Upon arrival, we'll set off on a walking tour of this vibrant fishing village. Unlike the city center, which is bustling with visitors from around the world, colorful Burano maintains a more relaxed, local feel. During your discovery walk, which will take you past fishermen's cottages in a kaleidoscope of colors, you'll learn about the island's famed lace-making traditions. You may even spot local ladies weaving lace outside their homes.

Lunch: On your own. Since you're visiting an island, this is another good opportunity to enjoy some of the local seafood, from grilled fish to fresh prawns.

Afternoon: Board the boat bound for neighboring Murano, which is famous for its glass-making industry. After exploring with our Trip Experience Leader, we'll return to our hotel and enjoy time for independent discoveries.

Dinner: On your own. Your Trip Experience Leader can offer dining suggestions.

Evening: Enjoy the evening as you please in this romantic Italian city.

Day 5 Gondola ride • Embark ship •

Captain's Welcome Dinner

- Destination: Venice
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner
- Accommodations: M/V *Artemis* or M/V *Athena*

Activity Note: You will take a water taxi ride today. Agility will be required to board the vessel. When embarking your small ship this afternoon, keep in mind that the gangplank may be steep, and elevators are not available onboard. This Small Ship Adventure covers more than 800 miles, and includes long stretches of sailing, where rough sea conditions are possible. Depending on how your small group is divided, the order of today's activities may vary.

Breakfast: At the hotel.

Morning: This morning you're free to explore Venice on your own. Or, you can join your Trip Experience Leader for a discovery walk along the city's narrow streets to visit a few of the typical Venetian shops and engage with some of the artisans.

Then, walk to the Gondola Station, where we'll embark on a scenic boat ride along the city's picturesque canals by gondola, the iconic symbol of Venice.

Lunch: At a local restaurant.

Afternoon: We'll transfer to the cruise terminal, where we'll meet our small ship, our home for the next eleven nights. The ship is staffed by a friendly, English-speaking crew who will be eager to welcome you aboard and show you to your room. Your Captain will conduct a safety briefing and an introduction to the ship's staff. At the conclusion, you'll have time to get acquainted with the ship's common areas.

Later this afternoon, make your way to the lounge for the first in a series of nightly Port Talks. These informative discussions, led by your Trip Experience Leader, will give you an overview of the following day's itinerary, and prepare you for the destination ahead.

Dinner: A Captain's Welcome Dinner onboard the ship. While the dress code at mealtimes is always relaxed and smart casual, some travelers opt to wear a day dress or slacks to the Captain's Welcome Dinner.

Evening: Tonight, our small ship will set sail for Ravenna. You may choose to relax in the lounge, or watch from the Sun Deck as Venice retreats into the distance.

Day 6 Porto Corsini • Explore Ravenna • Balera music performance

- Destination: Ravenna
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner
- Accommodations: M/V *Artemis* or M/V *Athena*

Breakfast: Onboard the ship.

Morning: After our ship docks this morning, we'll drive to Ravenna where we'll set off on a walking tour with a local guide.

Throughout most of the Renaissance and Middle Ages, Ravenna was a papal city, and its architecture and expansive mosaic work reflect that early Christian influence. Today, this city has been given UNESCO World Heritage status. As we walk, you'll witness the city's highlights, including the tomb of writer Dante, as well as the colorful mosaics adorning both the 1,400-year-old Basilica di San Vitale and the Mausoleo Galla Placidia. The tour concludes in bustling Piazza del Popolo.

Lunch: At a local restaurant in Ravenna.

Afternoon: After lunch, a shuttle bus will be available for travelers who wish to return to the ship. Or, you may choose to spend the afternoon exploring Ravenna at your own pace. Strolling along the unassuming city streets, you'll encounter open shops, intimate cafés tucked into alleyways, and locals zipping past on bicycles. If the morning has whetted your appetite for more mosaics, seek out the collection at Battistero degli Ariani. You can also examine an array of artistic achievements spanning the centuries at the Mar, the city's fine arts museum.

Before dinner, gather with your fellow travelers in the lounge for your nightly Port Talk.

Dinner: Onboard the ship.

Evening: After dinner, a local performance group will treat you to traditional *balera* music in the lounge. Your ship sets sail for Pesaro late tonight.

Day 7 Pesaro • Explore the Republic of San Marino

- Destination: San Marino
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner
- Accommodations: M/V *Artemis* or M/V *Athena*

Activity Note: San Marino is an independent republic, so you will need to bring your passport for your morning tour.

Breakfast: Onboard the ship.

Morning: Our small ship will dock in Pesaro, a small port designated as a UNESCO World Heritage Site and mainly used for fishing vessels and sail boats. From here, we'll transfer by bus to the independent republic of San Marino, one of the world's smallest states. Life here is essentially the same as life in Pesaro and the people of San Marino still identify as Italian, but perhaps with an additional bit of hometown

pride. Upon arrival, you'll head to the heart of Old Town by funicular (cable car) where a local guide will welcome you to town.

After meeting our guide, begin with a discovery walk along the cobbled, sloping streets. Explore the labyrinth of ancient lanes and discover the small shops weaving through the city. We may stroll by the 17th-century Ducal Palace, adorned with an ancient fountain, and explore the Piazza del Popolo located in the center of town. As we stroll, you'll begin to understand why this small republic has been recognized as a UNESCO World Heritage Site. After the tour concludes, enjoy some free time to explore further. For a small fee (about 5 Euros), you can get your passport stamped—your Trip Experience Leader will be happy to show you where to go.

Lunch: At a local restaurant in San Marino.

Afternoon: After lunch, we'll transfer back to the ship. Enjoy some free time onboard to relax. Perhaps you'll utilize the books and games stocked in the lounge.

Or, take advantage of the optional shuttle between your small ship and the Pesaro town center. You have the option to explore Pesaro on your own or join your Trip Experience Leader for an elective activity.

Later on, your Trip Experience Leader will deliver a Port Talk about your next destination.

Dinner: Onboard the ship.

Evening: Enjoy time at leisure on your ship. Perhaps you'll grab a drink with your fellow travelers at the bar or relax in your cabin. Your ship will remain docked in Pesaro overnight.

Day 8 *A Day in the Life* of an Ortona farmstead

- Destination: Ortona
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner
- Accommodations: M/V *Artemis* or M/V *Athena*

Breakfast: Onboard the ship.

Morning: After your small ship docks in Ortona, we'll set out to experience *A Day in the Life* of an Ortona farmstead. Below is a description of one of the three family-owned farms you may visit today.

When we arrive, the owner will be waiting to welcome us to their family's dairy farm. We'll accompany them during a typical day, touring the property and help out with the chores. Later, we'll help prepare lunch with some of the fresh vegetables grown at the farm.

Lunch: We'll dine with our host and their family at the farm.

Afternoon: Following lunch, we'll help the family clean up before continuing with our tour of the facilities and getting to know our gracious hosts. Then, we'll thank our hosts and transfer back to our ship. After a couple hours of free time, your Trip Experience Leader will deliver a Port Talk.

Dinner: Onboard the ship.

Evening: Enjoy onboard entertainment this evening provided by local musicians and a folk dance troupe.

Day 9 Explore Tremiti Islands

- Destination: Tremiti Islands
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner
- Accommodations: M/V *Artemis* or M/V *Athena*

Activity Note: To reach the Tremiti Islands, you will need to embark and disembark shuttle boats without the use of gangplanks or handrails. The tour includes a mile and a half of walking over uneven, hilly terrain, and lasts approximately two hours. Hats, walking sticks, walking shoes, and sunscreen are advised.

Breakfast: Onboard the ship.

Morning: Your ship will either anchor near or dock in San Nicola, depending on the weather. If you anchor, a small boat will be available to take you to the shore. This is one of the scenic Tremiti Islands you'll explore today.

After disembarking this morning, a local guide will meet you outside, and you'll begin your walking tour. A brief stroll up the island's slopes and along its ancient fortifications will lead to the hilltop abbey of Saint Mary of the Sea, where you'll enjoy sweeping views of the Adriatic before walking back down the hill. You'll then have free time to explore the island's green hills and coastlines on your own.

Next, we'll walk to the pier to set off on a scenic boat ride around the turquoise waters of San Domino and San Nicola Islands. We'll disembark on San Domino Island for a discovery walk with your Trip Experience Leader. During this walk we'll explore along the woods and sandy coastlines that some Italians visit in the summertime. We'll pass through the village and see a small school and city hall, but notice that this island is fairly small and quiet despite its scenic appeal.

Lunch: At a local restaurant.

Afternoon: After lunch, take advantage of some free time in San Domino.

All travelers will be invited to the lounge later this afternoon for a Port Talk.

Dinner: Onboard the ship.

Evening: Yours to do as you please—you may share your experiences with your fellow travelers in the lounge, or retire early after a discovery-filled day. Your ship sets sail for Monopoli late tonight.

Day 10 Explore Alberobello • Discussion about environmental issues in Puglia • Home-Hosted Dinner

- Destination: Monopoli
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner
- Accommodations: M/V *Artemis* or M/V *Athena*

Activity Note: Depending on how your small group is split up for your **Home-Hosted Dinner**, you may experience today's activities on Day 11. Your Trip Experience Leader will have your specific schedule available for you on the day.

Breakfast: Onboard in the ship's dining room.

