

SICILY & MALTA TOURS

FRIDAY, MAY 31st

GUIDED WALKING TOUR OF PALERMO

Today we will be with our guide Raeffella who will take us on a nice tour of Palermo. We will visit some amazing cathedrals and churches. Other than the admission fees this tour is included in your package.

SATURDAY, JUNE 1st

MONREALE AND ERICE



We've got a terrific and leisurely day planned for you today with this two stop, full day bus tour with our guide Raeffella.

We'll start off by taking a tour of [Monreale Cathedral](#) which is quite amazing. Famed for its glorious golden mosaics, Monreale Cathedral is perhaps the finest Norman building in Sicily. Monreale Cathedral was built from 1174 to 1185. It was commissioned by William II (1154-89), the Norman ruler of Sicily, who wished to demonstrate the magnificence of his kingdom and outdo the splendid [Palatine Chapel](#) built by his grandfather, Roger II. The project employed both Sicilian and Byzantine craftsmen, resulting in a magnificent fusion of eastern and western influences. It is part of a grand royal complex a few miles outside of [Palermo](#).

After our visit here we will visit the medieval town of [Erice](#). This singular city, located on a mountain overlooking the Tyrrhenian coast of western Sicily, was ancient Eryx, a

prosperous [Elymian](#) and Carthaginian city, boasting a well-known temple to a Phoenician fertility goddess, [Astarte](#) (later identified with Venus and worshipped by the Romans) and its own eponymous - if mythical - hero, the Elymi ruler Eryx. Both Hercules and Aeneas are associated with ancient Erice.



COST: with bus, guide and entry fees - **\$52**



SUNDAY, JUNE 2nd

PALERMO TO TAORMINA

On our way to Taormina today we will have some options that I am still looking in to. One will be to stop at [Cefalu](#), a nice seaside town along the way. You may never want to leave. Then there's [Castelbuono](#), a lovely town in the middle of Madonie Mountains. There is a castle and the Cathedral to visit and our guide tell me they have the best ice cream! Admission fees will be on your own, otherwise there is no cost to today's tour.

Monday, June 3rd

TAORMINA WALKING TOUR

Today we will enjoy a walking tour of our town of Taormina with our guide Chiara Rozzi. From our hotel we'll first have a look at the Palace Duchi di Santo Stefano. We'll stop on the cathedral square to see the fountain with the symbol of the town. Along the Corso Umberto (shopping road) we will get to the clock tower and to the panoramic square IX April. Then we will see the Palace Corvaja (courtyard), the Odeon and the church of Santa Caterina. We will finish the tour with the visit of the Greek-Roman theatre. Admission of 8 euro for the theatre is on your own, otherwise this tour is included.



Tuesday, June 4th

MT. ETNA



Today we will journey to Mt. Etna – a must do. After much research I believe I have come up with the ultimate game plan at the best possible price. We will make use of our motor coach to get us to the big parking lot at 2000 meters up the mountain. From there we will get on a cable car (30 euro – included in price) to take us up to another much higher point on the mountain. Then from there, if you really want to get high, you can get on a 4x4 truck that will take you to the very top for another 30 euro to enjoy some amazing views. Here's a video on youtube that I found that gives you a good look at what the cable car and 4x4 buses look like:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vA6xGW3neAM> Because of the weather conditions it's better not to commit in advance on the 4x4 as you can just pay for that on the spot. We will have our guide, Chiara with us leading us on a moderate hike along the ancient lava flows and tubes while we enjoy a fantastic view. On the way back we will stop at the highest restaurant in Sicily called " La Cantoniera ", the restaurant was destroyed by lava eruption in 1983 and reopened already in 1985. Anyway, it will be another wonderful day. **COST: \$90** This includes our transportation, guide and cable car.

MALTA

Thursday, June 6th

MORNING TOUR OF VALLETTA

This morning we will spend some time visiting the town we are staying at – Valletta, followed by a bus tour of the towns of Mdina and Mosta. The morning tour is included in your package (other than admissions). Then we will break for lunch and those people who want to sign



up for the afternoon tour will continue on to explore Malta.

In Valletta we will visit St John's Cathedral which is a gem of Baroque art and architecture. It was built as the conventual church for the [Knights of St John](#). The Grand Masters and several knights donated gifts of high artistic value and made enormous contributions to enrich it with only the best works of art. This church is till this very day an important shrine and a sacred place of worship. It is also a venue for cultural events. (entry fee if 6 euro is on your own). If you are not continuing our tour you can elect to stay in town or we will return you to our hotel but I hope everyone will continue on...

AFTERNOON TOUR OF MOSTA AND MDINA:

<http://www.maltasightseeing.com/en/content/70/The%20Tour%20of%20Mosta,%20Ta>

You will first drive to the city of [Mosta](#). Inspired by Rome's Pantheon, the church in the centre of the city was built in the 18th Century. It became known throughout the country in 1942 when during World War II, a



dropped bomb failed to explode, thus sparing the lives of some 300 people. This church has the third largest dome in Europe.

