

**Civitavecchia – Ponza, Palmarola – Sorrento – Amalfi –
Giardini Naxos – Lipari – Gaeta - Civitavecchia**

All tours are offered with English speaking guides. The length of the tours and time spent on the sites is given as an indication as it may vary depending on the road, weather, sea and traffic conditions and on the group's pace. Minimum number of participants indicated per coach or group.

The level of physical fitness required for our activities is given as a very general indication without any knowledge of our passenger's individual abilities. Broadly speaking to enjoy activities such as hiking, biking, snorkelling, boating or other activities involving physical exertion, passengers should be fit and active. Passengers must judge for themselves whether they will be capable of participating in and above all enjoying such activities.

All information concerning excursions is correct at the time of printing. However Star Clippers reserves the right to make changes, which will be relayed to passengers during the Cruise Director's onboard information sessions



PALMAROLA

A ruggedly beautiful island cradled in the Golfo de Gaeta about half-way between Rome and Naples, Palmarola is the perfect stop for a beach day. The water is remarkably clear, and between the islands of Ponza and Palmarola, archeologists have uncovered a number of wrecks of Roman galleys dating from the Republican Period.

PONZA

Located on the site of an extinct volcano which erupted some two million years ago, the island consists mainly of rhyolitic and andesitic rocks whose characteristic gray, yellow and ashy tuft formations combine to create a unique shade of blue. Ventotene and S. Stefano, 39 km to the east of Ponza are rich in acid and basalt rocks. Ponza is one of the treasures of the Tyrrhenian Sea and, according to legend, was the home of the sorceress Circe who seduced Ulysses. One look at the beauties of this enchanted island, and you will understand why Ulysses found it so hard to leave.

The area has many historical associations. The archipelago lying some 20 miles from the coast of Latium, was inhabited during the Neolithic period. The Phoenicians and Greeks inhabited Ponza after colonization by the Aurunci, and build a fortified citadel there. Traces of the Cyclopean walls (so called because of the size of the blocks used) remain to this day. In 313 BC the Romans colonized Ponza and in customary fashion set about improving the infrastructure and amenities, building a magnificent aqueduct, still partially used today, as well as a temple devoted to the Dioscuri and another to the Venus Epiponzia. After centuries of naval battles and other tumultuous events, Ponza fell into the hands of the Bourbon family, who rebuilt the port area. A long period of isolation followed the island's unification with the kingdom of Italy, which was intensified during the twenty years of the Fascist regime. It was only after WWII that Ponza gained its reputation as an ideal holiday destination. The beautiful scenery, warm climate and rich history combine to make this island a true paradise on earth.



SORRENTO

Pompeii

By air-conditioned motor-coach and on foot

Minimum 20 participants, no maximum

Duration 4 h30

€ 69

Ancient Pompeii was a prosperous provincial center with an estimated population of 20,000. An earthquake destroyed much of the town in 63 AD. Rebuilding was still in process when the volcano erupted again 16 years later. The whole town was buried beneath more than 20 feet of ash and pumice stone.

Many residents were killed by lethal sulphur fumes or struck by lava and pumice stone that rained down upon the city, but others escaped. Abandoned until the 18th century, Pompeii was frozen in time until excavations revealed this amazing archaeological site. Plaster was poured into empty spaces in the lava to make body casts of some of the victims, such as a young man stretched out to protect his mother and the famous twisted body of a dog still tethered by its chain.

The eruption of Vesuvius on August 24, 79 A.D. not only preserved structures but also evidence of the ancient way of life, such as a fully-equipped tavern with the last customer's money still on the counter. Admire the luxurious mansions and fabulous art of wealthy patricians who came to Pompeii to escape the turmoil in Rome. Their houses were designed around an inner garden with few windows on the exteriors, so residents could forget the outside world and get sunlight from their own courtyards. Visit some of the more modest homes, and explore ancient baths, temples, theaters, markets and the huge forum.

Large coaches cannot drive to the pier, so a mini-bus will shuttle tour participants between the pier and a main parking lot in Sorrento. (Same on the way back; a minibus will take you down to the pier)

The drive to Pompeii takes about one hour. We suggest comfortable shoes to walk on cobblestone streets.

Attractions are behind bars and glass windows in Pompeii.

Most of the shops in Italy are closed between 1 and 4 p.m.

At the end of the tour, you may choose to stay in Sorrento and explore the village on your own.

The site of Pompeii is very busy; it is important to stay with your guide at all times. The pace of the tour is moderate, as there are many highlights to visit in this vast city.

This tour is not recommended for guests with walking difficulties.

Timing is subject to traffic on the Sorrentine drive, especially during high season and weekends.



Pompeii (new programme including the latest discoveries)

Transport by air-conditioned motor-coach and on foot

Minimum 15 participants, maximum 30

Duration 4h30

€74

All the areas described were accessible at the time of writing, but could be closed without notice for further restoration work or similar

The ruined city of Pompeii lies at the foot of Mount Vesuvius, the only active volcano on mainland Europe.

