

TRAVEL WITH FRIENDS IN 2012



Sicily and Malta: from Homer to Caravaggio

7 – 21 April 2012 (15 days / 14 nights)

Tour Leader: Christopher Allen


Renaissance
Tours





Tour Leader

Christopher Allen

BA (Hons), MèSL PhD

Dr Christopher Allen is an art critic and historian who graduated from the University of Sydney, has worked at the Collège de France in Paris and lectured at the National Art School in Sydney. He is currently Head of Art at Sydney Grammar School. Christopher is the author of *Art in Australia from colonization to postmodernism* (London, Thames and Hudson, 1997), *French painting in the golden age* (London, Thames and Hudson, 2003), and several other books. His most recent book, *Jeffrey Smart: unpublished paintings 1940-2007* (Melbourne, Australian Galleries) was published in 2008. He was art critic of the *Financial Review* and is now national art critic for *The Australian*. Christopher speaks French and Italian and has travelled extensively throughout Europe for several decades, particularly in France and Italy.

Sicily and Malta: from Homer to Caravaggio

Unlock the secrets of Sicily, for thousands of years at the crossroads of Mediterranean civilization, in an absorbing tour that combines art, archaeology, myth and literature. Much of Homer's *Odyssey* is set in Sicily, from the one-eyed giant Cyclops to the sea monster Charybdis. Centuries later, Sicily was the refuge of Caravaggio, fleeing from hired killers and travelling from city to city painting masterpieces.

After two booked-out tours in 2009 and 2010, the 2012 version will include the island of Malta for the first time, extending both of the tour themes - here was the mythical home of Calypso, who detained Odysseus for years as her lover, and here too, Caravaggio became a knight of Malta and painted his largest work, the *Decapitation of St John*.

In between Homer and Caravaggio, discover some of the best Greek sites in the world, as well as excellent examples of Norman architecture and Byzantine mosaics. There will be also be time to relax and enjoy delicious local cuisine and fine wines.



Aerial view of Mdina and Rabat. Courtesy Visit Malta.

ITINERARY

Fri 6 April 2012

Depart Australia

Suggested departure from Sydney or Melbourne on Cathay Pacific flights via Hong Kong. Overnight in flight.

Sat 7 April

Arrive Palermo

Morning arrival in Rome. Clear customs and immigration formalities before a late morning flight to Palermo (not included in tour cost, approx. \$350 return in economy class). On arrival in Palermo, make your way to the hotel (taxis readily available, approximate cost EUR 30 - 40).

Palermo is a jumble of periods and styles from baroque to Moorish, to sumptuous Arab-Norman. It is Sicily's capital and lies on the north coast, along a bay known as the Conca d'Oro (the golden shell) because of its glittering citrus groves. This evening, join Christopher Allen and fellow travellers for a welcome dinner. (D)

Sun 8 April

Palermo

Morning orientation walk of the historic centre of Palermo. Attend a mass and see Easter celebrations all over town featuring impressive street processions and re-enactments of the Last Supper at many churches throughout the city.

Afternoon at leisure. Before dinner at a local restaurant, attend the opera dei pupi (marionette theatre) which has a long tradition in Southern Italy. The repertoire usually includes the lives of bandits and saints, historical events and Shakespearean dramas (subject to performance schedules). (BD)

Mon 9 April

Palermo

Excursion to Segesta and Erice. Splendidly situated against the hillside, Segesta archaeological park is dominated by a Doric temple (430BC). Probably founded, like Erice, by the Elimi, Segesta soon became one of the main cities in the Mediterranean basin under Greek influence.

After lunch continue to Erice, a mediaeval town which was settled by the Elymians and was an important religious site associated with goddesses of fertility. (BL)

Tue 10 April

Palermo

Morning visit to Palatine Chapel. Continue to Monreale, a hilltop town close to Palermo with one of the greatest cathedrals in all of Italy, the Monreale Duomo. Arabo-Norman art and architecture reached the pinnacle of its beauty in this cathedral, launched in 1174 by William II.

