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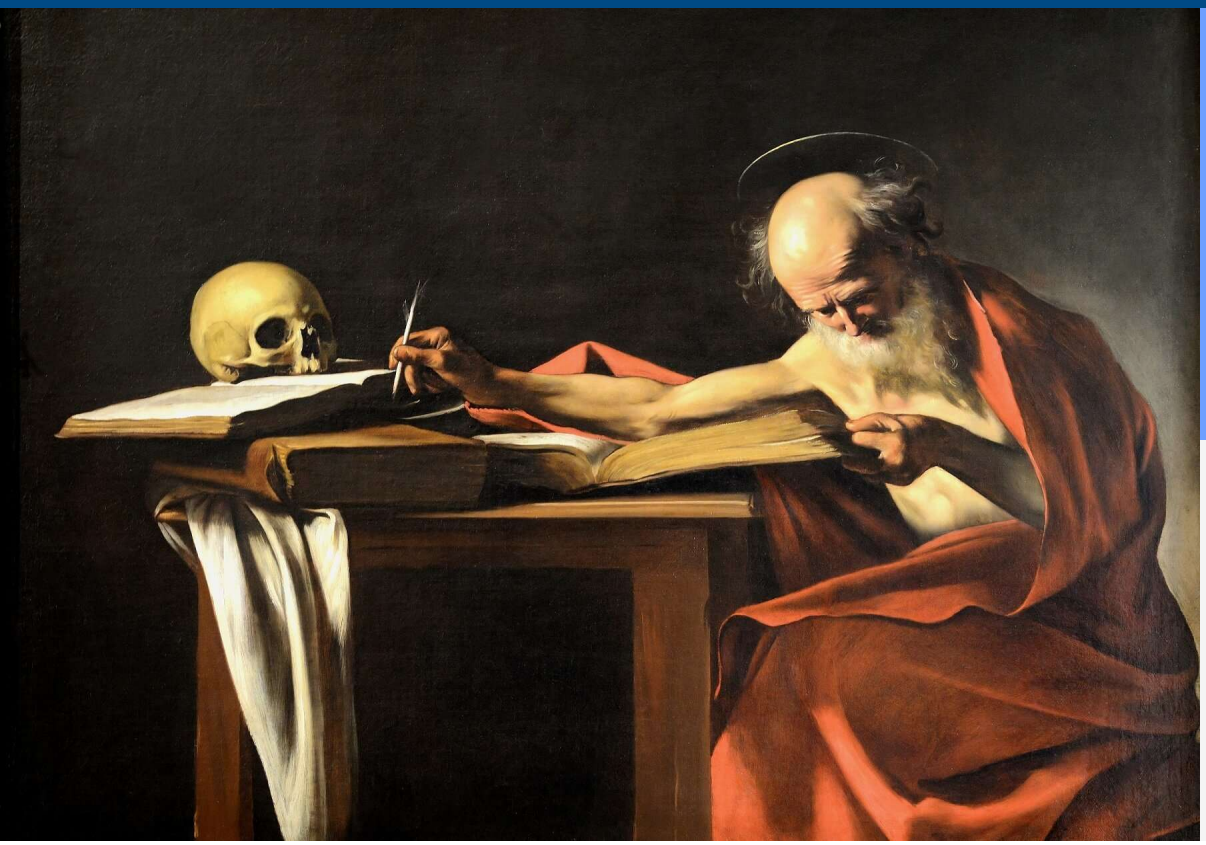

From
$16,444 NZD

Single Room
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Prices valid until
30th December 2024

20 days
Duration

Italy, Malta
Destination

Level 2 - Moderate
Activity

Caravaggio’s Journey | Small Group Tour in Italy

May 06 2024 to May 25 2024

Caravaggio’s Journey through Italy and Malta

Odyssey offers easy, convenient, and relaxed escorted small group tours across Italy and Western Europe. We explore Italy’s’s fairy-tale natural beauty, its ancient Roman, and Imperial heritage, its World Heritage Sites, and world famous cities, all with some truly spectacular scenery along the way as we follow Caravaggio. This and more is all waiting to be explored on one of Odyssey’s small group tours of Italy designed for the senior traveller, and led by experienced, and

enthusiastic like minded people.

Our escorted small group Caravaggio tour follows in the footsteps of this brilliant but troubled Italian painter. Born Michelangelo Merisi in the city of Milan in 1571, Caravaggio became one of the most famous painters of his time and became known for his intense, large-scale religious works. However, his quarrelsome nature and propensity for getting into trouble led to his rapid departure from many cities. Caravaggio established a brilliant artistic reputation but annoyed the authorities. His legacy retains an element of mystery that continues to enthral lovers of his work.