Morning: Your small ship docks in Monopoli early this morning. After breakfast, we'll make a short drive to Alberobello for a walking tour of the area. During our explorations, we'll witness the conical-roofed homes, or *trulli*, that line the hilly streets of this UNESCO World Heritage Site and have the opportunity to ask our Trip Experience Leader any questions we have about this unique community.

Then, we'll meet with a *Mastro Trullaro* or "Master of Trulli," a high-ranking community figure who carries on the knowledge of the distinctive construction of *trulli* huts. Historically, these structures were built

using dry stone masonry, meaning without the adhesive power of mortar or cement. Maintenance on the huts is, therefore, highly specialized, requiring skilled carpentry that is passed down through generations. This technique cannot be learned in trade schools—the method is purely preserved in the mind of the Mastro Trullaro and his or her apprentices.

After some free time to explore more of Alberobello on your own, we'll return to Monopoli.

Lunch: Onboard in the ship's dining room.

Afternoon: We'll gather for an enlightening discussion about environmental issues affecting Puglia, a region that produces about 15 percent of the world's virgin olive oil, an industry worth more than \$2 billion annually. To prevent the further spread of a plant bacterium that has been devastating local olive groves, farmers have been forced to uproot and burn many of their trees, and are looking for a more sustainable alternative to prevent them from losing their livelihood.

Dinner: We'll divide into smaller groups to enjoy a special **Home-Hosted Dinner**. During your visit, you might ask your family about Monopoli's agricultural traditions or find out more about the professional opportunities available to people living in this remote corner of Italy. If your hosts have children, perhaps you'll inquire about the Italian school system. Italy also has the second-oldest population in the world (after Japan); if a grandmother or grandfather joins you for lunch, you might discuss the country's tight-knit family structure. Whatever questions you have about life in eastern Italy, this is your opportunity to ask. Italians are known for their conviviality, and your hosts will be eager to share their culture with you.

Evening: Free to do as you please—perhaps you'll enjoy a complimentary beverage at the bar.

Day 11 Monopoli • Optional Matera Troglodyte City tour

- Destination: Monopoli
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner
- Accommodations: M/V *Artemis* or M/V *Athena*

Breakfast: Onboard in the ship's dining room.

Morning: You are free to explore Monopoli as you please today. Your Trip Experience Leader will provide you with a list of activities to pursue. Perhaps you'll head to Lido Le Macchie beach to catch some sun along the aqua coastline or explore the historic Roman Catholic cathedral and peruse the artifacts kept there.

Or, join our optional Matera Troglodyte City tour to discover one of the oldest continuously inhabited cities in the world—and a modern-day European capital of culture. Drive to Matera—a UNESCO World Heritage Site—and set off on a tour with a local guide to learn about the stone carving techniques that the Sassi people used to chisel the town into the surrounding rock. Go back in time as you walk past quarries, ravines, and sculptured gardens toward a network of small cave churches, crypts, and fortifications. You may see the churches of San Pietro Barisano and Santa Maria de Idris, which overlooks scenic Sasso Caveoso valley. You'll want to keep an eye out for medieval paintings executed in fresco on many of the church walls.

Lunch: Travelers who remained in Monopoli today will enjoy lunch in the ship's dining room. If you opted for the optional tour, you'll enjoy an authentic Italian lunch in a local restaurant in Matera.

Afternoon: If you remained in Monopoli today, the balance of the day is yours to explore independently, or to relax onboard. Travelers who journeyed to Matera will return to the ship in the late afternoon.

Later on, we'll have our nightly Port Talk.

Dinner: Onboard in the ship's dining room.

Evening: Following dinner, make your way to the lounge to enjoy a live performance of traditional Italian music. The ship begins cruising toward Otranto late this evening.

Day 12 Explore Otranto • Afternoon at sea

- Destination: Otranto
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner
- Accommodations: M/V Artemis or M/V Athena

Activity Note: Setting sail this afternoon, your ship will pass by Italy's easternmost point, where the Adriatic and Ionian seas converge. Out on the open waters, your ship will slip between Italy and Greece bound for Sicily—the southernmost destination on the Italian portion of your adventure. You'll likely feel the ship roll as it completes its 150-mile course tonight.

Breakfast: Onboard in the ship's dining room.

Morning: Your ship arrives in the UNESCO World Heritage Site of Otranto, a port city in the far eastern corner of Italy's boot heel. After breakfast, we'll head into the heart of the city for a walking tour with a local guide. Once a strategic port during Roman times, today Otranto is known for its white-sand beaches, famed Aragonese Castle, and eleventh-century Romanesque cathedral.

You'll have free time after your tour to do as you please. You may choose to continue to explore Otranto, or you may visit the Constantine association with your Trip

Experience Leader. This program is dedicated to helping marginalized women by providing them with work. Their mission is to improve the "knowledge and competency" of women in the community by teaching them to weave and create handmade textiles. You'll also see some of the instruments used for weaving including "jaw harps" and "double flutes," and learn how they are used.

Lunch: Onboard in the ship's dining room.

Afternoon: Your ship sets sail for Siracusa, Sicily. You're welcome to visit the Sun Deck to watch as the mainland fades into the distance.

Dinner: Onboard in the ship's dining room.

Evening: Free to do as you please. Your ship will cruise toward Sicily throughout the night tonight.

Day 13 Morning at sea • Explore Siracusa, Sicily • Sicilian folk music performance

- Destination: Siracusa
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner
- Accommodations: M/V Artemis or M/V Athena

Breakfast: Onboard in the ship's dining room.

Morning: Free to do as you please as your ship continues cruising toward Siracusa. Perhaps you'll choose to relax in the window-lined lounge as Sicily comes into view. Later this morning, you'll join your Trip Experience Leader and fellow travelers for an onboard conversation about the economy, unemployment, and the mafia in Southern Italy.

Lunch: Onboard in the ship's dining room.

Afternoon: You'll disembark in Siracusa and meet with a local guide for a walking tour of its Old Town, Ortigia. Of all the Greek cities of antiquity that flourished outside of Greece,

Siracusa was the Mediterranean's most important. In the heyday of its power, it dared to take on both Carthage and Rome, and its wealth and size were unmatched by any other city in the ancient world. It is said that Siracusa is the birthplace of comedy in Greek theater, and was the only school of classical drama outside of Athens.

Today this UNESCO World Heritage Site serves as one of Europe's richest historical sites and a photographer's haven, complete with white limestone buildings, narrow winding streets, and rich architectural details—among them, Baroque structures and a cathedral fashioned out of an ancient Greek temple. Afterwards, you will have time on your own to explore your own interests. You may choose to continue walking around the town with your Trip Experience Leader, or maybe you'll take advantage of the bikes available on your ship and take a leisurely ride to the beach. Return to your ship by foot, which is docked conveniently in the heart of this destination.

Later on, join your Trip Experience Leader for a Port Talk before dinner.

Dinner: Onboard in the ship's dining room. As you dine, a Sicilian folk music group will come aboard to play traditional tunes in the lounge—complete with authentic local instruments.

Evening: At leisure. Feel free to enjoy a nightcap at the bar. Your ship begins cruising toward Malta later tonight.

Day 14 Siracusa • Visit the Roman amphitheater • Visit Siracusa War Cemetery

- Destination: Siracusa
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner
- Accommodations: M/V *Artemis* or M/V *Athena*

Breakfast: Onboard in the ship's dining room.

Morning: Our first destination of the day is the Roman amphitheater in Siracusa. Built between the fourth and third centuries BC, this amphitheater was once the setting for gladiator fights and open-air performances. Today, it's the third largest amphitheater in all of Italy and one of the best preserved. We'll take a 2-hour guided tour, giving us ample opportunity to admire the excavated tiered seats, which were carved out of rock, and to learn about the Romans' influence here in Siracusa.

Next, we'll visit the Basilica of Santa Lucia al Sepolcro. Santa Lucia is the patron saint of Siracusa, and it was at this site that she was martyred by the Romans in 304 AD. The church is best-known for a Caravaggio painting above the altar which depicts her death.

Lunch: Onboard in the ship's dining room.

Afternoon: We'll board our bus once again and drive to the Siracusa War Cemetery. The Cemetery is the final resting place of the men who lost their lives in the landings in Sicily on July 10, 1943, as part of the early stages of the campaign to capture the island (Operation Husky). During our visit, we'll have the chance to pay our respect to the fallen soldiers and learn more about their contributions to World War II.

We'll have an enlightening onboard discussion about the Allied landings during World War II before your nightly Port Talk.

Dinner: Onboard in the ship's dining room.

Evening: At leisure. Feel free to enjoy a nightcap at the bar. Your ship begins cruising toward Malta late tonight.

Day 15 Valletta, Malta • Discussion on anti-corruption activism in Malta • Captain's Farewell Dinner

- Destination: Valletta
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner
- Accommodations: M/V *Artemis* or M/V *Athena*

Activity Note: The visit to St John's Cathedral cannot be guaranteed when visiting on a Sunday or during Holy Festivities.

Breakfast: Onboard in the ship's dining room.

Morning: Your ship docks in Valletta, Malta's walled capital city, this morning.

Join your small group for a guided walking tour of the city center, a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Highlights include a visit to the ornately decorated St. John's Co-Cathedral (home to a number of Caravaggio paintings), the Barracca Gardens, as well as insights into the city's mysterious founders: the Sovereign Military Order of Malta. The world's oldest surviving chivalric order, these Knights of Malta founded the city more than 500 years ago and continue to serve the community today. Without the protection of the Knights, Malta's history—and in fact, Europe's history—would be very different than it is today.