In the afternoon return to Palermo to visit the Galleria Regionale della Sicilia, housed in the Palazzo Abatellis, itself an architectural treasure. The superb collection shows the evolution of the arts in Sicily from the 13th to the 18th centuries. Continue to the Regional Archaeological Museum, one of the grandest



Opera dei Pupi (Marionette Theatre)



Palermo Duomo



Norman Castle Palermo



Monreale Cloister

archaeological museums in Italy, filled with artefacts from prehistoric times to the Roman era. The collection includes major Sicilian finds from the Phoenician, Punic, Greek, Roman, and Saracen periods, with several noteworthy treasures from Egypt. (BL)

Wed 11 April Palermo – Cefalù – Reggio di Calabria - Taormina

Depart Palermo and travel to Cefalù, a small fishing village. Explore Cefalù on foot. Walk down its main street, Corso Ruggero visit the Duomo, the splendid Romanesque cathedral boasting a stunning array of mosaics and the Museo Mandralisca.

Transfer to Milazzo where you will board the ferry to Reggio di Calabria for a visit to the Museo Nazionale della Magna Grecia. The Bronzi di Riace (Italian for 'Riace bronzes') are two famous full-size Greek bronzes of nude bearded warriors. These bronzes are from the early Classical Period and were made about 445 BC. They are a fine example of contrapposto - the weight is on the back legs and is much more realistic than Archaic stances.

Return by ferry to Messina and visit the Regional Museum of Messina. Highlights include the Polyptych of San Gregorio (1473) by Antonello da Messina and two masterpieces by Caravaggio, the Adoration of the Shepherds and the Resurrection of Lazarus. Continue to Taormina, built on a cliff, Monte Tauro, overlooking the sea. (BLD)

Thu 12 April Taormina

Morning visit to the Teatro Greco (Greek Amphitheatre) dating from the 3BC offering a view of rare beauty of the seacoast and Mount Etna.

Remainder of the day at leisure to explore the Roman 'Naumachiae', the 13th century Cathedral of Saint Nicolò, the 14th century Palazzo Corvaja, the 16th century Palace of the Dukes of Saint Stefano, the public gardens, the 'Badia Vecchia' (Ancient Abbey) and many others. (B)

Fri 13 April Taormina – Etna - Malta

Depart Taormina after breakfast and travel to Catania via Mount Etna (subject to volcano activity). Mt Etna is one of the world's most active volcanos and the highest point on the island. The drive up the Mount Etna mountain slopes takes you through picturesque villages and an ever changing landscape. The lower slopes of the volcano are extremely fertile with groves of oranges, lemons and other Mediterranean flora and of course vines which produce Sicily's best wines. During our tour of Mount Etna visit the Sylvester Craters located at an altitude of 1800m and travel to 3000m by cable car and 4WD.

Transfer to Catania airport for a late afternoon flight to La Valletta, the capital of Malta. (BLD)



Segesta Archaeological Park



Bust of Eleonora d'Aragona at the Galleria Regionale della Sicilia.



Galleria Regionale della Sicilia, housed in the Palazzo Abatellis.



Cefalù



Bronzi di Riace at the Museo Nazionale della Magna Grecia



The Adoration of the Shepherds by Caravaggio

Sat 14 April

Malta

Full day exploration of Valletta, which is inextricably linked to the history of the military and charitable Order of St John of Jerusalem. It was ruled successively by the Phoenicians, Greeks, Carthaginians, Romans, Byzantines, Arabs and the Order of the Knights of St John.

Described as the first complete example of the high Baroque anywhere, St John's Cathedral epitomises the role of its original patrons, the Knights of St. John. The Cathedral is home to Caravaggio's impressive work *The Beheading of St John the Baptist*. The Church museum is adorned with Flemish tapestries. Visit the Knights Armoury located in the 16th-century Grand Master's Palace, once the residence of the Grand Masters of the Knights of St John, is today the seat of Malta's parliament and the official residence of the Maltese president.