In AD 79 a catastrophic eruption rained ash upon the town literally burying it alive in six metres of ash and pumice stone. A mere 16 years before this terrible tragedy the town had been badly damaged by an earthquake, and the townsfolk had not yet finished rebuilding and repairing all the damage.

At the first sign of the eruption, a column of smoke reaching nine miles into the sky, many people fled the city, so when the final flow descended the slopes of Vesuvius and engulfed the city only 2000 people remained.

Since that fateful afternoon on August 24th AD 79, Pompeii has been a sort of ghost town, a sleeping beauty, lying under a blanket of ash.

The first excavations started in the 18th century, and all the findings were taken to a museum in Naples. Since 1911 archaeologists have chosen to leave the artefacts in place which makes the site come alive, giving a vivid picture of everyday life in a Roman town. So far about three fifths of the total area has been explored.

The tour starts by the Porta Anfiteatro dating from 80 BC. This massive amphitheatre, with seating for 12000 spectators, is the oldest surviving Roman amphitheatre; close your eyes for a moment and you can almost hear the roar from the crowds as they watch the gladiators in mortal combat. Next to it lies the Palaestra, or gymnasium with colonnades around three sides and a swimming pool in the centre, a sort of Roman Sports club. Archaeologists have found quite a lot of graffiti in the toilets of the palaestra, much of it obscene, the sort of thing you might come across in public toilets today.

You will also visit the House of Julia Felix, a large Roman property on the Via dell'Abondanza, also known as the praedia (estate) of Julia Felix. This was the residence of one Julia Felix, obviously an astute businesswoman, who converted parts of the house into flats to rent, and public areas after the major earthquake in 62 AD left many people homeless. A notice on the front of the building reads "To let, for the term of five years from the thirteenth day of next August to the thirteenth day of the sixth August thereafter, the Venus bath, fitted up for the best people, shops, rooms over shops and second storey apartments in the property owned by Julia Felix, daughter of Spurius"

The house of Julia is complex of indoor and outdoor areas built around atria and courtyards. The property had enclosed gardens and a private water supply, as well as baths; statues and frescoes indicate that the property was extremely stylish and well equipped and indeed it took up one whole block of the city of Pompeii.

The Romans were concerned about cleanliness, hygiene and generally looking good, so it is perhaps no surprise to find 18 laundries in the town. The best preserved site is the Stephanus laundry. Here the scrubbing took place on the ground floor while the upper storey consisted of living quarters and a drying area. Instead of today's notion of "hand washing", in those days clothes were actually washed by foot! Garments were placed in vats of urine and water and trampled on by the laundry workers to get them clean.

The House of the Wounded Bear is another interesting find. It gets its name from a beautiful floor mosaic of a wounded bear with the greeting HAVE, an elegant roman alternative to the modern "Welcome" mat. The villa was re-opened to the public in 2016, after extensive restoration work was done on the mosaics and frescos to bring out the original colours. The house offers some of the finest examples of painting from the mid-1st century A.D and boasts a garden with frescoed walls and a fountain with a mosaic of Venus coming out of a shell.

There were 35 bakeries in Pompeii, which indicates the importance of bread in the Roman diet. The excavated remains of the bakery show that over the centuries bread making equipment has changed very little; wood was used for the ovens, mill stones were used to grind the wheat and produce flour, there was a place for kneading the dough and brick ovens were used to cook the bread.

The Romans were deeply superstitious and liked to have symbols of good luck around them. Outside the bakery belonging to N. Popidius Priscus, they found the following inscription "hic habitat Felicitas", or happiness lives here embellished with a carving of a man's phallus, a popular good luck charm.



Behind the temple dedicated to Jupiter lie the Forum Baths, which were built immediately after the founding of the colony by General Silla (80BC). The Women's and Men's facilities had separate entrances. The men's quarters had an apodyterium or dressing room, a tepidarium for medium hot baths, a frigidarium for cold baths and a caldarium for hot baths. The building was both aesthetically pleasing and practical with elegant decorations, little niches to store belongings, and a great bronze brazier for heating the water, as well as more than 500 lamps used for evening sessions at the baths.

The baths were badly damaged during the earthquake of 62 AD and the women's quarters, which were smaller than the men's facility, were being renovated at the time of the eruption.

One of the most beautiful and luxurious residences in Pompeii, open to the public after three years of excavation, is the House of the Faun, built in the late second century BC. The property has a surface area of 3000 m² and took up an entire city block. It belonged to a noble Roman family and was richly decorated with lavish floor mosaics including a mosaic of Alexander the Great defeating the Persians at the Battle of Issus. The residence was named the House of the Faun because of the exquisite bronze statue of a dancing faun placed in the centre of the impluvium (a stone basin used to collect rainwater).

The Forum, lined by rows of columns, was the main square and the centre of business, cultural and religious life in the town.