Lunch: Onboard in the ship's dining room. Or, you may choose to remain in Valletta and seek out lunch on your own. Your Trip Experience Leader will be happy to provide recommendations.

Afternoon: We'll gather in the ship's lounge to discuss 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.

The remainder of the afternoon is on your own—perhaps you'll visit the Lascaris War Room, where Maltese military leaders planned their defense of the island during World War II. Later on, join the nightly Port Talk.

Dinner: Convene in the dining room for your Captain's Farewell Dinner. Like the Welcome Dinner at the beginning of your adventure, this special reception features more elaborate dishes and a convivial atmosphere—a fitting way to conclude your time onboard.

Evening: Relax onboard tonight. Perhaps you'll head to the top deck for star gazing.

Day 16 Disembark ship • Explore Mdina

- Destination: Valletta
- Included Meals: Breakfast
- Accommodations: Grand Hotel Excelsior or similar

Breakfast: Onboard in the ship's dining room.

Morning: Disembark your small ship and take a short drive to Mdina. Surrounded by thick, imposing walls, the limited access allowed to traffic gives Mdina its nickname—the “Silent City”—and its UNESCO World Heritage distinction. During your walking tour with a local guide this morning, you’ll stroll along winding streets lined with buildings of characteristic yellow limestone. Admire palaces now serving as private homes, and see Mdina’s Baroque cathedral anchoring a large square. With a history that can be traced back 4,000 years, an exploration of Mdina is like a voyage through time—with layers of cultural and religious treasures waiting to be discovered.

We’ll next head to Rabat, a village just on Malta’s doorstep. We’ll head to a local bakery specializing in *pastizzi*—a local favorite made of flaky layers of puff pastry. While here, we’ll interact with locals and sample this specialty. After our tour wraps up, you’ll enjoy free time to explore independently. Perhaps you’ll venture underground to explore St. Paul’s Catacombs—a warren of ancient Roman tombs.

Lunch: On your own in Mdina. Your Trip Experience Leader will be happy to provide suggestions for where to find the best local fare.

Afternoon: After checking in to our hotel, enjoy some free time to continue exploring Mdina on your own. If you’d like, join your Trip Experience Leader on an orientation walk later this afternoon.

Dinner: On your own—there are many restaurant options just steps from your hotel. Ask your Trip Experience Leader to suggest his or her favorites during your orientation walk. Perhaps you’ll seek out a hearty slice of *timpana*, a Maltese-style lasagna made with macaroni, tomato sauce, corned beef, and cheese.

Evening: Free to explore.

Day 17 Explore Hagar Qim • Explore Three Cities

- Destination: Valletta
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Dinner
- Accommodations: Grand Hotel Excelsior or similar

Breakfast: At the hotel.

Morning: Set out by bus for Hagar Qim, a UNESCO World Heritage Site whose name means “free-standing boulders” and who boasts remains older than Stonehenge and the Pyramids. You’ll explore the temple ruins with a local guide. Then, travel overland to the area known as the “Three Cities” for the three historic fortified towns of Cospicua, Senglea, and Vittoriosa. On a discovery walk with your Trip Experience Leader, you’ll explore Vittoriosa, which dates back to the time of the Phoenicians. This ancient city was where the Knights of St. John made their headquarters before Valletta was built.

Lunch: On your own—your Trip Experience Leader can recommend options that suit your taste.

Afternoon: You’ll have some free time for independent discoveries after your tour. Perhaps you’ll climb to the top of Fort St. Angelo for sweeping views of the bay—and of Valletta just on the other side. Later, enjoy a few hours of time to relax and enjoy your hotel’s amenities, or begin packing for your journey home (or, if you’re taking our post-trip extension, to Rome) tomorrow.

Dinner: Cap off your adventure with a seated dinner at your hotel. You may reminisce about your discoveries over the past few weeks as you enjoy local and familiar options.

Evening: On your own—you are free to return to your room to rest before your return flight home tomorrow, or join fellow travelers in the lobby for a nightcap.

Day 18 Return to U.S.

- Included Meals: Breakfast

Breakfast: At the hotel.

Morning: Transfer to the airport for your return flight home.

OPTIONAL TOURS

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

Matera Troglodyte City

(Day 11 \$165 per person)

Embark on a journey back in time to the Sassi di Matera, a collection of ancient troglodyte cave dwellings believed to be one of the first human settlements in Italy, in this UNESCO World Heritage Site. You'll get a glimpse of what life was like during the Stone Age all the way through the 20th century. After exploring the homes and nearby cave church, enjoy lunch at a local restaurant before returning to Monopoli.

PRE-TRIP

Ljubljana & Trieste: World War II to the Present

INCLUDED IN YOUR PRICE

- » 5 nights accommodation
- » 7 meals: 5 breakfasts, 1 lunch, and 1 dinner
- » 4 guided tours with personal headsets:
Ljubljana • Postojna Caves • Trieste • Collio
Wine Country
- » Services of our local Trip Experience Leader
- » Gratuities for local guides and
motorcoach drivers
- » All transfers

PRE-TRIP EXTENSION ITINERARY

With cafe-lined streets in its Old Town and quaint bridges spanning its namesake river, Ljubljana, Slovenia, is reminiscent of the timeless cities of Old Europe. It boasts a modern touch as well—much of the city was rebuilt after an earthquake at the end of the 19th century. Then find inspiration where James Joyce once did in Trieste, Italy—where Italian, Slovenian, Croatian, and Austrian influences combine in a flourish of central European elegance.

Day 1 Depart U.S.

Depart the U.S. this evening for Ljubljana, Slovenia.

Day 2 Ljubljana, Slovenia

- Destination: Ljubljana
- Accommodations: Mrak Hotel Ljubljana or similar

Morning/Afternoon: Arrive in Ljubljana, Slovenia today. A representative will meet you at the airport and assist you with the transfer to your hotel.

Upon arrival, you'll be welcomed by your Trip Experience Leader, where you'll check in and receive your room assignment. You may rest or take a short orientation walk of the area with your Trip Experience Leader.

Dinner: On your own this evening. Ask your Trip Experience Leader for recommendations close to your hotel.

Evening: On your own. Enjoy the amenities of your hotel or set out to explore Slovenia's capital city.

Day 3 Explore Ljubljana

- Destination: Ljubljana
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Dinner
- Accommodations: Mrak Hotel Ljubljana or similar

Breakfast: At the hotel.

Morning: Meet your Trip Experience Leader in the lobby for a Welcome Briefing.

Then, we'll depart our hotel to discover this university town on today's walking tour, led by your Trip Experience Leader. As you walk,

you'll witness the array of outdoor coffee shops and art museums that line the Ljubljanica River, which divides the city in two. In fact, your walk will take you to the pier where you'll board a vessel and enjoy a scenic boat ride on this curved body of water.

Lunch: On your own. Perhaps you'll indulge in some Slovenian prosciutto, a popular snack in this area.

Afternoon: The afternoon is free for independent discoveries. Perhaps you'll visit the National Museum of Slovenia, which is an elaborate display of this country's varied history.

Dinner: Enjoy an included Welcome Dinner.

Evening: On your own. Perhaps you'll venture out to see the city illuminated at night, or return to the hotel to rest up for tomorrow's discoveries.

Day 4 Explore Postojna Caves • Trieste, Italy

- Destination: Trieste
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch
- Accommodations: NH Trieste or similar

Breakfast: At the hotel.

Morning: Today you'll meet your Trip Experience Leader in the lobby to check out of your hotel. Then, set off by bus to the fascinating Postojna Caves, underground chambers with names like Upturned Ship, Gothic Hall, and Brilliant. You'll experience these chambers during a walking tour led by your Trip Experience Leader. You'll then have some time to explore the caverns on your own.

Lunch: At the self-service restaurant at the caves.

Afternoon: Following lunch, we'll transfer to Trieste, Italy, arriving at your hotel and checking in.

Long serving as a crossroads of cultures, Trieste was once a hub of art and commerce. But if you look on a map of Italy, you may not find it immediately. As the last slip of land in Italy's north-easternmost corner, this city is tucked away and often overlooked by tourists, but has served as a beloved locale for artists, writers, and musicians for centuries. Later, you may choose to take an orientation walk of the area around your hotel with your Trip Experience Leader.

Dinner: On your own this evening. Trieste is teeming with traditional pizzerias, so perhaps you'll ask your Trip Experience Leader where to find the best one.

Evening: The evening is free for you to make your own discoveries in Trieste. Perhaps you'll catch a show at the Teatro Lirico Giuseppe Verdi Opera House, one of the city's proudest centers of entertainment.

Day 5 Explore Trieste, Italy • *Foiba Massacres* conversation

- Destination: Trieste
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch
- Accommodations: NH Trieste or similar

Breakfast: At the hotel.

Morning: Meet your Trip Experience Leader in the lobby this morning. You'll take a short walk to your first stop today, where you'll take a sobering look into World War II-era history at Risiera di San Sabba. This is a rice factory-turned-concentration camp at which Nazis killed as many as 3,000 political prisoners, and where tens of thousands of Jews were processed for transfer to Auschwitz.

Then, continue on to discover Trieste, a crossroad for cultures and perennial gathering spot for artists and thinkers (James Joyce lived here for 15 years), during an included walking tour.

