



## **Southern Italy & Sicily With Apulia & the Amalfi Coast**

*Delight in a special exploration of Italy's southern climes, from striking Sicily and the breathtaking Amalfi Coast to unheralded Apulia, the alluring "boot heel" where a vivid history, unique architecture, and bountiful plains join the sun and sea in creating a prized (and crowd-free) region. Add Italian hospitality, outstanding cuisine, and notable lodgings for la dolce vita, small-group style.*

### **Itinerary**

Created on Feb 29, 2024

# Southern Italy & Sicily

## Day-by-Day Itinerary

### **DAY 1: Depart U.S. for Taormina (Catania), Sicily**

### **DAY 2: Arrive Taormina**

We arrive today in Catania on Italy's autonomous island of Sicily and then transfer by motorcoach to Taormina and our boutique hotel overlooking the Ionian Sea. Tonight we gather for a welcome dinner at the hotel.

*Accommodations:* Eurostars Monte Tauro

*Meals:* Dinner

### **DAY 3: Taormina**

Highlights of our morning walking tour of this delightful medieval town include the spectacular ancient Greek theater (dating to the 3<sup>rd</sup> century BCE), the popular 13<sup>th</sup>-century cathedral, and the grand Piazza Vittorio Emanuele. This afternoon is at leisure, perhaps to relax by the hotel pool, visit a lovely Taormina beach, or stroll along Corso Umberto with its shops and restaurants. With lunch and dinner on our own today, perhaps a culinary adventure is in order...and thanks to Sicily's strategic Mediterranean location that lured many invaders, Sicilian food incorporates Italian, Arabic, and African influences into a singular and delicious cuisine.

*Accommodations:* Eurostars Monte Tauro

*Meals:* Breakfast

### **DAY 4: Taormina/Agrigento**

On today's excursion, we visit the "Valley of the Temples," the archaeological zone of Agrigento whose Doric temples and sanctuaries date to Greek rule in the 5<sup>th</sup> century BCE. Known in its heyday as the "most beautiful city of mortals," Agrigento's highlight is the stunning, well-preserved Temple of Concordia (c. 430 BCE). A visit to the museum here lends context to our explorations. Late this afternoon we return to our hotel, where we dine tonight.

*Accommodations:* Eurostars Monte Tauro

*Meals:* Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

### **DAY 5: Taormina/Mount Etna**

This morning's tour ventures to Europe's largest active volcano. The ancients believed Mt. Etna to be the forge of Vulcan, god of fire; today, modern-day Sicilians have a very personal relationship with the volcano, which frequently erupts but is seldom destructive. Centuries of lava flows have resulted in a rich, fertile landscape where citrus groves and vineyards thrive. At midday we enjoy a small group highlight: lunch at a family-run working farm amidst acres of lemon and kiwi. After returning to our hotel mid-afternoon, the remainder of the day is at leisure.

*Accommodations:* Eurostars Monte Tauro

*Meals:* Breakfast, Lunch

## **DAY 6: Taormina/Matera**

We leave Sicily today for the mainland region of Basilicata via a day-long transfer that includes a ferry ride from Sicily to Calabria. Late this afternoon we reach Matera, whose historic troglodyte churches and dwellings (*Sassi*) have been designated a UNESCO site and where our hotel's renovated cave dwellings reside in the city's historic district.

*Accommodations:* Locanda di San Martino

*Meals:* Breakfast, Dinner

## **DAY 7: Matera**

Today we explore this city of art and folklore, its unique ancient urban structure still intact. Home to more than 100 rock churches, Matera resembles ancient Jerusalem and has been used by international film directors as a stand-in for the holy city. Following a guided walking tour, the remainder of the day is at leisure to explore independently before dinner tonight at a local restaurant.

