

Travel with the World Affairs Council of Charlotte Kingdom of Sicily and the Knights of Malta

April 26 - May 6, 2013 (11 Days)

(*Additional Two Day Optional Trip to Rome also Available)

15 travelers have already signed-up to travel with the WAC Charlotte on this travel tour. If you're interested in going, please contact our office as soon as possible to secure your spot.



The spring 2013 World Affairs Council of Charlotte trip is a uniquely crafted journey touching all parts of beautiful Sicily, followed by a tour of the fascinating island nation of Malta and ending in the Eternal City of Rome.

- A full-time English-speaking experienced travel guide will be accompanying us throughout the trip
- Travelers will enjoy local Sicilian culture and participate in political and educational discussions that are part of the Council's program during this tour
- Enjoy local delicacies that are only available in April and May (and not other times of the year)
- The weather in Sicily and Malta will be in the mid to high-60s in April and May



Discover the history of one of Europe's oldest cultures spanning from ancient Greek, Roman, Vandal, Byzantine, Arab, Norman, Hohenstaufen, Catalan and Spaniard civilization to today's modern Italy.

April 26, 2013 - Charlotte/Munich/Palermo via Lufthansa

Depart Charlotte this afternoon via the services of Lufthansa Airlines nonstop flight to Munich with connecting service to Palermo. Our flight leaves Charlotte at 5:10 p.m. and arrives in Munich the following morning at 7:50 a.m. where you will clear EU immigration formalities. In-flight meals and entertainment offered.

***Upgrade to business class is available.**

April 27, 2013 – Palermo

Lufthansa departs Munich at 9:15 a.m. and arrives in Palermo at 11:20 a.m. Transfer to the Grand Hotel Piazza Porsa Palermo, which is centrally located.

After time for lunch and a rest break, enjoy a guided tour this afternoon of the bustling city, to include the Palermo Cathedral, triumphal Porto Nuova, the Norman Palazzo Reale (Royal Palace) – seat of Sicily's rulers for centuries and now home to the regional parliament.



Highlights of the palace are the Cappella Palatina built in 1132 and the Royal Apartments.

“Palermo is a city of decay and of splendor and, provided you can handle its raw energy, deranged driving and chaos, has plenty of appeal. Unlike Florence or [Rome](#), many of the city’s treasures are hidden, rather than scrubbed up for endless streams of tourists. Be prepared to explore: this giant treasure-trove of palaces, castles and churches has a unique architectural fusion of Byzantine, Arab, Norman, Renaissance and baroque gems. Palermitans themselves have inherited the intriguing looks and social rituals of their multicultural past. Life here is full on: a very public, warm-hearted and noisy affair.” – [Read More](#) (Lonely Planet)

Enjoy a welcome to Sicily complimentary dinner tonight in a local restaurant featuring Sicilian cuisine and wine.

April 28, 2013 - Palermo or Optional full day tour to Monreale and Cefalu

Start your day with a complimentary breakfast at the hotel.

Today, enjoy a full day in Palermo at leisure for sightseeing and shopping or take a full day optional tour which would include the following:



The Catacombs of the Capuchins to see the unbelievable memento mori, the mummification and arrangement of more than 8000 friars and local residents preserved in the catacombs between 1533 and 1920.

This will be followed by a visit to the nearby town of Monreale, home to one of the most celebrated medieval wonders of the world the Norman Cathedral with one of the finest cloisters in Italy – famous for the impressive glass mosaics covering the interior of the church, that chronicle Sicily’s Norman history.

Continue after independent lunch to the ancient city of [Cefalu](#), a fishing village and popular beach resort on the north coast of Sicily, famous for its sea views and the magnificent Norman Romanesque Cathedral.

Return to Palermo for independent evening.

April 29, 2013 - Palermo/Segesta/Erice/Marsala/Agrigento



Start your day with a complimentary breakfast at the hotel.

Full day of touring/traveling today around the west coast of Sicily visiting the abandoned ancient city of Segesta, built by the Elymians in 500 B.C. to tour the majestic Doric temple.

Continue along the coast to Erice, a small medieval town offering commanding views from its 2000 foot high location atop Mount Giuliano.

“One of Italy’s most spectacular hill towns, [Erice](#) sits on the legendary Mt Eryx (750m); on a clear day, you can see Cape Bon in Tunisia. Wander the medieval tangle of streets interspersed by churches, forts and tiny cobbled piazzas. The town has a seductive history as a centre for the cult of Venus. Settled by the mysterious Elymians, Erice was an obvious abode for the

goddess of love, and the town followed the peculiar ritual of sacred prostitution, with the prostitutes themselves accommodated in the Temple of Venus. Despite countless invasions, the temple remained intact – no guesses why.”