On this tour, you will have the opportunity to gain greater insight into this complex man who died at the age of just 39, while also taking in the beautiful scenery that Italy and Malta have to offer. Along with witnessing and learning about breathtaking art, you will explore amazing landscapes and have the chance to try delicious regional cuisine. One of the best aspects of this program is that you not only get to visit some of Italy's most popular destinations but you also get the chance to take the road less travelled and experience a different side of Italy informed by Caravaggio's unique biography.

This small group tour traces Caravaggio's journey, exploring the artistic works he left behind and the tumultuous life he led. We follow him from his birthplace in Milan to Rome, Malta, Sicily and on to Naples. He died under mysterious circumstances on his way back to Rome in 1610.

A controversial lifestyle forced Caravaggio from Milan to Rome. While in Rome, he was accused of murder and forced to flee again. Naples followed, and it was during this period that Caravaggio painted two magnificent altarpieces, *The Flagellation of Christ* and *The Seven Works of Mercy.* The success of these led to further commissions, and the artist's intense realism ushered in a new school of painting. It is not known why Caravaggio left Naples for Malta, but it appears he was welcomed here by the Order of Knights Hospitaller of St John of Jerusalem.

The Knights of St John were drawn from among the most aristocratic families of Europe and were very proud of their position in society, as

well as their history of military prowess. It would appear that Caravaggio had little to offer in this regard, apart from his fame as a painter. But he impressed the Grand Master and was made a Brother – a move that attracted more controversy. The rumours of murder were a concern to many, since murderers were prohibited from joining the order. Before long, Caravaggio was expelled anyway. He was involved in an assault on a higher order Knight and was arrested. He escaped and fled to Sicily. Here, it is believed he suffered from loneliness, but produced some of his greatest works. *David With the Head of Goliath* shows a pensive David holding a head that bears the artist's own features, ravaged by time and excess. Caravaggio sailed North from Naples back to Rome, but died on the journey in 1610.

Caravaggio was one of the most revolutionary painters of his time. He was the first great exponent of the Baroque School and his use of an intense form of chiaroscuro influenced many later painters, including Rembrandt and Rubens.

During his lifetime, however, it was not just his quarrelsome nature that caused him problems but also the style of his painting. Caravaggio's style was both lauded for its remarkable spirituality and condemned for being too realistic. At times, his critics saw his intense realism as bordering on the sacrilegious as he painted visceral scenes from the bible as if they were bloody dramas.

This thought-provoking article from the Guardian considers how we might appreciate art that is tainted by the sins of its maker. You could also watch this insightful documentary on Caravaggio. His work, 'Nativity' is also on the list of the FBI's 'most-wanted stolen works of art'.

Caravaggio Tour in Italy | Itinerary & Highlights

The tour begins in Milan where you will have the chance to stroll through the streets of Italy's most elegant city. We will enjoy a full day art tour here before moving on to Florence, with a lunch stop in Bologna. Here, at the birthplace of the Renaissance, we will see some Caravaggio's most important paintings as well as other memorable artworks in some

of Europe's best art galleries.

Later, we transfer to Rome where we see some of the most iconic sites of Ancient Rome. The second day in Rome we enjoy a full day of the Galleria Doria Pamphilj and the Contarelli Chapel at San Luigi dei Francesi. Here we see several of Caravaggio's canvases and learn about the history of these pieces.

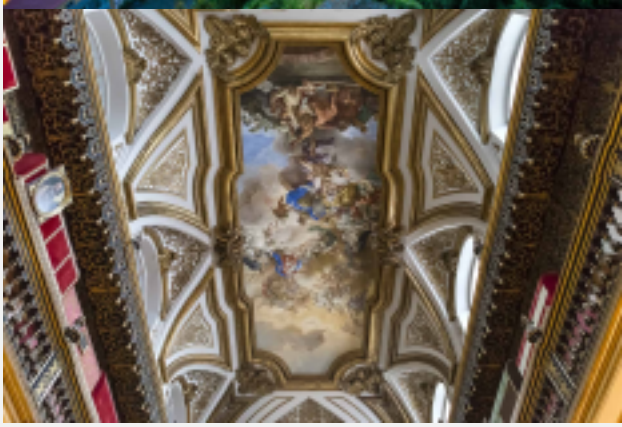
After a few more days of exploring and discovering in Rome, we head to Malta. In Malta, we stay in Sliema and visit the Grandmasters Palace and learn about Caravaggio's life as a Brother before his expulsion.