*Accommodations:* Locanda di San Martino

*Meals:* Breakfast, Dinner

## **DAY 8: Matera/Alberobello/Lecce**

Departing Matera this morning, we stop in Alberobello, whose 400 or so *trulli* – whitewashed conical houses with graystone roofs – rank as a UNESCO World Heritage site. We take a walking tour along the pristine cobblestone alleys, stepping inside an artisan's workshop or *trullo tipico*, a recreation of an inhabited home. After lunch at a local restaurant, we continue on to Lecce, one of the oldest cities in Apulia (Italy's "boot heel") in time for dinner together at our hotel.

*Accommodations:* (2024) Chiostro dei Domenicani, (2025) Risorgimento Resort

*Meals:* Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

## **DAY 9: Lecce**

We discover the "Florence of the South" on this morning's tour, so named for the unique decorative style for which Lecce is known: *barocco leccese*, the ornate and intricate sandstone carvings of cherubs, monsters, fruits, and flowers that adorn local buildings from top to bottom. We see Palazzo Vescovile (c. 1632), the exuberantly decorated church of Santa Croce, and the *Duomo* with its lovely piazza. This afternoon is at leisure to explore this town of 100 churches as we wish; tonight we enjoy dinner together.

*Accommodations:* (2024) Chiostro dei Domenicani, (2025) Risorgimento Resort

*Meals:* Breakfast, Dinner

### **DAY 10: Lecce/Otranto**

Today's excursion takes us to the beautiful walled town of Otranto, overlooking the Adriatic. On a walking tour here, we see the imposing 15<sup>th</sup>-century Aragonese castle with its traditional moat and the Romanesque cathedral whose impressive wall-to-wall mosaic floor was created in 1166. We continue on to a local winery for a tasting and lunch and then return to Lecce mid-afternoon. Dinner tonight is on our own.

*Accommodations:* (2024) Chiostro dei Domenicani, (2025) Risorgimento Resort

*Meals:* Breakfast, Lunch

### **DAY 11: Lecce/Sorrento**

This morning we depart by coach for Sorrento, located by the Bay of Naples. En route, we stop for a traditional *trattoria* lunch in the small town of Polignano a Mare. Dinner tonight is on our own in lively seaside Sorrento.

*Accommodations:* Hotel Antiche Mura

*Meals:* Breakfast, Lunch

### **DAY 12: Sorrento/Pompeii**

Today we visit the excavated ruins at the evocative UNESCO site of Pompeii for a guided tour of the city frozen in time by the eruption of Mt. Vesuvius in 79 CE (the city was accidentally rediscovered in 1749). Late this afternoon we gather for a hands-on Neapolitan cuisine cooking lesson, followed by dinner to savor the fruits of our labors.

*Accommodations:* Hotel Antiche Mura

*Meals:* Breakfast, Dinner

### **DAY 13: Sorrento/Capri**

Today we travel by hydrofoil to the storied Isle of Capri, a popular resort since Roman times. We explore cozy Capri town, visit the terraced Gardens of Augustus with stunning views of the azure sea, and then enjoy free time for lunch and to explore on our own before we return to Sorrento early this afternoon. The remainder of the day is at leisure to enjoy this city with views of Mt. Vesuvius as we wish. Dinner tonight is on our own in Sorrento.

*Accommodations:* Hotel Antiche Mura

*Meals:* Breakfast

### **DAY 14: Sorrento/Amalfi Coast**

We embark this morning on a breathtaking drive along the winding cliff-top Amalfi Coast road between Sorrento and Amalfi and above the glistening Tyrrhenian Sea – with stops for photos along the way. This afternoon is at leisure; tonight we bid “*arrivederci*” to Italy and our fellow travelers at a farewell dinner.

*Accommodations:* Hotel Antiche Mura

*Meals:* Breakfast, Dinner

**DAY 15: Depart for U.S.**

This morning we transfer to the Naples airport where we connect with our return flight to the U.S.

*Meals:* Breakfast

This tour itinerary was generated for Southern Italy & Sicily on Feb 29, 2024. Please visit the Southern Italy & Sicily page at <https://www.odysseys-unlimited.com/tours/europe/southern-italy-sicily/> for the latest and most accurate information.