Lunch: At a local restaurant.

Afternoon: You're free to make your own discoveries in Trieste today. Maybe you'll admire views of the city from the Grand Canal. Later at your hotel, you'll learn more about Trieste's painful past from a local expert during a conversation about the foiba massacres. Following World War II, Yugoslav partisans killed thousands of Italians on the Istrian peninsula by throwing them into deep sinkholes known as *foiba*. For decades, these crimes were largely ignored by Italy and its neighbors in favor of maintaining good relations in the region.

Dinner: On your own. Ask your Trip Experience Leader for recommendations. Perhaps you'll set out for a bowl of *Jota*, a hearty Istrian stew made of beans, potatoes, and sauerkraut.

Evening: The balance of the evening is yours. Perhaps you'll join your fellow travelers at the hotel bar for a drink.

Day 6 Trieste • Optional Villages of Istria tour

- Destination: Trieste
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Dinner
- Accommodations: NH Trieste or similar

Activity Note: Please be sure to bring your passport with you today if you plan on taking the optional tour to Croatia.

Breakfast: At the hotel.

Morning: Spend the day at your leisure in Trieste. Or, join us on our optional *Villages of Istria* tour. You'll drive to Motovun Village in

Croatia, where you'll embark on a discovery walk with your Trip Experience Leader and hike up to an antiquated village to explore the artisanal workshops there. Many of the artists here make their living selling handicraft goods, which you can converse with them about with the help of your Trip Experience Leader.

Lunch: If you choose to stay in Trieste, lunch is on your own today.

If you take the optional tour, you'll have lunch at a family-owned delicatessen and truffle farm in the center of town. You'll also tour the family's factory and learn about their home-grown truffles, asking them any questions you may have about the truffle business.

Afternoon: If you take the optional tour, you'll next visit the artist colony of Grozjan. You'll take a brief discovery walk with your Trip Experience Leader and learn about the history of this community, admiring the works of Croatian artists as you pass. After some free time, you'll make the transfer back to Trieste.

Dinner: At a local restaurant.

Evening: Head out for last-minute discoveries in Trieste tonight, or rest up for your departure to Venice tomorrow.

Day 7 Trieste • Winery visit • Venice • Join main trip

- Destination: Venice
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch

Activity Note: Today we will transfer to Trieste by bus for a total of 3.5 hours, stopping along the way for a visit to a family-owned winery.

Breakfast: At the hotel.

Morning: Depart Trieste this morning to join the main trip.

En route, we'll turn onto the *Strada del Vino* (Wine Road), and follow it into the Collio region of Italy. Known for its exceptional white wines, Collio also has another, less romantic claim to fame: Following World War I and the dissolution of the Austrian Empire, the region was divided between Italy and Slovenia. Families were split overnight by the arbitrary boarder, and remained so until the end of the Cold War.

You'll stop and meet the owners of a family-run vineyard, where you'll take a cellar tour and enjoy a wine tasting.

Lunch: You'll enjoy wine and conversation with the family over a light lunch of cheeses, cured meats, fresh bread, and more.

Afternoon: After our visit, you'll board your bus and continue to Venice to begin your *Undiscovered Adriatic: Eastern Italy, Venice, Puglia & Malta* Small Ship Adventure.

OPTIONAL TOUR

Villages of Istria

(Day 6 \$175 per person)

Journey to the Croatian villages of Motovun and Groznjan, each known for their handcrafts. Explore the artisanal workshops of Motovun—a picturesque hilltop town—during a discovery walk. While here, you'll also learn about the city's truffle tradition—including how the prized mushroom is hunted and the best way to prepare it. Then, after an included lunch featuring the fame food, discover the charming artist colony of Groznjan.

YOUR MEDITERRANEAN SMALL SHIP

Small Ship Adventures aboard our privately owned, award-winning, 50-passenger small ships

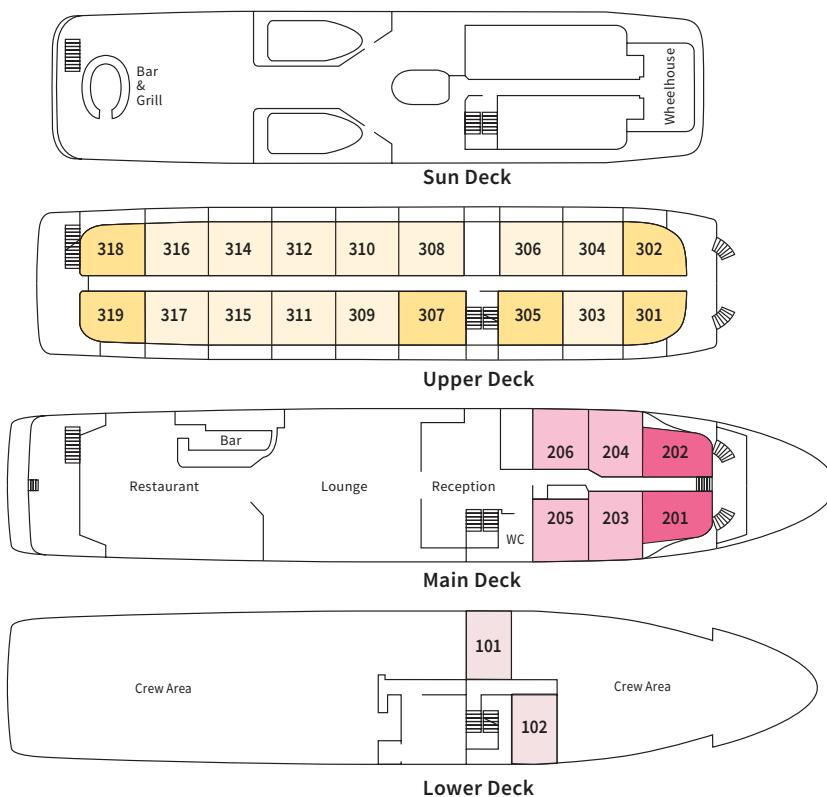
During your travels in the Mediterranean—including the Aegean and Adriatic seas and French and Italian Rivieras—you'll be cruising aboard one of our 50-passenger small ships, rated excellent by 96% of travelers. The M/V *Athena*, M/V *Artemis*, and M/V *Arethusa* were designed and built to carry just two groups of 20-25 (average of 22) travelers, each with its own local Trip Experience Leader. These ships are the perfect size to navigate the islands and shores of the Mediterranean—and then slip into the smaller ports and harbors for the night, well away from the larger cruise ships.



SHIPBOARD FEATURES

- **Restaurant with single, open seating:** Savor regionally-inspired dishes or American favorites during all meals.
- **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.
- **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 on the Sun Deck—perhaps with a cocktail from the outdoor bar.
- **English-speaking crew:** Enjoy dedicated attention from our international staff throughout your voyage. Plus, all shipboard announcements are made in English for your convenience.

MEDITERRANEAN SMALL SHIPS



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 CATEGORIES

	A	Cabin with private balcony – 150-170 sq. ft.
	B	Cabin with private balcony – 150-170 sq. ft.
	C	Cabin with portholes – 160 sq. ft.
	D	Cabin with portholes – 160 sq. ft.
	S	Single cabin with portholes – 140 sq. ft.

Registry: Malta

Length: 193 ft.

Beam: 35 ft.

Draft: 10 ft.

Cabin Size: 150-170 sq. ft., with 2 single cabins of 140 sq. ft.

Number of Cabins: 26

Passenger Capacity: 50

Built: 2007

International crew: 21

Passenger Decks: 3

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

Stairs, no elevator

CABIN FEATURES

- 24 double-occupancy cabins from 150-170 sq. ft.; 2 single-occupancy cabins at 140 sq. ft.
- All outside-facing with either portholes or a balcony
- Two single beds (convertible to one full); one single bed in single-occupancy cabins
- Wireless Internet access, closet, bed-side tables with lamps, desk with mirror, flat-screen TV, telephone, safe, mini-refrigerator, individually controlled air-conditioning, and dual electrical outlets
- Private bath with shower, hair dryer, and toiletries



Cabin on the Upper Deck of the M/V Athena

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 3 blank passport pages.
- **Optional extension to Trieste and Ljubljana:** No additional pages needed.

You may want an additional blank page for a souvenir stamp in San Marino on the main trip.

Entry Requirements

We'll provide 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 (Italy, Slovenia, Malta):** 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 – we 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

- 17 days, with one 3-night hotel stay in Venice, one 2-night hotel stay in Malta, and 11 nights aboard a 50-passenger small ship.

PHYSICAL REQUIREMENTS

- Walk 3-5 miles unassisted and participate in 6-8 hours of physical activities each day, including stairs
- Our activities may include up to two hours of walking on uneven surfaces
- Good agility, balance, and strength needed for boarding motorboats and 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 50-passenger small ship.
- The 50-passenger small ship does not have an elevator onboard
- 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 walking surfaces, including unpaved paths, hills, stairs, and cobblestones, which can be slick in wet or colder conditions
- Travel by 50-passenger small ship, 30-seat coach, and local tender

CLIMATE

- Daytime temperatures range from 58–98°F during cruising season; during the summer months (July–September), temperatures typically range from 77–90°F but can sometimes exceed 100°F for a week or longer

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.