Finally we will visit [Mdina](#), Malta's ancient capital. It rests in a very majestic way, on top of a hilltop right at the centre of the island. Mdina is also called 'The Silent City' because of its literally quiet and narrow streets that give off a quaint yet very homey atmosphere. Mdina is not only considered to be one of Malta's precious jewels, but this ancient walled city is one of the best medieval fortifications. You will see magnificent views of the entire Maltese landscape. You will also visit St. Paul's Cathedral, a

Roman Catholic Cathedral built on the site where governor Publius was reported to have met Saint Paul following his shipwreck off the Maltese Coast. **COST:** With bus and guide - **\$25**

Friday, June 7th

GOZO TOUR: <http://www.maltasightseeing.com/en/content/71/Discovering%20Gozo,%20Malta>



After a twenty minute crossing, on setting foot in Gozo you will notice that although both islands are similar in history and development, Gozo has a character entirely of its own. Gozo, which is a three hilled island, is greener and more picturesque than Malta.

First stop is The Ggantija Temples that stand at the end of the Xaghra plateau, facing towards the south-east. This megalithic monument is in

fact two temples, built side by side and enclosed with a boundary wall. The southerly one is the larger and elder, dating back to approximately 3600 BC. It is also better preserved.



The second stop is Calypso's Cave, is said to be the cave where Ulysses was kept as a love prisoner for seven years by the nymph Calypso in the story of Homer's Odyssey. Calypso's cave lies near the stunning beach of Ramla Bay; the view is Magnificent!



You will then drive to Xlendi Bay, a popular beach and an ideal diving site. Xlendi is a typical Gozitan fishing village and harbours a number of fishing vessels. The next visit is The Citadella, also called as The Citadel, is on Malta's tentative list of future World Heritage Sites by UNESCO, who describes it as a small fortified town. An old prison is located within the city, as are the Courts of Justice.

After this visit you will stop for lunch in a restaurant in Rabat. Afterwards you will visit Ta' Pinu Basilica, a Roman Catholic Parish Church located 700 metres away from the village of Gharb and allows visitors to enjoy beautiful views of the area. After visiting this church, which is dedicated to Blessed Virgin of Ta' Pinu, you will also visit The Azure Window, a natural arch featuring a table-like rock over the sea. It is situated near two other famous landmarks - The Inland Sea & Dwejra Bay.

For this tour we are again hiring our own bus and guide and replicating this tour that another company offers but would have charged 58 euro to do. **Our price**, with bus, guide and ferry will be **\$35**

or: GOZO BIKE TOUR

I was contacted by a guy in Orange County who saw that we were going to Malta and highly recommended this tour, and I agree, that it sounds wonderful. So this is an alternative to the tour listed above.

We will go with Sergio with Malta by Bike for this tour that we take us to the nearby island of Gozo where we will enjoy a wonderful ride. The person who recommended this tour wrote about it in his blog: <http://bikenewportbeach.org/gozo-cycling-adventure/>

Our tour will include our hotel pick up, high quality mountain bikes with helmets, full day of touring around Gozo and a box lunch. Of course if this isn't for you, you can go to Gozo on our optional bus tour. <http://www.maltabybike.com/Adventures.aspx> click on "Legendary Gozo".

This tour normally runs \$130. **Our group rate is \$80!**



Saturday, June 8th

Three Cities, Marsaxlokk the fishing village and Blue Grotto Tour:

<http://www.maltasightseeing.com/en/content/69/The%20Three%20Cities%20and%20Wine%20Tasting%20Tour> & <http://www.maltasightseeing.com/en/content/87/Blue%20Grotto%20and%20Marsaxlokk%20Market%20Tour>



Today we're going to combine 2 different tours into one full day. Click on the links above to see more about today's itinerary.

The Three Cities is a collective description of the three fortified cities of Cospicua, Vittoriosa and Senglea. During the tour you will drive past Cospicua, a double-fortified harbour city and the largest of the three. It was also given a title as Citta' Cottonera, but erroneously the title is now used to define the whole region.

You will then arrive in [Vittoriosa](#). Vittoriosa is ideally situated for safe anchorage and over time it has developed a very long

history with maritime, mercantile and military activities. Prior to the establishment of Valletta as capital and

main city of Malta, military powers that wanted to rule the Maltese islands would need to obtain control of Vittoriosa due to its significant position in the Grand Harbour.

The third city [Senglea](#) is also called Civitas Invicta because it managed to resist the Ottoman invasion at the Great Siege of 1565. The name Senglea was given by the grandmaster who built it, Claude De La Sengle. The island on which Senglea lies was joined by a land bridge to Cospicua during the time of the Knights of St. John and as a result, it became peninsular in shape. During this tour you will walk through the various narrow streets shaded by many historic churches and buildings.



Then we'll drive to The Blue Grotto. The Blue Grotto is actually a number of sea caverns on the southern coast of Malta. Everyday from sunrise until about 1 p.m. a unique sight can be observed here. The cave's location combined with the sunlight lead to the water mirroring shows numerous shades of blue just like the famous blue grotto on the island of Capri! Several caverns mirror the brilliant phosphorescent colours of the underwater flora; other caverns show a deep dark shade of blue. If weather permits, you can do a 20 minute boat trip around the caves for an extra cost.

You we'll drive to the fishing village of Marsaxlokk. Marsaxlokk is a very popular attraction for tourists and locals because fresh fish and seafood caught during the same morning can be bought. The market is very interesting and attractive as many different items are sold. Although the market was originally a fish market, it has developed and now it also sells locally produced honey, fruit jams, wine as well as vegetables, souvenirs and clothes. Free time will be given in this picturesque village.



COST: with bus & guide - \$25

OUR GUIDES!

Raeffella – Palermo



Chiara - Taormina



Ann Marie – Malta