[Read More](#) (Lonely Planet)

Arrive in the wine town of [Marsala](#), famous for its fortified wine of the same name to visit a winery and enjoy a tasting. The day ends with arrival at the 5 star Hotel Villa Athena, located in the town of Agrigento in the very shadow of the Temple of Concordia in the Valley of the Temples.

Enjoy complimentary dinner tonight with wine on the Terrace of the Gods, overlooking the Temple. This beautiful hotel is one of the tour highlights.

“Best known for its sweet dessert wines, the historic centre of Marsala is an elegant town full of stately baroque buildings and bookshops within a perfect square of walls. It was founded by the Phoenicians who escaped the Roman onslaught at Mozia. Not taking any chances, they fortified their city with 7m-thick walls, which ensured it was the last Punic settlement to fall to the Romans.” [Read More](#) (Lonely Planet)



“Surrounded by green, [Agrigento's](#) rows of bland modern apartment blocks curve around [Sicily's](#) oldest tourist site (the Valley of the Temples, or Valle dei Templi), first put on the map by Goethe in the 18th century. In ancient times, Pindar declared that the people of Akragas were ‘built for eternity but feasted as if there were no tomorrow’ – nowadays the modern town, with its savvy inhabitants, has more in common with the character rather than the aesthetics of its ancient counterpart.” [Read More](#) (Lonely Planet)

April 30, 2013 - Agrigento/Piazza Armerina/Taormina

Start your day with a complimentary breakfast at the hotel.

Begin the morning with a walking tour of the Valley of the Temples, a UNESCO World Heritage Site, and explore the temples of Hera and Hercules and the Temple of Concordia.

Continue across the center of Sicily to [Piazza Armerina](#) and another UNESCO World Heritage Site, the [Roman Villa del Casale](#), one of the most luxurious Roman villas in Italy, noted for the richness and quality of the mosaics which decorate almost every room.



End the day in the breathtaking mountainside town of [Taormina](#) with sweeping views of two bays and majestic Mount Etna. Complimentary dinner and wine at a local restaurant tonight.

“Perched on its eyrie, [Taormina](#) is sophisticated, chic and comfortably cushioned by some serious wealth – very far removed from the banal economic realities of other Sicilian towns. But the charm is not manufactured. The capital of Byzantine [Sicily](#) in the 9th century, Taormina is an almost perfectly preserved medieval town, and if you can tear yourself away from the shopping and sunbathing, it has a wealth of small but perfect tourist sites.” – [Read More](#) (Lonely Planet)

May 1, 2013 - Taormina/Optional Tour to Mt. Etna



Start your day with a complimentary breakfast at the hotel.

The morning begins with a talking tour of one of the world's most picturesque resort cities. Beautifully restored medieval buildings, breathtaking views around every corner and a network of streets strewn with shops, bars and restaurants make this a paradise. The highlight of the tour is a visit to the Greek Theatre with Mount Etna in the background.

Afternoon at leisure to enjoy Taormina or take an optional excursion to Mt. Etna, known locally as Montebello (beautiful mountain), Europe's largest and most active volcano. Climb to a total of 8000 feet and see the dramatic change from landscape to moonscape.

Evening at leisure to enjoy Taormina.

May 2, 2013 - Taormina/Siracusa/Noto/Ragusa

Start your day with a complimentary breakfast at the hotel.

The ancient Greek city of [Siracusa](#) is the first stop today. Once one of the most important cities on the Mediterranean, Siracusa is known for the 5th century B.C. Teatro Greco, the 2nd century Anfiteatro Romano, once used by gladiators and the Ear of Dionysius. Guided walking tour of the oldest portion of Siracusa, the island called Ortygia.

"A dense tapestry of overlapping cultures and civilisations, [Siracusa](#) is one of [Sicily](#)'s most visited cities. Boosted by EU funding, derelict landmarks and ancient buildings lining the slender streets are being aesthetically restored. Settled by colonists from Corinth in 734 BC, Siracusa was considered to be the most beautiful city of the ancient world, rivaling Athens in power and prestige." - [Read More](#) (Lonely Planet)



Next stop is [Noto](#), the beautiful Sicilian baroque town completely rebuilt after the 17th century after an earthquake destroyed the city.

"Flattened in 1693 by an earthquake, [Noto](#) was grandly rebuilt by its nobles. It is now the finest baroque town in [Sicily](#), especially appreciable at night when the illuminations introduced in 2006 accentuate its beauty and intricately carved façades. The baroque masterpiece is the work of Rosario Gagliardi and his assistant, Vincenzo Sinatra, local architects who also worked in [Ragusa](#) and [Modica](#). Recently added to Unesco's list of World Heritage sites, Noto's fragile sandstone buildings are currently undergoing extensive restoration." - [Read More](#) (Lonely Planet)

Overnight will be, in arguably the prettiest city in Sicily, [Ragusa](#) at the lovely boutique hotel, Villa del Lauro, in the center of old Ragusa.