Medications for This Trip

When you visit your doctor, we suggest that you get a prescription for an antibiotic medication for gastrointestinal illness. Our staff do not carry prescription medications of any kind, and a written prescription is required to obtain an antibiotic in Europe.

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 aboard ship and in the countries you visit is perfectly safe for drinking.
- Bottled water is usually for sale in hotels, cafés, food shops, and restaurants.

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.
- **You will not be able to pay with U.S. dollars on this trip;** you will need euros 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.

Please note that many banks in Europe will only exchange money for their own customers. Never exchange money on the street. All exchange methods involve fees, which may be built into the conversion rate; ask beforehand.

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 expectation for ATMs, they will be listed below.

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.

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.

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 could 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.) and is calculated in Euros. This bill is payable at the front desk by cash or credit/debit card only. For cash, we accept only Euros. For credit/debit cards, we accept MasterCard and Visa. Other forms of payment, such as checks, Discover, and 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. This bill is paid with your Trip Experience Leader (they will have you fill out a form) 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:** In Italy, 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 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% to 10% for the server, depending on the quality of service. A tip of 5% can be appropriate in a café or a family-run trattoria, while 10% is more suitable at a restaurant. In Malta, 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 in local currency—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 Planner at www.oattravel.com/myplanner 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 Planner.

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 Planner at www.oattravel.com/myplanner).

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 can accept one.

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 and 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.

Italy: +39

Slovenia: +386

Malta: +356

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	
<p>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 for flights to Europe and other international flights.</p> <p>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.</p>	

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.

Your Luggage

- **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. To have a varied travel wardrobe, yet keep your luggage light, we recommend you select a color scheme and pack color-coordinated clothing items that can be mixed to create different outfits.
- **Consider clothing designed for travel, sports, or camping:** With modern fabrics, lightweight packing for comfort and protection through a wide range of weather is easy.
- **Bring 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.
- **Good walking shoes are critical.** This program features many included tours that follow steep, unpaved or cobbled routes; and even an average day of light sightseeing or shopping can put great demands on your feet. If you prefer more ankle support, take light hiking boots. In case you get caught in the rain, we suggest you bring an extra pair of walking shoes, and rain boots or galoshes. Aboard ship, you'll want non-slip shoes with rubber soles.

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.

- **Proper attire in churches:** To satisfy dress codes for Italian churches, men and women are requested to cover their arms and legs. No shorts above the knees or sleeveless garments please. Women wearing sleeveless blouses can cover their bare arms with a scarf. It's no longer necessary for women to cover their heads. Pantsuits are now acceptable in churches.

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 traveler's 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.

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

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

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

Home-Hosted Visits

It is customary, though not necessary, to return your hosts' generosity with a small gift. If you do bring a gift, we recommend that you bring something the whole family can enjoy, or something that represents your region, state, or hometown. Get creative and keep it small—peach jelly from Georgia, maple sugar candy from New England, orange blossom soap from California; something that can be used or used up is best. When choosing a gift, be certain to consider the local culture as well. For example, we do not recommend alcohol in Muslim countries because it is forbidden in Islam, and your hosts may be religious. Not all Grand Circle vacations include a home-hosted visit; please check your final itinerary before you depart.

Electricity Abroad

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

Voltage

Electricity at hotels in Italy, Slovenia, and Malta 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, there are both standard American plugs and Western European Type C 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 be visiting multiple countries 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.

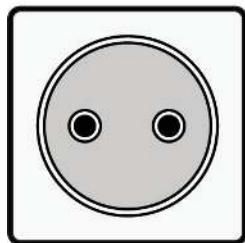
Different plug shapes are named by letters of the alphabet. Standard U.S. plugs are Type A and Type B. Here is the list of plugs for the countries on this trip:

Italy: C, L, or F

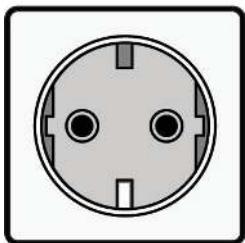
Malta: G

Slovenia: C and/or F

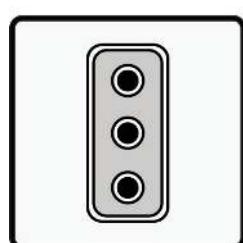
Type C



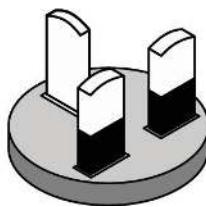
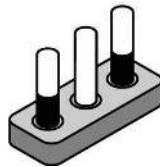
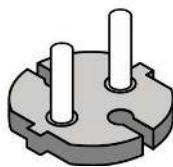
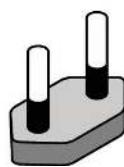
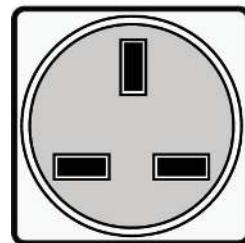
Type F



Type L



Type G



CLIMATE & AVERAGE TEMPERATURES

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.

Venice, Italy: Venice is situated in the flat, low-lying plains of northern Italy, where the climate features year-round rain and sunshine, hot summers, and surprisingly cold temperatures during the three winter months. Fog, frost, and snow are frequent in midwinter. Thunderstorms can pass through in autumn and spring, though they are the exception and not the rule. While “off-season” travel may involve stints of inclement weather, it rewards you with the chance to explore Venice’s museums, piazzas, and canals at a time when they are wonderfully free of the summer tourist crowds.

Ljubljana, Slovenia: Ljubljana, capital of Slovenia, is situated between the Alps and the Adriatic Sea; both the warmth of the sea and the cool air of the mountains influence its climate. Although coastal regions of the country have a Mediterranean climate with hot summers and mild winters, Ljubljana’s weather reflects a continental climate. The city’s summer days from June to September are moderately warm and dry, with comfortably cool evenings, while autumn brings mornings of sunshine occasionally interspersed with some showers or haze. Winter months, beginning in January, can be quite cold with temperatures dropping below freezing, while the warmth of spring brings refreshing breezes. This continental climate is changeable, and a day with some passing showers is to be expected during any two-week interval.

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	VALLETTA, MALTA			SIRACUSA, SICILY		
	Temp. High-Low	% Relative Humidity (am-pm)	Average # of Days with Rainfall	Temp. High-Low	% Relative Humidity (am-pm)	Monthly Rainfall (inches)
JAN	60 to 49	80	17	60 to 40	89 to 71	3.0
FEB	59 to 49	80	13	62 to 40	88 to 66	1.9
MAR	88 to 66	80	11	88 to 66	88 to 65	1.6
APR	88 to 71	75	10	88 to 71	83 to 62	1.5
MAY	95 to 75	75	6	95 to 75	75 to 57	0.9
JUN	98 to 85	70	3	98 to 85	67 to 51	0.4
JUL	112 to 90	65	1	112 to 90	62 to 46	0.2
AUG	112 to 90	70	3	112 to 90	66 to 48	0.6
SEP	98 to 85	75	8	98 to 85	77 to 56	1.4
OCT	76 to 64	80	11	78 to 56	86 to 65	3.9
NOV	69 to 57	80	15	69 to 48	89 to 68	2.2
DEC	62 to 52	80	19	62 to 43	90 to 73	3.4

MONTH	VENICE, ITALY			LJUBLJANA, SLOVENIA		
	Temp. High-Low	% Relative Humidity	Average # of Days with Rainfall	Temp. High-Low	% Relative Humidity (am-pm)	Monthly Rainfall (inches)
JAN	60 to 32	81	6	36 to 23	91 to 77	1.6
FEB	65 to 33	77	5	40 to 25	90 to 65	1.6
MAR	70 to 40	75	6	50 to 31	91 to 57	1.6
APR	81 to 48	75	8	57 to 37	88 to 52	2.0
MAY	95 to 63	73	6	67 to 45	86 to 52	2.0
JUN	100 to 75	74	9	73 to 52	87 to 55	2.0
JUL	108 to 80	71	6	77 to 55	87 to 53	2.0
AUG	108 to 80	72	6	77 to 55	90 to 53	2.0
SEP	100 to 75	75	6	69 to 49	95 to 60	2.4
OCT	81 to 51	77	7	58 to 41	95 to 68	2.8
NOV	65 to 42	79	6	44 to 31	93 to 78	2.8
DEC	60 to 33	81	6	37 to 26	92 to 84	2.0

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

M/V Athena, M/V Artemis & M/V Arethusa

Owned, operated, and staffed by us, these ships were designed exclusively for our travelers, and each features a similar layout. On the main deck, you'll find our reception area and the ship's library. For relaxation, the lounge/bar features inviting leather couches and soft chairs. Topside, a sun deck has classic wooden deck chairs for admiring the scenery. When it's time for meals, our large dining area at the stern features a single seating policy. While cruising, we'll enjoy daily breakfast and lunch buffets; sit-down dinners feature international and local specialties paired with regional wines.

Included features of your Small Ship

The Ship:

- Restaurant with single open seating
- Open Sun Deck for prime viewing
- Shipboard activities
- Smoke-free environment
- All shipboard announcements made in English
- Ice machine in the lobby
- Water fountains in the lobby

All Cabins:

- All outside cabins
- Layout of 150-163 square feet (24 doubles) and 120-135 square feet (2 singles)
- Private bath with shower, hair dryer
- Color TV with movies, and a bow camera for ship-front views
- Ample closet and dresser space
- Direct-dial telephone

An important word: While our ship features larger-than-usual cabins, please keep in mind that this ship is a coastal vessel, not large ocean cruise ships. Coastal cabins, in comparison, are relatively small, and ship amenities, in general, are comfortable but not lavish.