At the north end stood the Temple of Jupiter and in the right hand corner there was a Macellum or food market. Other buildings surrounding the forum include the Shrine of the Lares, the Temple of Vespasian, a hall for selling wool and the Curia where the town council met.

Nearby stood the Basilica, an important public building which was used as a law court and for business transactions. To the left you can see the Temple of Apollo, surrounded by 48 Ionic columns and in front of the basilica stands the House of Triptolemus, one of the latest houses to be opened to the public. The house dates back to the 2nd century BC and must have belonged to a wealthy and important family because it has two reception halls and two peristyles or courtyards.

The Forum granary on the west side of the forum was once a fruit and vegetable market but is now used to store artefacts from the excavation site, including all the paraphernalia of everyday life: crockery, pots, pans, jugs, bottles and amphorae used throughout the Mediterranean to transport oil, wine and fish sauce. There are also some plaster casts of victims of the eruption including a small dog with a collar writhing on its back.

The granary was built after the earthquake of 62 and might not have been completed at the time of the eruption.

Large coaches cannot access the pier so a minibus will shuttle tour participants between the pier and the parking area. On your return, the minibus will take you back to the pier.

The drive to Pompeii takes about one hour. We recommend comfortable footwear, suitable for walking on cobblestoned streets.

The attractions in Pompeii are behind bars and glass windows.

Most of the shops in Italy are closed between 1 and 4 pm.

At the end of the tour you may choose to stay in Sorrento and explore the village on your own.

The walking tour takes about 2h30; it starts from the Porta Anfiteatro and ends at the Porta Marina

The tour includes the highlights of Pompeii and the area newly opened to the public, Julia Felix Domus, the House of the Wounded Bear etc

Pompeii is a very busy site; it is important to stay with your guide at all times. The pace of the tour is moderate, as there are many things to see in this vast city

The tour is not recommended for guests with walking difficulties

Timing is subject to traffic conditions, especially during high season and weekends.

All areas mentioned are currently open, but could be closed without any notice in case of further renovation or else.



Ercolano

By air-conditioned motor-coach and on foot

Minimum 15 participants, no maximum

Duration 4 h30

€ 66

Herculaneum was destroyed by the eruption of Vesuvius on August 2nd 79 AD. The town was not an important commercial centre like Pompeii, it was smaller, wealthier and more residential. There was no open space or forum, just streets lined with villas and shops and, as is customary in Roman town planning, two very straight main roads crossing in the middle.

Vesuvius destroyed the two ancient towns in different ways. Pompeii was buried under layers of ash, while Herculaneum, much closer to the volcano, drowned under a sea of mud. Over time the mud hardened to a soft stone, preserving the city and nearly everything in it as a sort of fossil, so that the furniture, clothing and even some of the goods in the shops have survived. Excavations began by accident in 1709 when some workers were digging a well - they discovered a wall which was later found to be one of the stages of the ancient theatre. Later, there were many human skeletons uncovered at the ancient shoreline, suggesting that numerous inhabitants attempted to escape but perished when mountains collapsed and volcanic gases were released.

The excavation work since has brought to light sumptuous villas, baths, theatres and even a villa thought to have belonged to the father-in-law of Julius Caesar, called Villa di Pisone (Villa dei Papiri). Much of the town is still buried and excavation work continues today. Many buildings and their contents are in a remarkably good state of preservation.

Large coaches cannot drive to the pier, so a mini-bus will shuttle tour participants between the pier and a main parking lot in Sorrento. (Same on the way back; a minibus will take you down to the pier)

The drive to Ercolano takes about an hour

The tour is not recommended for Guests with walking difficulties.

At the end of the tour, you may choose to stay in Sorrento and explore the village on your own.

Large coaches cannot drive to the pier, so a mini-bus will shuttle tour participants between the pier and a main parking lot in Sorrento. (Same on the way back; a minibus will take you down to the pier)



Capri on your own

Transfer by boat to Capri

With an escort – this is not a guided tour

Minimum 15 participants, maximum 40

Duration 6 hours depending on local boat schedule

€ 69

Discover Capri on your own, with the help of some tips from a local guide to ensure you make the most of your visit

Capri is the outpost of Sorrento's peninsula. It is called the jewel of the Bay of Naples because of its unmatched scenery, clear skies and beautiful climate. Geologically, Capri is built on limestone. Dolomite cliffs, which at many points tower out of the sea, have been cut by time into fantastic shapes and marvellous grottoes. There are two main massifs: to the east is Monte Tiberio at 1,095 feet, and to the west Monte Solaro rises 452 feet above sea level. Capri itself is 452 feet high and sits between them. Capri has the Marina Grande to its north and the Marina Piccola on its southern side. The island's second residential centre, Anacapri, lies in a sweep of lush countryside to the west of Monte Solaro. Capri is derived from Greek Kapros, meaning wild boar. Inhabited since the Palaeolithic age, the island was, in classical times, first Greek then Roman. Many emperors lived part-time on Capri, and Roman nobles resided on or visited the island until the 6th century. The island endured Saracenic incursions in the 6th and 7th centuries and thereafter became the dominion of the Lombards, then Spain, then the French and British. Around the beginning of the 19th century, the island faced a more welcome artistic invasion when artists, writers and poets settled here.