Finish with a visit to the Museum of Fine Arts with a collection ranging from the early Renaissance to modern times. (B)

Sun 15 April

Malta

Full day discovery of the sites beyond the city of Valletta - the Megalithic Temples, the Hal Saflieni Hypogeum and the Blue Grotto. The temples of Hagar Qim and Mnajdra are unique architectural masterpieces, given the limited resources available to their builders. The Ta' Hagra and Skorba complexes show how the tradition of temple-building was handed down in Malta. These temples represent a unique architectural tradition that flourished on the Maltese Islands between 3600 and 2500BC.

Optional cruise to the Blue Grotto and its neighbouring system of caverns mirroring the brilliant phosphorescent colours of the underwater flora (weather permitting).

The Hal Saflieni Hypogeum is a rock-cut underground complex that was used both as a sanctuary as well as for burial purposes by the temple builders. The three underground levels date from around 3600 to 2400 B.C. The monument is considered one of the essential prehistoric monuments in the world. (BL)

Mon 16 April

Malta – Pozallo - Syracuse

Late morning departure for Rabat and the ancient capital of Mdina. The Maltese Islanders are among the oldest Christian peoples in the world. St Paul, shipwrecked as a captive on route to Rome in AD 60, brought Christianity to Malta. His steps can be retraced in the shrines, grottos and catacombs of Rabat. Walking tour of the citadel of Mdina, the former capital Malta. Visit the main cathedral of Malta, dedicated to St Paul, patron Saint of Malta. Late afternoon departure by catamaran from Valetta Grand Harbour to Pozallo on Sicily. Transfer to Syracuse. (BL)



Teatro Greco (Greek Amphitheatre) in Taormina



Catania



Valletta



St John's Cathedral Valletta.
Courtesy Visit Malta.



St John's Cathedral Valletta.
Courtesy Clive Vella.

Tue 17 April Syracuse

After breakfast walk around the island of Ortigia, the historic centre of Syracuse and today a UNESCO World Heritage site.

Afternoon visit the Paoli Orsi Regional Archaeological Museum, one of the most important archaeological museums in Italy. Its artifacts, found throughout Sicily, survey the Greek, Roman, and early Christian epochs. (BL)

Wed 18 April Syracuse

Morning at leisure. In the afternoon visit the main archaeological site of the town. Highlights include the famed theatre of Syracuse, the altar of Hieron II, and the ancient quarries. Continue to the Galleria Regionale del Palazzo Bellomo housed in a beautiful 13C palace. The art gallery is home to The Burial of St Lucy by Caravaggio. (B)

Thu 19 April Syracuse – Enna - Agrigento

Depart Syracuse and travel inland to Enna, occupying a magnificent position on a plateau 948m above sea level. See the cathedral with its coffered ceiling and Gothic apses, Lombardia Castle which looks out over the valley and San Marco, erected on the site of an old synagogue. Stroll in the Quartiere Fundrisi with its typical single-storey houses.

On arrival in Agrigento visit the Valley of the Temples, one of the greatest sights left of the ancient world. The most majestic temples are the Temple of Juno, the Temple of Concord, and the Temple of Hercules. After dinner, return to the Valley of the Temples at night when these temples are lit, one of the most evocative sights of Sicily. (BD)

Fri 20 April Agrigento - Selinunte - Palermo

Morning visit to the Regional Archeological Museum. Depart Agrigento and travel to Selinunte, one of the superb colonies of ancient Greece, tracing its history to the 7th century B.C., when immigrants from Megara Hyblaea (Syracuse) built a new colony. Visit the Archaeological Garden with temples, in varying states of preservation, dedicated to such mythological figures as Apollo and Hera (Juno). Most date from the 6th and 5th centuries B.C.

In the afternoon return to Palermo. Tonight enjoy a special farewell dinner with Christopher Allen and fellow travellers. (BD)

Sat 21 April Depart Palermo

Tour arrangements conclude after breakfast. Transfer to the airport. Depart Palermo on a morning flight on Alitalia to Rome connecting with the midday departure on Cathay Pacific to Hong Kong and Australia. (B)

Sun 22 April Arrive Australia

Arrive Australia in the evening.