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 Planner at www.oattravel.com/myplanner. However, your cabin number may not be assigned until you arrive on board the ship. (This is normal procedure for ships in many parts of the world, including Europe.) 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

You'll enjoy fine cuisine and excellent views in your ship's dining room, featuring a warm decor of dark woods, rich carpeting, and white-linen and china table settings. Your ship's daily service includes breakfast and lunch buffets, and a more formal dinner. Our professional chefs will create unique menus for you that feature regional specialties. Included with both lunch and dinner are complimentary drinks; you'll be able to choose from house wine, draft beer, or a selection of soft drinks. In addition, a selection of other fine wines and beer is available for purchase, starting at approximately \$20–30 per wine 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.

Please note that if you bring your own alcohol aboard, it can only be consumed in the dining room as described above, or in your cabin. Consumption of alcohol purchased outside the ship is not permitted in the lounge or public areas. We also offer complimentary coffee and tea throughout the day, available in the lounge.

Open-table, single seating for all meals: Each meal is open seating—reservations of any kind are not accepted. Dinner has only one designated time for its open seating, announced each day aboard ship.

Dining times: Dining times for all meals may vary depending on the day's sightseeing and sailing schedule, but in general, meal times are as follows:

- Early riser breakfast: 7:00 –7:30 am
- Breakfast: 7:30–8:30 am
- Lunch: 1:00–2:00 pm
- Dinner: 7:00 pm

Special diets & celebrations: Special diets, such as low-cholesterol, vegetarian, or gluten-free, can be accommodated, as well as the recognition of an anniversary or birthday. Please call us to submit your request no later than 45 days prior to departure. Religious dietary regimens, such as kosher or halal meals, cannot be prepared aboard ship. Half-portion meals can be also be requested.

Dress code: The dining-room dress code is casual, though most travelers dress nicely for the Captain's Welcome Reception and Farewell Dinner.

Non-smoking policy: The entire dining room is non-smoking at all times.

Embarkation/Disembarkation

On the day of disembarkation, your cabin will no longer be available after breakfast. You may sit in the ship's lounge or on the Sun Deck until disembarkation.

Headsets

During your trip, complimentary headsets (often called "whisper receivers") will be provided on all of your 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, but not on the transfer day to/from the main trip.

Wireless Internet Access

Limited complimentary Wireless Internet service is available on board the ship. If you want to use the Wireless Internet connection you'll need to bring your own device (laptop/tablet/netbook) — ships do not rent or loan these devices. Shipboard access is subject to the challenges of travel: ship location, signal availability, and usage volume on board will affect connectivity and speed. The ship's Internet connection demands a strong cell phone signal, which is unavailable in many of the areas we visit, and connectivity can be limited. You can expect disruptions of both long and short duration. You may be able to take advantage of available shoreside Internet cafes, or hotel access if available.

Laundry and Linen Service

Laundry service is available for a fee. Please note that neither self-service laundry facilities nor dry cleaning services are available. Towels are changed daily, but only at your request. (We use the international signal that most green hotels have adopted—if you want a towel changed, leave it on the floor or in the shower. A towel on the rack or hung up indicates you'll reuse it.) Bed linens are not changed daily. Fresh bed linens are supplied at the start of every cruise, and if the cruise is longer than two weeks they will be changed every 14 days. For cruises less than two weeks long, you'll keep same the same bed linens for the duration.

Medical Care

Our entire fleet adheres to stringent European safety standards. Ships feature fully staffed reception desks for most of the day (from 7:00 AM to 10 PM) and each cabin is equipped with an emergency call button available to alert the Captain.

On Board Activities

During your cruise you'll enjoy exclusive Discovery Series events, including group activities that relate to the region, theme dinners, organized discussions, and talks on upcoming ports of call.

Recreational Facilities

These include a sun deck, lounge, library, bar and dance floor. The bar is open from 9:30 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). Prices are in Euros.

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.

Telephone Services

To make telephone calls from the ship, you will be charged on your shipboard account on the last day of the cruise. Phone calls are directly from your cabin and through satellite, and are charged per minute without regard to whether or not it is a local, international or Calling Card based call. We advise you to use it only for an emergency, as this is a satellite connection and a very expensive service (for example, calls will cost about \$10.00 per minute).

Smoking/Non-Smoking Policy

All cabins are non-smoking. Smoking is permitted only outside on the sun deck. Smoking is not allowed anywhere else on the ship.

Shore Excursions

Included during your cruise are many sightseeing tours. Other optional tours are available for purchase. We will provide information on these optional excursions on your arrival. Please note that optional tours can only be purchased with a credit card or a debit card that doesn't require a pin.

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 Artemis

- **History:** Built in 2008
- **Size:** 193x35 ft
- **Capacity:** 50 passengers, 21 crew members

- **Layout:** 26 cabins, 3 decks; Elevator-no

M/V Athena

- **History:** Built in 2007
- **Size:** 193x35 ft
- **Capacity:** 50 passengers, 21 crew members
- **Layout:** 26 cabins, 3 decks; Elevator-no

M/V Arethusa

- **History:** Built in 2008
- **Size:** 193x35 ft
- **Capacity:** 50 passengers, 21 crew members
- **Layout:** 26 cabins, 3 decks; Elevator-no

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.

The Cultures of Italy, Sicily, and Malta

There is some truth to the stereotype of Italians being passionate, animated, and gregarious. After all, with major cultural achievements including the administrative genius of the Roman Empire, the birth of Catholicism, the imaginative leaps of the Renaissance, modern innovations in fashion and design, and much more, Italians have much to celebrate and be proud of. But even more pronounced than national pride is the spirit of *campanilismo*—an important aspect of this culturally diverse journey.

Campanilismo is often defined as “provincialism,” but it goes well beyond that. The word derives from the Italian for “belltower” (*campanile*), and refers to a sort of “our belltower is taller than yours” mentality that manifests itself in a deep sense of local pride. So as you travel, you will hear people identify themselves not as Italians, but in terms of their region, town, or even their specific quarter of town. *Sono Toscano.* (I’m Tuscan.) *Sono Veneziano.* (I’m Venetian.) *Sicilianu Sugnu.* (I’m Sicilian.) This makes sense when you consider that Italy has only been a unified nation for about 150 years and only a republic since 1946: most Italians have deep, local family roots that long predate either of those events.

One place on your itinerary that really stands out in terms of *campanilismo* is **Sicily**, where waves of successive invaders left indelible, and unique, marks on the culture. The Greeks and Arabs had an especially profound influence here—more so than in the rest of Italy—and it is alive and well in the Sicilian language (which is distinct from Italian), cuisine, architecture, agriculture, and civil society. On the surface, Sicilians are fatalistic, skeptical, conservative and pragmatic—but also deeply passionate, outgoing, loyal, and possessed of a wickedly dark sense of humor. That they embrace life so fully is the real wonder of their story.

The pace of life is slower in Sicily, a trend you will note as your cruise moves from the industrialized north to southern ports. In fact, the southern regions of **Abruzzo, Molise, Campania, Puglia, Basilicata, Calabria, Sicily** and **Sardinia** are collectively known as *Il Mezzogiorno*. The term means “midday” and refers to the intensity of the southern noontime sun. It’s not hard to see what the connotations may be: the hot noonday sun is a boon to agricultural communities, but also cause to retire indoors and rest. Thus, the hurtful prejudice

that southerners are lazy, insular, country bumpkins. Conversely, southerners may accuse their wealthier northern neighbors of being cold, uptight workaholics. These stereotypes have helped reinforce the significant economic divide between the richer north and disadvantaged south.

If indeed some southern shops and business may close on weekdays between 1pm and 4pm, more often than not it's not to snooze but to socialize. Southern Italian culture in particular (and Italian culture in general) places a high value on interpersonal relationships, starting with the family, the bedrock of all social interactions. To reflect well on one's family, one is expected to dress well, behave graciously, and be dutiful. It is part of the concept of *la bella figura*, the "beautiful figure" that all Italians strive to cut.

You can see this in action during the early evenings, when local Italians may gather at public squares and promenades for *la passagiata*, the traditional evening stroll. Even in rural areas, people will be fashionably (if casually) dressed, the mood will be upbeat, and good manners will be on display. As a cultural phenomenon, *la bella figura* may well be a metaphor for the allure of Italy itself: here is a culture you will find confident, elegant, charming, and engaging.

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.

Religion and Religious Observances

Roman Catholicism is the predominant religion across mainland **Italy**, **Sicily**, and **Malta**. The cultures of all three places are saturated with Catholic beliefs, rituals, and iconography; and most people say that they are nominally Catholic, even though church attendance, in general, is on the decline.

On a day-to-day basis, the influence of religion is more pronounced in **Sicily** than the rest of Italy. Most Sicilians 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. Sicily has a small but growing Muslim

population, comprised mainly of North African immigrants. Though Jews were present in Sicily for at least 1,400 years, they faced frequent persecution and were expelled in 1492. Since then, the Jewish population has remained small.

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. With the influx of migrants from North Africa and the Middle East, there is a small but growing Muslim population.