Capri's Faraglioni and the Blue Grotto are very famous and beautiful. The Blue Grotto is the most celebrated of all the grottoes of Capri. It was already renowned in ancient times but was rediscovered in 1826 by Augusto Kopisch, a German. Many tourists visit the Grotto each year and never fail to be stunned by its magical atmosphere. The walls and concave ceiling of the grotto are so steeped in blue light that everything has a shimmering silver outline and even swimmers in the water look blue. A delightful climate, brilliant blue skies, lovely scenery and a host of other attractions make the island a perfect holiday resort in any season.

Take the opportunity of discovering Capri on your own! Your local guide will give you some great tips so you can make the most of your time on the island.

The price includes: Escort and the Hydrofoil ticket. Prices are subject to local regulation of entrance tax and maritime transportation monopoly.

The visit in Capri is entirely on your own. No visit is included.



Every Ash Cloud has a Silver Lining!

Transport by air-conditioned motor coach

Minimum 15 participants, maximum 30

Duration 7 hours

Lunch included

€119

This tour is not only for history lovers, but also for those of you who are interested in fine wine and the area's culinary traditions. We aim to show that there is definitely a positive side to living next door to an active volcano.

First of all, a taste of everyday life in a Roman town.

In 79 AD, before that fateful afternoon in August, Pompeii was a prosperous provincial town with an estimated population of 20,000. They were still in the process of repairing buildings that had been damaged by an earthquake sixteen years earlier, but apart from that it was very much "business as usual".

The first sign of the eruption was a towering column of smoke, nine miles high! Then ash and pumice stone rained on the town burying it under more than 20 ft of debris. Some of the citizens fled the city at the first sign of trouble but others were killed either by lethal sulphur fumes, intense heat causing their bodily fluids to boil, or were hit by lava and pumice stone.

Pompeii was left to slumber undisturbed under its ashy blanket until the 18th century when archaeologists started to explore this remarkable time capsule. Plaster was poured into empty spaces in the lava to make body casts of some of the victims caught in suspended animation, like the young man with arms stretched out to protect his mother, and the twisted body of a dog, still tethered by its chain.

This remarkable site is not about Roman ruins, broken columns and temples, it is about the townsfolk, the way they lived and of course the way they died. You will see a fully equipped tavern, with the customer's money still on the counter. Admire the luxurious mansions and fabulous art belonging to wealthy patrician families who came to Pompeii to escape the turmoil in Rome. Their "no expenses spared" houses were designed around an inner garden and had few outside windows, so that the owners could forget the world outside. You will also get to visit more modest dwellings as well as Public baths, temples, theatres, markets and the huge forum.

The volcano certainly brings death and destruction, as we have seen, but new life does spring up from the ashes. Vineyards flourish on the slopes of this sleeping monster, nourished by the incredibly fertile volcanic soil. Those who are brave enough to disregard the ever present danger and work the land, cultivate the same grape varieties as the ancients (as proved by excavated seeds). Some of these varieties can be found in Vesuvius's legendary wine "Lachryma Christi" or the tears of Christ. It is said that Christ wept over Vesuvius and from his tears grape vines blossomed, bearing grapes with a heavenly taste.

Casa Setaro is a winery located on the slopes of Vesuvius, just inside Vesuvius National Park. For generations the Setaro family have cultivated grapes and produced wine in the looming shadow of the volcano. The company is run today by Massimo Setaro, whose work ethic, craftsmanship and passion for wine was handed down to him by his father Don Vincenzo. It is therefore no surprise that his excellent wine "Lacryma Christi Don Vincenzo Riserva" is dedicated to the man who taught him all he knows.

When you visit the Winery you will learn about the production process at Casa Setaro, which respects the environment and the natural characteristics of the grape variety.

The tour continues in the wine cellar which was dug out of the lava flow from the last big eruption. Here they will explain the wine making process from fermentation in steel vats to ageing in Oak barrels.

Afterwards you will be treated to a Neapolitan lunch consisting of five emblematic dishes complemented by 5 different wines.

Large coaches cannot access the pier so a minibus will shuttle tour participants between the pier and the parking area. On your return, the minibus will take you back to the pier.

The drive to Pompeii takes about one hour. We recommend comfortable footwear, suitable for walking on cobblestoned streets.

The attractions in Pompeii are behind bars and glass windows.

Pompeii is a very busy site; it is important to stay with your guide at all times. The pace of the tour is moderate, as there are many things to see in this vast city

The tour is not recommended for guests with walking difficulties

Timing is subject to traffic conditions, especially during high season and weekends.