From Malta, it is onto Sicily. In Taormina, we will see the paintings of Mario Minniti, a lifelong friend of Caravaggio's. Minniti is thought to have been instrumental in procuring many of Caravaggio's commissions in Sicily.

We then head to Palermo in northwest Sicily to see Caravaggio's one remaining work here: the Seven Works of Mercy at Pio Monte della Misericordia.

From Palermo, we travel to the mainland coast, to Naples. We spend a day in stunning Sorrento, before making our way back to Rome to end this amazing travel experience.

If you wish to extend your stay in Italy, Odyssey's 3 week long stay tour studying Florence is typically paired with this tour. You can learn more about Italy with our country profile where all other tour departures are listed as well. For more details about this tour, click the 'Top 5' or 'Itinerary' buttons above! If you're keen to experience this tour, please call or send an email. Or, to book, simply fill in the form on the right hand side of this page.



Highlights

1. Gain a deeper appreciation and understanding of Caravaggio's life and art.
2. Learn from 20 local guides about Caravaggio as you visit over 35 relevant locations
3. See the wonders of the Palatine Gallery at the Pitti Palace, in Florence.
4. Enjoy a private tour of the Casino Ludovisi in Rome, complete with a Caravaggio
5. Follow Caravaggio across Italy to Malta, on to Sicily and back to Italy in 19 days

Itinerary

Day 1

Locations: Milan

Overview:

We meet at the hotel for a tour orientation and drinks in the afternoon, followed by a welcome dinner at a local restaurant.

Accommodation:

Eurohotel, or similar

Day 2

Locations: Milan

Overview:

Today, we take an introductory walking tour of Milan, with visits to the Cathedral to view Da Vinci's the Last Supper.

In the afternoon, we visit the magnificent Castello Sforzesco. The Sforza & Colonna family were important patrons for Caravaggio, as well as

being a significant force in the social and political life of Milan.

The art museums and galleries within the Castle have some beautiful pieces, including Michelangelo's unfinished 'Rondanini Pietà'.

Accommodation:

Eurohotel, or similar

Day 3

Locations: Milan

Overview:

Today is a full day art tour of Milan.

Today with a local guide we visit the Pinacoteca Brera and the Pinacoteca Ambrosiana. We also visit the Church of San Fedele, to view works by Simone Peterzano, Caravaggio's tutor during his early years as an artist.

Simone Peterzano (c. 1535 – 1599) was an Italian painter of the later Mannerism, native of Venezia. He is mostly known as the master of Caravaggio.

Accommodation:

Eurohotel, or similar

Day 4

Locations: Florence

Overview:

Today, we transfer to Florence, via a stop for lunch in Bologna. On arrival in Florence, we enjoy a guided tour of the Palatine Gallery at the Pitti Palace.

Here, the group will see numerous important paintings by Caravaggio, including Portrait of Fra Antonio Martelli, Sleeping Cupid, and The Tooth

Puller. This last is currently only attributed to Caravaggio.

The Palatine also has many other wonderful artworks, from Caravaggio's time and beyond.

In the evening, we head back to the hotel for another group dinner.

Accommodation:

Hotel Delle Nazioni or similar

Day 5

Locations: Florence

Overview:

The morning starts with a guided tour of the Uffizi, to see the paintings Bacchus, Medusa, and The Sacrifice of Isaac.

The rest of the day is yours to enjoy at leisure.

Accommodation:

Hotel Delle Nazioni or similar

Day 6

Locations: Rome

Overview:

This morning, we transfer south to Rome.

On arrival, we enjoy an orientation tour of Caravaggio's Rome. This walking tour includes key sites, such as the Spanish Steps, Trevi Fountain, and Piazza Navona. We will also visit the Pantheon, if time permits.

In the evening, we enjoy another group dinner.

Accommodation:

Hotel Assisi or similar

Day 7

Locations: Rome

Overview:

Today, we enjoy a full day art tour of the Galleria Doria Pamphilj and the Contarelli Chapel at San Luigi dei Francesi.

The Doria Pamphilj gallery is housed in a majestic palazzo owned by one of Rome's most ancient noble families, and houses several Caravaggio canvases: Penitent Magdalene, Rest on the Flight to Egypt, and one of his many depictions of John the Baptist. Two of these key paintings are described below:

1. Repentant Mary Magdalene (122.5 x 98.5 cm; oil on canvas (FC 357))

This painting dates back to the early stage of Caravaggio's activities in Rome (c. 1595) and portrays the Sinner who has just renounced her former worldly life.