Visiting Places of Worship

Many churches run special services that you are welcome to attend—even if you are not Catholic. Otherwise, you are welcome to visit outside of services. Most churches in Italy and Malta have a dress code, whether overtly stated or not. Typically, they request that you cover your shoulders and that shorts or skirts reach the knee. It is rare nowadays for churches to require women to cover their heads. If you'll be traveling during warm weather and want to go sleeveless or wear a tank top, then we suggest that you throw a light sweater or cover-up into your daypack. A pashmina-type shawl is ideal for covering shoulders or low-cut blouses, or even wrapping around the waist as a sarong.

Language

There are actually 34 “living languages” or dialects spoken across Italy, and nearly all are derived from Latin. But the official language is Italian, which mainly evolved from Tuscan, and it is spoken and understood by nearly everyone. English is the most popular foreign language in Italy and nearly 14% of the population can speak it. The numbers are higher among young people, and in major cities. (English is increasingly spoken in Sicily, though not as widely as elsewhere in Italy.)

The language of **Sicily**, Sicilianu or Sìculu, is not a dialect of Italian, but a distinct language in and of itself that is recognized as such by UNESCO. Like Italian, it has Latin roots. But Sicilian is much older and has many elements of Greek, Punic, Phoenician, Arabic, French, Catalan, and Spanish. In 1900, Italian became the national tongue and is spoken by nearly all Sicilians. But even mainlanders sometimes have trouble understanding the local Sicilian pronunciations. For example, in Sicilian, Bs are mostly pronounced as Vs, so the word la barca (the boat) sounds like “a varca.” Double Ls found in words such as bello (beautiful) become Ds and sound like “beddu.” Sicilians also tend to put their verbs at the end of a sentence.

In **Malta**, though Maltese is the national language (spoken by 98% of the people), the second national language is English and 88% of the people can speak it. The Maltese language is Arabic at its base but very much influenced by Sicilian and Italian.

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.

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.

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 into 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:

- **Aperitivo:** A glass of sparkling prosecco or spumante white wine.
- **Antipasto all'Italiana:** Raw vegetables served with various cheeses and salami
- **Fritto Misto:** A lightly fried seafood mix, usually with calamari, shrimp, and fish such as sardines or anchovies.
- **Crostini:** Chicken liver pate or fresh cut tomatoes served on a thin piece of toasted bread
- **Caprese Salad:** Thick slices of tomato and mozzarella flavored with fresh basil leaves, olive oil.

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

- **Tagliatelle al Tartufo:** Long ribbons of delicate tagliatelle pasta, swirled with warm melted butter, garlic, and decadently topped with black truffle shavings and parmesan cheese
- **Ribollita:** A bean and kale soup served with toasted bread. On the second day, the soup is cooked again in a pan with olive oil, hence the meaning “boiled twice”.

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

- **Bistecca alla Fiorentina:** A T-Bone steak from a local breed of cow, the Chianina cattle
- **Lampredotto:** A panino stuffed with the fourth stomach of a cow and soaked in broth, with salsa Verde and black pepper from Florence
- **Polpette:** Savory and seasoned Italian meatballs.

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

- **Tiramisu:** A layered confection of sponge cake, mascarpone cheese, coffee and liqueur.

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

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 filling.

Slovenian Cuisine

Slovenia may only be the size of Massachusetts, but it still boasts 24 distinct gastronomic regions, and many dishes with EU protected status. Here are some dishes to try:

- **Idrijski zlikrofi:** Heavenly pasta pockets filled with potato, bacon and herbs.
- **Kremšnita:** This Bled Cream Cake is a confection of flaky crust, vanilla custard, icing sugar and whipped cream.
- **Kraški pršut:** (prosciutto from the karst lands) and Istrian olive oil give their Italian cousins a run for the money.
- **Štruklji:** Slovenia's version of strudel, filled with either savory or sweet ingredients like cheese, walnuts, apples and poppy seeds. In spring and summer, try it with fresh tarragon.

Venice in Brief

City Layout and Details

Venice is about two and a half miles from the Italian mainland and one and one quarter miles from the Adriatic Sea. The city is built on and around 118 islands and islets, separated by approximately 150 small canals. These small land clusters are joined together by some 400 bridges. The three largest and most historically significant bridges are the Rialto, Accademia, and degli Scalzi, each of which crosses the Grand Canal. The city has only one main piazza—San Marco—and it bustles all day long. Most visitors are primarily interested in seeing San Marco, with its St. Mark's Basilica and Doge's Palace, but there's much to see elsewhere if you are game for walking. Shoppers will want to explore along the Mercerier, which leads out of the piazza San Marco and serves as the city's major shopping artery. It eventually leads to the Rialto, site of the market area.

The city is divided into six quarters, called sestieri, and these include San Marco, Santa Croce, San Polo, Castello, Cannaregio, and Dorsoduro. Each has its own mood and appeal. The Dorsoduro, for example, has been compared to New York's Greenwich Village. Don't expect to find any order to the tiny streets and winding canals that comprise each sestieri. Street numbers do not follow a logical sequence, and finding a specific address can be baffling. Looking for certain cross streets and posted signs can be more helpful than trying to pinpoint an address by its street number. Regardless of your orientation skills, however, expect to get at least a little lost at some point while exploring on your own. Everybody does—that's part of the charm of Venice.

Across the lagoon from Venice proper is the shoestring island of Lido. This long, narrow sandbar protects Venice from the force of the Adriatic Sea; it is also one of Italy's most fashionable beach resort areas. Venice is connected to mainland Italy via a three-mile bridge that runs from the city across the Venetian Lagoon to the town of Mestre.

Evening Entertainment

Compared to Rome, Venice is a quiet city that shuts down pretty much by midnight. Typical nighttime entertainment includes classical concerts (often featured in various churches), opera performances, art exhibitions, leisurely visits at cafés and bars, and sunset strolls. The tourist office and some hotels distribute the free weekly pamphlet *Un Ospite a Venezia* ("A Guest in Venice"). It is a useful multilingual booklet that lists up-to-date museum schedules, special events, entertainment programs, and other activities, as well as the current rates for gondolas and motorboat taxis.

Local Transportation

There are no cars in Venice, except on the Lido. To get around, you can walk, or take a vaporetto or gondola. Remember, Venice has 460 pedestrian bridges.

Vaporetti: These motorboats operate as public waterbuses. An *accelerato* boat makes every stop; a *diretto* makes only express stops. They operate from designated piers and run about every 15 minutes. Service is frequent from about 7 am to midnight, then hourly between midnight and 7 am.

Gondola: If you opt for a gondola ride, first agree on the price and the length of the trip. Two major stations at which you can hire gondolas include piazza San Marco and Ponte Rialto. *TIP: In 2019, the official price for a 30 minute gondola ride was set as 80 euros, but may cost more during the evening or if music is included.*

On foot: By far, the easiest way to explore Venice is on foot. All the locals walk, too. Because the city has 400 bridges with stairs, bicycles are impractical.

Motorboat Taxis: A ride as short as 10 minutes can cost upwards of \$60. Given the small distances of Venice, use of water taxis is a very expensive proposition that can be easily avoided with a little forethought or scheduling.

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.

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

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.

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.

Slovenia

Handicraft shops in Slovenia feature locally made ceramics, woolens, wood carvings, embroidery, tapestries, filigree jewelry, pumpkin seed oil, hand-painted beehive panels, honey brandy and handmade carpets. The fashion brands Sens and Akultura are popular, and for something more traditional, consider Idrija lace and Rogaska crystal.

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.

DEMOGRAPHICS & HISTORY

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 Sicily, 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:** 58,853,482 (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 riven 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 Minister 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.

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.

Slovenia

Facts, Figures & National Holidays

- **Area:** 7,827 square miles
- **Capital:** Ljubljana
- **Population:** 2,100,000 (estimate)
- **Languages:** Slovenian is the official language.
- **Religions:** Catholic 57.8%, Muslim 2.4%, Orthodox 2.3%, other Christian 0.9%, unaffiliated 3.5%, other or unspecified 23%, none 10.1%
- **Time Zone:** Slovenia is on Central European Time, six hours ahead of Eastern Time. Summer hours operate from the last Sunday in March until the last weekend in October.

National Holidays: Slovenia

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

01/01 New Year's Day

01/02 New Year's holiday

02/08 Preseren Day

End of March - Early April is Easter

04/27 Day of Uprising Against Occupation

05/02 Labor Day

06/25 Statehood Day

08/15 Assumption of Mary

10/31 Reformation Day

11/01 Remembrance Day

12/25 Christmas Day

12/26 Independence and Unity Day

Slovenia: A Brief History

While Slovenia experienced many of the same historical events as its neighbors, its development diverged in several important ways. For one thing, we know a little more about the Bronze Age inhabitants who predated the Illyrians here: they were marsh dwellers who lived in huts on stilts south of present-day Ljubljana, trading along the Amber Route that linked the Balkans with the rest of Europe. By 400 BC, the Celts established the first political entity on Slovenian soil, the Noric kingdom. The Romans annexed this and brought Slovenia into its larger province, Illyrium.

As Rome declined, Slavs arrived and eventually joined with the Frankish kingdom to form the Duchy of Carantania. Charlemagne sealed the deal when he made Carantania a vassal state called Carinthia, and established Roman Catholicism as the state religion. This brought Slovenia into the fold of the Holy Roman Empire, and far from the sway of eastern Orthodoxy. By the 10th century, control of the Holy Roman Empire fell to German nobility. They replaced local Slovenian lords with German ones, reduced the peasants to serfs, and divided Slovenia into six provinces that remained intact until 1918: Carniola, Carinthia, Styria, Gorica and the White March.