At the end of the tour you may choose to stay in Sorrento and explore the village on your own.



AMALFI

Amalfi was one of the original maritime republics. It has a glorious history. Compared to the ancient cities of Campania it was founded rather late--around the 6th century--yet Amalfi flourished while other ancient towns were in decline. Its inhabitants were expert sailors and built up an extensive trade with the East, founding churches and hospitals and making their town the richest in the south of Italy. The Amalfi fleet, together with those of Naples and Gaeta, defeated the Saracens who were about to launch an attack on Rome in 849. The 11th century saw the town at its pinnacle of greatness. Its dockyards built ships for foreign countries as well as Italy's own fleets. Amalfi minted its own money and had its own maritime laws. The famous "Tabulae Amalphantane" is kept in the town's museum. Amalfi sailors were the first to use the compass. The founder of the order of St. John of Jerusalem also came from Amalfi. Amalfi was, alas, defeated by Pisa, and although it was among the first maritime republics to rise, it was also the first to fall into decline. It became part of the principality of Salerno, losing and regaining its independence under the Normans, only to lose it again under Norman Roger II. After belonging to a succession of different lords, it was taken by the Aragonese, with a subsequent history similar to that of other Campanian towns. The Cathedral of Amalfi, atop its great steps, remains a testimony to the town's ancient glory. It is dedicated to St. Andrew. A great statue of St. Andrew, sculpted by Michelangelo Naccherino, stands in a 13th century crypt along with the statues of St. Stephen and St. Lawrence by Pietro Bernini. The so-called Cloister of Paradise is attached to the Cathedral. It is accessible via an arched passageway decorated with frescoes by Pietro Cavallini. Sarcophagi, Roman and medieval objects d'art are kept here. The other tower, built at the same time as the Cathedral's bell tower, is now annexed to a hotel that occupies the old 12th century monastery.

Ravello & the villa Rufolo

By air-conditioned motor coach

English speaking guide only

Minimum 20 participants, no maximum

Duration 3h30

€ 54

You will enjoy a pretty and panoramic drive climbing up from the harbor in Amalfi to Ravello, one of the most famous and popular spots along the Amalfi coast.

You'll see the Duomo as you enter the main square of Ravello. The linear facade preserves, from the original Roman design, three oculi and a lit window above the entrance portal. Decorated with a classical marble cornice, it has a bronze door that was crafted in 1179 by Barissano da Trani. On the right hand side of the church stands the bell tower, built in the 13th century. When the Duomo is open, you can peek inside and see the majestic marble pulpit, richly cased with mosaics, friezes and columns, supported by six slim spiral posts resting on marble lions.

You'll visit the Villa Rufolo, a spectacular complex formed by the main palazzo, built in the second half of the 13th century. You'll see various buildings in Arabian-Sicilian style on a wide terrace facing the gulf. Entering the smaller 14th century tower, the tour continues along a small avenue flanked by cypresses until reaching the Moorish courtyard in front of the palazzo, decorated with friezes and arabesques. Beyond the Knights room, the picturesque belvedere opens up to reveal a luxurious garden with pines, cypresses and exotic plants. From here you can descend to the lower terrace, bright with flowers and exotic plants. Richard Wagner was particularly struck by the spectacular nature of the gardens. He saw in them the materialization of the magic garden, or Klingsor, in his "Parsifal."

Enjoy the return ride back to Amalfi; your senses will be saturated by the spectacular panorama.

This tour involves some walking.

The local authorities of the Amalfi Coast often apply new traffic regulations, such as a change of the drop off/pick up site, establishment of one-way streets through the Amalfi drive, etc. These rules could affect the coach tours.

Timing is subject to traffic on the Sorrentine drive, especially during high season and weekends.



Positano and Amalfi Coast

By private boat

English speaking guide

Minimum 25 participants, no maximum

Duration 3h30

€ 52

The Amalfi Coast offers a scenery of incomparable beauty, characterised by a succession of uncontaminated beaches, bays, caves, inlets and villages perched on cliffs. Since time immemorial, artists and travellers have fallen under the spell of its tiny villages lost amidst the orange, lemon and olive groves, the vines and bougainvillea.

In the fifties, the glamour of the Dolce Vita turned the small fishing village of Positano into a retreat for the wealthy and a popular resort area. The Amalfi Coast has been classified as a UNESCO World Heritage site since 1997.

After a panoramic transfer of 45 minutes by boat you will reach the village of Positano. Explore the village at leisure and spend some time browsing in some of Positano's 200 boutiques, which sell the casual, locally made cotton clothing that the town is famous for.

Then meet your guide and board the public boat for a ride back to Amalfi. After your return in Amalfi, you will be free to visit Amalfi's Cathedral and village on your own, or walk to the landing pier to return to the ship.

Comfortable shoes are suggested, as sometimes surfaces are uneven and steep.

The ride to Positano is approximately 45 minutes.

Time at leisure and free exploration in Positano.