TOUR PRICES

Per person, twin-share	AUD7,850
Single supplement*	AUD1,450
Deposit (per person)	AUD500
Final Payment	6 February 2012

*Single travellers may request to share. Please advise at time of booking.

TOUR CODE: AGS Sicily

SUGGESTED AIRLINE:

Cathay Pacific via Hong Kong

Alitalia flights between Rome and Palermo. Please contact Renaissance Tours for fares and assistance with flight reservations.

TOUR PRICES INCLUDE:

- Accommodation in centrally located 4-star hotels with private facilities and daily breakfast (B)
- Meals as per itinerary (L=Lunch, D=Dinner) including special Welcome and Farewell dinners. Wine with dinners.
- Comprehensive sightseeing, visits to galleries and attractions with Christopher Allen including entrance fees as per itinerary
- Economy class flight from Catania to La Valetta incl. taxes (20KG luggage allowance)
- One way ferry from La Valetta, Malta to Pozallo on Sicily
- Lectures and talks with your tour leader throughout
- Gratuities for local guides and drivers
- Hotel portorage (1 piece per person).

DO NOT INCLUDE:

- International airfares
- Flights Rome – Palermo – Rome (approx. \$350 in economy class)
- Transfers on arrival and departure from Palermo
- Drinks with lunches
- Items of a personal nature, including telephone, laundry, taxis etc.
- Airport and marina portorage
- Travel insurance

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Palermo
★★★★



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Taormina
★★★★



Hotel
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Malta
★★★★



Grand Hotel
des
Etrangers &
Miramare
Syracuse
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Hotel Domus
Aurea
Agrigento
★★★★

NB. Hotels of a similar standard may be substituted

TERMS & CONDITIONS

How to Book

Complete, sign and return the Booking Form available from Renaissance Tours with your deposit of \$500 per person. Upon receipt of your Booking Form and deposit, you will receive confirmation of your place from Renaissance Tours.

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Deposit (at time of booking) AUD 500

Your deposit is used to pay supplier deposits and is non-refundable in the event of your cancellation. Your final payment is due 60 days before departure. Failure to make your final payment by the due date may result in cancellation of your booking and loss of deposit. We reserve the right to charge a late payment fee in the event of late booking and/or payment to cover additional communication and other expenses.

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59 - 45 days	25% of tour cost
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30 - 15 days	75% of tour cost
Less than 15 days	100% of tour cost

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It is your responsibility to be in possession of a passport valid for 6 months after the date of your return to Australia. You are also responsible for obtaining all necessary visas, inoculations and preventative medicines as may be required for the duration of the tour. Information about these matters or related items is given in good faith but without responsibility on the part of Renaissance Tours.

Travel Insurance

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- a copy of your travel insurance policy (or details of master policy)
- the emergency telephone number of your insurance company
- next of kin emergency contact

Fitness and Participation

While our tours do not require a special level of fitness, for the overall benefit of the group, all tour members must possess a moderate level of mobility, including the ability to:

- negotiate airports and railway stations without wheelchair assistance
- use combined shower/bath facilities (it is impossible to guarantee walk-in shower facilities)
- undertake walking tour of 2-3 hours duration, including using stairs, walking over cobblestones and other uneven surfaces
- stand for long periods in museums and other sites
- embark / disembark coaches, trains and other methods of transportation without assistance
- handle your own luggage

If you (or we) have any doubts about your ability to participate in your chosen tour, you may be required to have a doctor's appraisal. This would require a doctor to read the itinerary of your chosen tour and provide you with a written confirmation of your ability to participate.

Terms & Conditions

You can find a copy of the full terms & conditions attached to the Renaissance Tours booking form. They can also be found on our website at: www.renaissancetours.com.au or we would be happy to post you a copy on request.



Cover: Rabat Domvs Romana, Malta by Clive Vella
Back: Agrigento

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