Between the late 13th and early 16th century, almost all of Slovenia passed to the Hapsburgs, who improved the infrastructure, opened mines, and lifted the economy. But soon, Germanic domination of the political and cultural scene faced a challenge. Slovenia was never occupied by the Ottomans, but under the Hapsburgs, it had to fight many battles against the Turks. Slovenian peasants were required to pay for their own defenses, and also pay tribute to their feudal lords. Between the 14th and 19th centuries there were more than 100 Slovenian peasant revolts.

Another turning point came when the Protestant Reformation reached Slovenia at the end of the 16th century. Many Protestant reformers wrote their treatises in the vernacular, elevating the status of Slovenian language. An awakening of Slovenian identity had begun.

When the Hapsburg dynasty was dismantled after World War I, Slovenia joined the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes. But much of Slovenia's land was ceded to Italy, Austria, and Hungary, and there was dissatisfaction with the government, which was dominated by Serbs. But when the Nazis invaded in 1941, a larger threat had to be dealt with. Communists and other left-wing

groups formed a Liberation Front. The people took up arms, and fought in the best-organized anti-Nazi resistance in Europe. The communist partisan leader, Josip Broz Tito, became the leader of the new Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia.

When Tito died in 1980, Slovenian dissatisfaction with the Serb-dominated government deepened. In 1987, a Slovenian magazine published an article calling for political pluralism, democracy, a market economy and more Slovenian independence, but stopped short of calling for secession. But Yugoslavia's new de facto leader, Serbia's Slobodan Milošević, resolved to put an end to it. Slovenia doubled down and in 1990, it voted to become an independent republic. The Yugoslav army marched on Slovenia, but after meeting with unexpected resistance, units of the federal army began disintegrating.

Since no territorial or ethnic issues were involved, the Yugoslav government agreed to a truce and finally withdrew in October 1991. Slovenia enacted its own constitution in December, and was recognized by the European Community in January, 1992. In May, 1992, it became the 176th member state of the United Nations, and in 2004, it joined the European Union.

RESOURCES

Suggested Reading

Venice

First Spritz Is Free: Confessions of Venice Addicts by Kathleen Gonzalez (2018, Anthology) This collection gathers essays from 34 contemporary contributors—chefs, bloggers, photographers, musicians, tour guides, historians and more—who share the quirky secrets and exquisite pleasures of life in *La Serenissima*.

Vivaldi's Virgins by Barbara Quick (2007, Historical Fiction) Violin prodigy Annina moves from the orphanage to the elite, all-girls orchestra led by composer Antonio Vivaldi. As her musical education unfolds, so, too, does the debauchery, artistry, and intrigues of 18th-century Venice.

The World of Venice by Jan Morris (1995, History/Travel) A new edition of a classic that blends history, social commentary, anecdotes, and personal travel experience.

History of Venice by John Julius Norwich (1982, History) The author skillfully manages to compress 1,000 years of Venetian history into one book.

Death in Venice and Other Tales by Thomas Mann (1912, Fiction) An aging writer retreats to Venice for artistic inspiration, and finds himself entranced by the mere sight of a beautiful young boy. His aesthetic appreciation turns into obsession as he secretly stalks the boy around the city, even as a cholera epidemic is brewing. The decaying splendor of Venice is the perfect setting for this complex meditation on art, sex, morality, and mortality.

Coastal Italy

Ravenna: Capital of Empire, Crucible of Europe by Judith Herrin (2020, History) The importance of Ravenna as a bridge between Rome and Byzantium, and therefore East and West has long been understudied by scholars—until now. Herrin's award-winning book explores Ravenna's political and cultural heyday (from the 5th through 8th centuries), and provides meticulous details and illustrations that bring the early Middle Ages to life.

Gino's Italian Adriatic Escape: A Taste of Italy from Veneto to Puglia (2019, Cookbook) If you like what you eat during this adventure (of course you will), join British-Italian celebrity chef Gino d'Acampo on a culinary journey along Italy's Adriatic coast, and learn how to recreate all that deliciousness at home.

Salento By 5: Friendship, Food, Music, and Travel Within the Heel of Italy's Boot by Audrey Fielding, Luciana Cacciatore, Carlo Longo, David Fielding, and Lucia Erriquez (2016, Nonfiction) Two Americans and three Italians from southernmost Puglia celebrate the land that connects them all. Filled with travel tips, recipes, anecdotes history, watercolor illustrations, and more.

Trieste by Dasa Drndic (2014, Fiction) In postwar Trieste, Haya Tedeschi weaves together documents, photos, and memories to relocate her son, who was fathered by an SS officer during the Nazi occupation, and taken away from her. Her obsessive research uncovers the stories of many others, including the 9,000 Italian Jews whose names are listed in the middle of this acclaimed book, like a wall of remembrance.

Casa Rossa by Francesca Marciano (Fiction, 2003) A young woman returns to her family home in Puglia to prepare it for sale, and conjures up the memories of three remarkable women whose choices in life indelibly shaped her family's history.

Otranto by Maria Corti (1992, Fiction) Five narrators from different walks of life share their experiences during the 1480 Siege of Otranto by Ottoman Turks, and its aftermath. Their overlapping tales provide a detailed historical account as well as beautiful descriptions of everyday life.

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.

The Monster of Florence by Douglas Preston and Mario Spezi (2008, Non Fiction) A remarkable true story by best-selling author Douglas Preston who, with Italian investigative journalist Mario Spezi, try to track down the identity of a serial killer known as the Monster of Florence.

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 an factual account of real events that happened when the action takes place.

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 DiGli (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.

Slovenia

Slovenology: Living and Traveling in the World's Best Country by Noah Charney (2017, Memoir/Travel) A witty and wise guidebook from an American art historian. The title tells you something about his love for Slovenia's history, food and drink, sights, music and people.

I Saw Her That Night by Drago Jancar (2010, Fiction) Explores the disappearance of a young woman from Ljubljana during a turbulent period in that city's history, as told by five different people.

Forbidden Bread: A Memoir (2009, Memoir) A New York financial analyst leaves her home and job to marry her Slovenian poet-lover. As she struggles to understand her new family and Slovenia's complex history, language, traditions and old-fashioned sexism, Slovenia itself is being transformed. A love story with witty and worldly observations on the birth of a new nation.

Yugoslavia, My Fatherland by Goran Vojnović (2011, Fiction) Through the eyes of Vladan, a young man grappling with his father's alleged war crimes, the novel explores themes of family, betrayal, and the search for truth in a fractured society. A complex narrative that delves into the complexities of identity and memory in the aftermath of the Yugoslav wars.

Suggested Films & Videos

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.

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 heartbreakingly 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.

Slovenia

Good to Go (2012, Comedy/Drama) A weary, disillusioned music teacher in his late 70s decides to retire—not just from his job, but from living. He buys a cemetery plot and moves into a retirement home. But once there, surprising turns make him rethink his decision, and his life.

Cheese and Jam (2004, Comedy) Lovely Slovenian Spela decides to leave her beer-drinking, jobless Bosnian husband, Bozo. Desperate to keep her, Bozo takes a job smuggling illegal immigrants, and things go wildly wrong. A black comedy about stereotypes, village life, and love.

No Man's Land (2002, Comedy/Drama) Filmed in Slovenia, this allegorical look at the Balkan War won the 2002 Golden Globes and the Oscar for Best Foreign Film. Two soldiers, one Bosnian, one Serb, find themselves facing off in a trench in no man's land. Insults and concessions ensue until a third soldier awakens nearby, but cannot move as he is sitting above a bouncing mine. The men forge a truce as they try to get help, and to find common ground.

Hang On, Doggy! (1977, Comedy) Set in Ljubljana, Slovenia, the film follows Matic, a young boy living with his mother while his father works abroad. His life takes a turn when he's cast in a film alongside a Newfoundland dog and a girl named Milena. After the shoot, the film crew gifts him the dog, leading to humorous and touching moments as Matic navigates his new responsibilities and relationships.

Useful Websites

Overseas Adventure Travel Frequently Asked Questions

www.oattravel.com/faq

International Health Information/CDC (Centers for Disease Control)

www.cdc.gov/travel

Electricity & Plugs

www.worldstandards.eu/electricity/plugs-and-sockets

Foreign Exchange Rates

www.xe.com/currencyconverter
www.oanda.com/converter/classic

ATM Locators

www.mastercard.com/atm
www.visa.com/atmlocator

World Weather

www.intellicast.com
www.weather.com
www.wunderground.com

Basic Travel Phrases (80 languages)

www.travlang.com/languages

Packing Tips

www.travelite.org

U.S. Customs & Border Protection

www.cbp.gov/travel

Transportation Security

Administration (TSA)

www.tsa.gov

National Passport Information Center

www.travel.state.gov

Holidays Worldwide

www.timeanddate.com/holidays

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 Maps.me

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 Grab

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 or Skype or Signal

WiFi calling anywhere in the world

Duolingo or 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

Tourlina

For women only, it connects you with other female travelers

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

ALIX for One

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

TripWhistle

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

GeoSure

Safely navigate neighborhoods around the world

Chirpey

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



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8-time travelers from Stevensville, MI



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



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



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



Submitted by David Fong, 16-time traveler
from Foster City, CA



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



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