This tour is subject to weather conditions.

TAORMINA

Giardini Naxos is Taormina's small port. Taormina is the most important resort in Sicily and Southern Italy. It is located on Mount Tauro, between the jagged mountains and the calm Ionian Sea. The town's origins date back to 398 AD. The Romans considered Taormina an ally, but as the city sided with Pompeus against Octavianus, it was reduced to the rank of mere colony. Thanks to its strategic position, it remained important to the various powers that held sway over the island. In 902, after a long siege, it fell to the Muslims. They destroyed it, but the caliph Al Muezz later rebuilt Taormina on a grander and much more beautiful scale. In 1079 it was conquered by the Normans, and was chosen as the seat of the Sicilian Parliament for the King's election in 1410. Its most important monument is the theater, built in the 3rd century BCE by the Greeks and restructured by the Romans. The site is really spectacular. The theater is situated between looming Mount Etna and the sparkling blue sea. It is one of the most beautiful landscapes in the world, a beautiful jewel set among the blue sky, aquamarine sea, green valley and white snow-capped peaks of Mount Etna.



Mount Etna

(Depending on weather conditions and local authorizations)

By air-conditioned motor-coach

Minimum 18 participants, no maximum

Duration 5 h30

€ 114

Majestic Mount Etna is Europe's largest active volcano, rising some 11.000 ft (3340 m). The slopes of the volcano soar up to over 3296m and its flanks are dotted with cones and craters. From the peaks you can gaze out across the Gulf of Catania and see the woods, orchards and vineyards below.

The main attraction is Etna's crater and the awe-inspiring petrified remains of the lava flows. The tour starts with a drive through the small town of Naxos. The scenic route to Mount Etna is a winding mountain road, passing the town of Giarre and the villages of Santa Venerina and Zafferana. The ever changing scenery is quite delightful : lemon groves, orchards, vineyards, chestnut and pine woods blend with the hardened lava and endless volcanic cones. The Silvestri crater is located about 1950 m above sea level.

Upon arrival you will transfer to 4x4 minibuses or cable car to climb to approximately 2500m and then carry on upwards until you reach the base of the main crater 2950m above sea level. A professional mountain guide will accompany you on a 30-45 minute hike to see the most recent lava flow and walk around the crater (depending on volcanic activity).

We recommend comfortable shoes and a jacket or sweater. It can be cold and windy on Mount Etna, even in summer time

It is a 1h15 drive each way to reach Mount Etna

This tour is only available in summer, weather permitting. You will visit either the North or the South side of the volcano depending on current volcanic activity

You will reach an altitude of approximately 2950m above sea level – if you suffer from high blood pressure or heart disease please check with your doctor about the advisability of going on this excursion

Sicilian brunch, wine tasting and transfer to Taormina

By air-conditioned motor coach

Minimum 18 participants, maximum 40

Duration 7 hours

€100

You will board the motor coach at the pier and travel on the southbound motorway to Giarre. At this point you will leave the motorway and continue to Mount Etna on a scenic road which winds around the mountainside, past the town of Giarre and the village of Santa Venerina, through vineyards and woodland. As you drive through the village of Santa Venerina you will see the traces of the damage caused by the 2002 earthquake.

The first stop is the country estate of the aristocratic di Villagrande family, where you will be welcomed by a member of the family who will take you on a tour of the cellar and the winery, and tell you all about the qualities of Mount Etna wine from the point of view of a real expert. The views over the fertile valley are magnificent and it is these vine covered fields that produce the local wine. A combination of local varieties of grape, an optimum climate and lava enriched soil combine to produce this unique wine. After the guided tour you will head back to the old stable where you will be served a Sicilian brunch prepared with local products and get to sample the different wines produced on the estate.

The excursion continues to Taormina. The town is perched on a terrace overlooking the sea and has a delightful medieval feel. There will be time for a stroll along the Corso Umberto. Just off this pedestrian street you will find many small boutiques selling local handicrafts and cafés where you can relax with a cup of real Italian coffee and enjoy some local sweets. You may decide to go and visit the Roman amphitheatre.

You will then be driven back to the pier.

45 minute drive from the pier to the Barone di Villagrande Estate

45 drive to Taormina

Wine and water included at lunch



LIPARI

There are seven small main islands off the Aeolian archipelago: Lipari, Vulcano, Salina, Alicudi, Filicudi, Panarea and Stromboli. The hill isles are the product of volcanic phenomena and offer an inexhaustible source of fascinating countryside scenery. The islands have been inhabited since prehistoric times. King Ausone's son, Liparo, founded the first settlement on the Lipari coast. Around 580 BCE, Greek colonization began on the Lipari islands. Lipari was besieged by the Athenians during their expedition to Sicily in 427 BCE, and in 304 BCE it was plundered by Agatocle from Syracuse, who pillaged the wealth of the temples. The Romans conquered Syracuse in 252. In the following centuries it fell into decline. It flourished once again under the Normans. In 1544, a tremendous tragedy befell the islands: Lipari was savagely plundered and destroyed by the Turkish fleet. The 9,000 inhabitants became slaves of the occupying force after 10 days of desperate resistance. Immigrants from Sicily and Southern Italy later repopulated the town. Lipari boasts endless beaches, bays, grottoes and a rich seabed, as well as geological and volcanic formations. The archeological museum of Lipari is among the most important in Europe. It highlights many aspects of history, including prehistoric villages from seven thousand years ago.