"Like a grand old dame, [Ragusa](#) is a dignified and well-aged provincial town largely overlooked by tourists. Like every other town in the region, Ragusa collapsed after the 1693 earthquake; a new town called Ragusa Superiore was built on a high plateau above the original settlement. But the old aristocracy was loathe to leave their tottering palazzi and rebuilt Ragusa Ibla on the original site. The two towns were only merged in 1927." [Read More](#) (Lonely Planet)

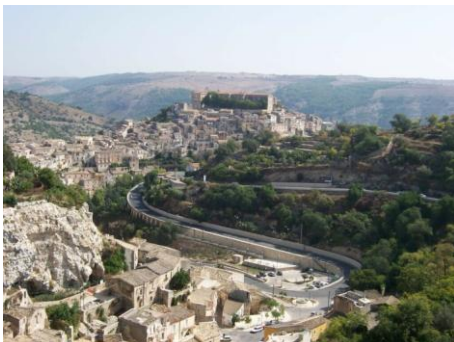
Dinner at leisure in Ragusa.

May 3, 2013 - Ragusa/Modica/Pozzello/Valletta, Malta

Start your day with a complimentary breakfast at the hotel.

Morning tour of Ragusa, perched majestically on a cliff above the sea, considered by many to be the most beautiful city in Sicily. Also, heavily damaged in the 1693 earthquake, Ragusa, a UNESCO World Heritage Site, is an ancient city whose origins can be traced back to the 2nd Century B.C.

After lunch, visit the beautiful city of [Modica](#), famous for its chocolate shops to watch the "chocolatiers" at their craft.



End up at the beach resort of Pozzallo to board the ferry to the island nation of Malta. Ferry will depart late afternoon/early evening for the 1.5 hour crossing.

Upon arrival, transfer to the Golden Tulip Vivaldi, for two nights, a resort hotel with commanding views of the sea and 15 minutes outside the city center of Valletta. The hotel is located right on the edge of the best known entertainment district with shopping, restaurants and bars.

Dinner at leisure in [Valletta](#).



May 4, 2013 - Valletta, Malta

Start your day with a complimentary breakfast at the hotel.

From its North African and Arabic influences (listen carefully to the local language) to the Sicilian-inspired cuisine, Malta is a microcosm of the Mediterranean. Few European countries have such concentrated history, architecture and, yes, beaches in so tiny an area.

"There's been an eclectic mix of influences and a roll-call of rulers over the centuries, but be in no doubt: Malta is not just a notional outpost of [Italy](#) or a relic of colonial Britain. This island nation (all 316 sq km of it, comprising the islands of Malta, Gozo and Comino) has a quirky character all of its own. From prehistoric temples, to the baroque architecture of [Valletta](#), feasts of rabbit to festas of noisy fireworks, rattling buses to colourful fishing boats, this nation has loads of unique charm." [Read More](#) – Lonely Planet

Malta boasts a vast and rich history with evidence of habitation as far back as 4th Century B.C. The country has some of the world's most ancient standing buildings (the Neolithic temples). Tour the main town of Valletta, founded in the 16th Century by the Knights of the Order of St. John of Jerusalem.

When UNESCO granted World Heritage listing to Valletta, it called Malta's wee capital 'one of the most concentrated historic areas in the world', and the city is certainly renowned for its massive fortifications and architectural excellence. Activity bustles around Triq ir-Repubblika and Triq il-Merkanti, but walk the quiet, narrow back streets to get a feel for everyday life. The city overlooks the impressive Grand Harbour to the southeast and Marsamxett Harbour to the northwest. [Read More](#) (Lonely Planet)

Explore Valletta in afternoon at your leisure.

Optional dining excursion to one of the finest restaurants in Valletta.

May 5, 2013 - Valletta, Malta/Rome

Start your day with a complimentary breakfast at the hotel.

This morning at leisure in Valletta or an optional tour to see some of historic Malta with visits to the ancient capital of Mdina, the Dingli Cliffs on the West Coast and the botanical gardens of San Anton (on the grounds of the official residence of the President of Malta).

"Elegant, aristocratic [Mdina](#) (aptly nicknamed the Silent City) is perched on a rocky outcrop in the country's southwest. Fortified for over 3000 years, it was [Malta](#)'s old political centre; today visitors can spend hours wandering the quiet, narrow streets. [Rabat](#) is the town settlement outside the walls." [Read More](#) (Lonely Planet)



Late afternoon return to Valletta Airport for the short flight to the Eternal City, Rome via Air Malta.