Island tour

By air-conditioned motor coach

Duration 3 hours

Minimum 20 participants, maximum 80

€ 50

The volcanic islands known collectively as the Aeolian or Lipari Islands emerge from the deep blue waters of the Tyrrhenian sea between Sicily and Southern Italy.

Legend has it that they were once the exclusive realm of Aeolus, God of the Winds, but now visitors are welcome to enjoy the unspoilt natural beauty of the islands with their pristine beaches, volcanoes and thermal spas, not to mention the excellent local cuisine.

Our ship anchors off Lipari, the main island in the archipelago, and guests will take a tender boat ashore to Marina Corta. Here in the bustling heart of the village, amidst the lively cafés, restaurants and attractive shops, you will meet your guide and walk to the motor coach for a scenic tour of the island.

Lipari is the largest of the Aeolian Islands and the first inhabitants can be traced back to a few centuries before 4000 BC. Nowadays the island is a highly prized tourist destination, appreciated as much for the beauty of its coastline with its crystal waters and its unique geological features: obsidian streams and pumice stone quarries, as for the archaeological interest of the site.

The excursion begins with a drive inland towards the hills to reach Quattrocchi, a panoramic look out post 300m above the sea. This lofty eyrie affords magnificent views of Vulcano Island with its stacks, sulphur springs and fumaroles, openings in the earth's crust once thought to be the entrance to the Underworld. From our next view point you can admire not only Salina, the second largest Aeolian island, situated close to Lipari, but also, weather permitting, the other islands of the archipelago.

The excursion continues with a visit to the pumice stone quarries where the light porous stone is extracted; here the white mountain sides are in dramatic contrast to the black obsidian lava flows.

The last stop before driving back to Lipari is the little village of Canneto on the east coast of the island.

During this panoramic tour there will be a short stop at "Marisa's place", where you will have the opportunity to sample local Malvasia wine and cookies. Malvasia grapes have been cultivated since time immemorial in the Mediterranean region and produce a sweet desert wine, fortified by the strong rays of the island sun. Traditional Aeolian delicacies include Nacatuli – small cookies stuffed with almonds, cinnamon and mandarin. Sesamini, flavoured with vanilla and orange and covered with sesame seeds and Spicchitedda : made with almonds mulled wine and cinnamon.

For those who wish to do a little exploring, there will be time to walk around the city before going back to the ship.



Vulcano

By boat

Minimum 25 participants, maximum 50

Duration 3h30

€ 60

Disembarking from the tender you will reach Marina Lunga, in the port of Lipari, where you will meet your guide and embark a private motorboat for a short ride to Vulcano. Vulcano is a small volcanic island in the archipelago of the Eolie. The island has three volcanoes. One is ancient and has been dormant since the Prehistoric Era. It forms the main mass of the island. The points of highest elevation are Monte Saraceno at 481 meters, Monte Aria at 500 meters, and Gran Cratere (or Fossa di Vulcano) at 386 meters. Gran Cratere, which is still active, dominates the northern part of the island. It is characterized by strange formations and coloration, especially near the summit.

Upon arrival in Vulcano you will either walk towards the base of the volcano, enjoy a short visit of the village, or go to the thermal wells. The wells, from which sulphurous steam rises, are composed of salt water and clay mud with a very high sulphur content that prohibits the growth of pathogens. The renowned therapeutic complex can treat three groups of health problems: those of the joints, skin, and respiratory system. The tour continues to the hot sea waters (you can swim in there if you wish), the fumaroles.

Return to the boat and sail back to Lipari on a scenic cruise past the west coast of Vulcano, Vulcanello, Spiaggia di Ponente, Grotta del Cavallo, I Faraglioni, and Lipari.

The ride from Lipari to Vulcano is 20 to 30 minutes.

On the way back you will enjoy a scenic sailing of approximately one hour.

If you plan on taking a mud bath, wear dark colored bathing suits. Do not wear jewelery, as the sulphur may cause a chemical reaction. Be aware that eye-irritation can occur (goggles, beach towel and water shoes can come in handy).

The guide will take you to the thermal wells, those choosing to walk to the village or to the volcano base will be on their own.

GAETA

Gaeta is an enchantingly pretty coastal town in the province of Latina in the Lazio region, equidistant between Rome and Naples. Its wonderful climate has made it a favourite seaside resort since Roman times. The town has a rich history and many artistic treasures. Historical highlights include the Angevin – Aragonese castle which dominates the town and affords spectacular views of the city rooftops and the sea. It was built in either the 6th or 7th centuries but it is first mentioned in documents from 1233 concerning Frederick II's decision to extend and reinforce the original edifice.