Short orientation driving trip of Rome en route to the hotel, the Hotel Ponte Sisto located close to the footbridge Ponte Sisto. Easy walk to the Trastevere Area of Rome with bars, restaurants and local color. Dinner at leisure in [Rome](#).

**Arrangements can be made for anyone who may need to leave directly from Malta to Charlotte on May 5th*

May 6, 2013 - Rome

Start your day with a complimentary breakfast at the hotel.

Depart Rome at 8:50 a.m. via Lufthansa Airlines, arriving in Munich at 10:30 a.m. Connect from Munich at 11:25 a.m. nonstop to Charlotte, arriving at 3:15 p.m.

Welcome Home!



OPTIONAL 2-DAY EXTENSION May 6, 2013 – Rome

For travelers staying two additional nights in Rome:

You will continue your stay at the Hotel Ponte Sisto for the duration of the trip and we will provide optional tours on those days.

Full free day in Rome for independent exploration or an optional tour of Ancient Rome including the Forum, the Palatine and the Colosseum.

"It may no longer be caput mundi (capital of the world), but Rome is an epic, bubbling-over metropolis harboring lost empires. One visit and you'll be hooked. Rome has a glorious monumentality that it wears without reverence. Its architectural heirlooms are buzzed around by car and Vespa as if they were no more than traffic islands. The city bombards you with images: elderly ladies with dyed hair chatting in [Trastevere](#); priests with cigars strolling the [Imperial Forums](#); traffic jams around the [Colosseum](#); plateloads of pasta in [Piazza Navona](#); sinuous trees beside the [Villa Borghese](#); barrages of pastel-coloured scooters revving up at traffic lights as if preparing for a race." [Read More](#) – Lonely Planet

The optional tour will also include the Basilica of San Clemente, which sits on a fourth-century basilica, built on top of a pagan temple. Tour continues to the Papal Archbasilica of San Giovanni in Laterano (St. John Lateran) - the cathedral of the Bishop of Rome.

May 7, 2013 - Rome/Vatican

Free day in Rome or optional tour across the Tiber to the Vatican to visit the Vatican Museum, Sistine Chapel and St. Peter's Basilica. A special visit today will be the Scavi Excavations, the necropolis underneath St. Peter's where the Tomb of Saint Peter is located. Only around 250 people per day are permitted on this tour.



Afternoon at leisure to enjoy Rome. Optional farewell dinner at local restaurant in Rome.

May 8, 2013 - Rome/Munich/Charlotte on Lufthansa

Start your day with a complimentary breakfast at the hotel.

Depart Rome at 8:50 a.m. via Lufthansa Airlines, arriving in Munich at 10:30 a.m. Connect from Munich at 11:25 a.m. nonstop to Charlotte, arriving at 3:15 p.m.

Welcome Home!

PRICE PER PERSON BASED ON DOUBLE OCCUPANCY:

*In addition to the pricing below, fuel surcharges and government taxes will be added at current rates, which are \$516 and \$316 respectively

*single room (upgrade) fee is \$835

- Minimum 15 Paying Passengers \$4325 (includes airfare)
- Minimum 20 Paying Passengers \$4075 (includes airfare)
- Minimum 25 Paying Passengers \$3825 (includes airfare)

OPTIONAL EXCURSION TO MONREALE/CEFALU/CATACOMBS

- Minimum 10 Paying Passengers \$95
- Minimum 15 Paying Passengers \$85
- Minimum 20 Paying Passengers \$75

OPTIONAL EXCURSION TO MT. ETNA INCLUDING CABLE CAR TO 8,000 FEET

\$55 Per Person Minimum of 10 Passengers

ROME 2-DAY EXTENSION BASED ON DOUBLE OCCUPANCY:

*single room (upgrade) fee is \$240

- Minimum 15 Paying Passengers \$1050
- Minimum 20 Paying Passengers \$975
- Minimum 25 Paying Passengers \$900

In addition to the above pricing, fuel and air/government taxes will be added at current rates at the time of final billing.

- Fuel is currently at \$516
- Tax is currently at \$316

A non-refundable deposit of \$500 is due by February 15th, 2013, with the balance required no later than February 20th, 2013. Please note that there will be 3% bank surcharge for credit card transactions. For additional information, please Ljubomir (L.J.) Stambuk, at lstambuk@worldaffairscharlotte.org or call 704-687-7760.

15 travelers have already signed-up to travel with the WAC Charlotte on this travel tour. If you're interested in going, please contact our office as soon as possible to secure your spot.

Mailing address: World Affairs Council of Charlotte, 9201 University City Blvd., CHHS 227, Charlotte, NC 28223