A few steps away from the harbour stands the Cathedral of Saint Erasmus, patron saint of Gaeta. The cathedral, built on the ruins of a 7th century church, was consecrated in 1106. It has an impressive 57 metre Byzantine style tower bell tower ornamented with majolica and the interior of the church is richly decorated with paintings, bas relief carvings and intricate mosaic work on the floor.

Other interesting religious buildings include the sanctuary of St Annunziata built in 1354 in the Gothic style, which boasts fine paintings and a magnificent golden chapel, and the neo Gothic temple of St Francis, donated to the town by Charles II of Naples and Ferdinand II of Bourbon Two Sicilies to honour the saint who sojourned in Gaeta and founded a small convent there.

The church stands at the top of a monumental staircase and offers spectacular panoramic views of the coastline. In front of the church is the statue of a woman holding a cross representing Faith, and the external façade has statues of the church's benefactors, Charles II of Naples and Ferdinand II of Bourbon Two Sicilies as well as a statue of St Francis himself.

The Archaeological Museum, housing artefacts dating from Roman times, is also well worth a visit, as is the Art gallery where you can admire 15th century frescoes by Giovanni da Gaeta and Renaissance and Baroque artwork by Teodoro D'Errico, Battista Beinaschi, Luca Giordano and Sebastiano Conca.



Sperlonga

By air-conditioned motor coach

Minimum 20 participants, no maximum

Duration 3h30

€48

Take a leisurely drive in air-conditioned comfort to the little town of Sperlonga, surely one of the most attractive seaside towns in Italy. Sperlonga consists of a cluster of whitewashed houses, clinging to a limestone promontory rising above the sea. It has been a popular holiday destination for Italians since Roman times when the emperor Tiberius built his summer residence there in the 1st century. His luxurious multi-storey villa was embellished with a remarkable collection of art objects including heads, busts, statues and marble groups. Tiberius loved throwing magnificent parties and this imperial residence included a fabulous grotto dining room where guests would recline on couches carved out of the rock and be entertained by musicians while they feasted on platters overflowing with delicacies. The grotto was sumptuously decorated with groups of statues depicting episodes from the life of Homer's hero, Odysseus.

The site was first discovered in 1957 by civil engineers who were building a coast road, before being properly excavated by archaeologists.

In 26 AD the roof of the grotto collapsed nearly killing the Emperor, burying several servants alive and smashing the sculptures to smithereens; so the statues, on display at the archaeological museum have had to be painstakingly reconstructed bit by bit.

In the 1950's and 60's Sperlonga welcomed glamorous celebrities such as Brigitte Bardot and Marlene Dietrich, and the town still attracts affluent visitors in search of beautiful beaches, fine food and six month long summers.

The coach will drop you off at the museum and then you will walk through the archaeological site to reach the grotto, returning the same way.

At the end of the guided tour, you will have some leisure time to stroll through the narrow streets of the old town and do a bit of exploring on your own.

This tour involves wading over uneven surfaces and cobble stones and there are steps to be negotiated – it may not be suitable for those with walking difficulties

The drive to Sperlonga takes 15 minutes each way.

After the visit of Tiberio's grotto, you will be transferred by coach to Sperlonga- the guide will provide you with historical and cultural information, then you will have time to stroll around on your own.

Trekking to Mount Orlando

Transfer by van to the departure point

A moderately strenuous tour over uneven ground and cobblestone paths

Minimum 20 participants 20, maximum 30

Duration 3hrs

€33

The headland of Monte Orlando, overlooking Gaeta, is a protected wildlife park, a paradise for bird watchers and nature lovers. There are several hiking trails across the park affording magnificent panoramic views.

You will be dropped off at the parking area and begin climbing the mountain; on the way up you will pass by the sanctuary dedicated to the Holy trinity located on "la montagna spaccata" or split mountain. Legend has it that the earth groaned at the moment of Christ's death, causing an earthquake which split the mountain causing three vertical crevices to be formed.

You will also see the ruined military fortifications put in place by King Charles V, Napoleon's army and the Bourbons, including look-out posts, batteries, powder magazines, tunnels and army barracks. This infrastructure was also used by the Nazis who occupied Gaeta during the Second World War.

The tour continues to the top of the mountain which is dominated by an impressive circular mausoleum. This is the tomb of one Lucius Munatius Plancus, a renowned Roman General who founded two Roman colonies during his military campaigns: Lugdunum in France, modern day Lyon, and Augusta Raurica in Switzerland which is now called Basel. Climbing to the top of the mountain is well worth the effort, and you will be rewarded by stunning sea views before making your way down again.

The going is quite difficult in parts and this tour is not recommended for anybody with mobility issues (approx 1h45 walking)

It is a round trip tour.