2. Rest on the Flight into Egypt (135.5 x 166.5 cm; oil on canvas (FC 241))

The Rest is one of the masterpieces of the young Caravaggio. This is the artist's first "historic" painting of such substantial dimensions. Arriving in Rome at the early 1590s, he began by painting half figures on small canvasses. In the Rest, dated around 1595, some points in the style of the landscape and tones of the light still show the influence of Lombardy and Veneto in the artist's vision. The same model seems to have posed for this Madonna as for the Magdalene painted not long afterwards.

In the afternoon, we visit The Contarelli Chapel. This chapel contains the masterworks The Calling of Saint Matthew, Martyrdom of Saint Matthew, and Inspiration of Saint Matthew. This last piece was commissioned to replace the statues originally planned for the altarpiece, and forms the final part of this hugely evocative triptych. For a short video of this museum, please follow this link: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OcUMAHfo9MA

Cardinal Francesco Maria Del Monte, suggested that his own personal painter, Michelangelo Merisi, known from his home town as Caravaggio, should be contracted to paint oils on canvas for the two side walls where Cesari would obviously never put his murals in the Contarelli Chapel. Giuseppe Cesari, one of the foremost artists then active in Rome, was contracted to fresco the two side walls and the vault. Cesari finished the

vault by 1593, but then his attention and time were taken by Papal commissions.

The two paintings commissioned by the Cardinal and completed by Caravaggio caused a sensation. The third and final work commissioned, The Inspiration of Saint Matthew, the first version was rejected for the vulgarity of the saint's crossed legs and bare feet, and for a overly-familiar angel. In the second version on view today the angel keeps a respectful distance, and the saint is a little more dignified.

The Inspiration of Saint Matthew, Caravaggio, 1599-1600

Caravaggio's solution to decorating a typically gloomy Roman church interior is considered by commentators as revolutionary and brilliant. Visitors to the Contarelli Chapel today are confronted with paintings that use the gloom instead of fighting against it. The paintings themselves are dark – mostly shadow – one can surmise that perhaps the Caravaggio also considered the lighting in the chapel: each of the two side paintings is lit by a beam of light coming from the same direction as the natural lighting in the chapel itself.

Although the three paintings by Caravaggio are today the star attraction of the chapel, the frescos by Cesari, who, although overshadowed by Caravaggio, nevertheless represent the final flowering of the Mannerist school. The Cesari fresco was finished about 1593, at which point Caravaggio was working for Cesari – who was only two years older. Cesari, an acute businessman as well as a skilful artist, valued his assistant's gift for painting flowers and fruit, and Caravaggio may have had a hand in the swags of greenery decorating the vault.

Accommodation:

Hotel Assisi or similar

Day 8

Locations: Rome

Overview:

This morning, we enjoy a guided tour of the Galleria Borghese, home of Rome's largest single collection of Caravaggio paintings: Young Sick Bacchus, Boy with a Basket of Fruit, Saint Jerome Writing, Still Life with Fruit on a Stone Ledge, Madonna and Child with St. Anne, John the Baptist, and David with the Head of Goliath. It also contains the work

Still Life with Flowers and Fruit, which may be by Caravaggio, or one of his followers.

In the afternoon, we enjoy a private tour of the Casino Ludovisi, the last surviving remnant of what was once a sprawling country estate. Here, we have the chance to see a Caravaggio work that is not on canvas: the ceiling painting Jupiter, Neptune and Pluto. This unusual oil painting – similar in many ways to a fresco – covers the ceiling of one of the palace's halls with a scene from Roman myth. It was commissioned by the great art lover and collector, cardinal Francesco Maria del Monte, who played a major part in establishing Caravaggio's career in Rome.

Accommodation:

Hotel Assisi or similar

Day 9

Locations: Rome

Overview:

Today we enjoy a full day guided tour of the Palazzo Barberini and Capitoline Museums. The works and stories of Caravaggio dominate the day.

The National Gallery of Antique Art at palazzo Barberini holds 4 Caravaggio masterworks: Judith Beheading Holofernes, Narcissus, another John the Baptist, and Saint Francis in Prayer.

The Capitoline houses the canvases the Fortune Teller, and a further John the Baptist.

Accommodation:

Hotel Assisi or similar.

Day 10

Locations: Rome

Overview:

Today we take a tour of the Palazzo Colonna. This was the home of the enormously wealthy and influential Colonna family, who were patrons of Caravaggio throughout his career. In fact, it was to this palazzo that he

ran first after the murder that caused him to flee to Naples and then to Malta. For more information on the Palazzo Colonna, please visit this link: http://www.galleriacolonna.it/en/colonna-palace/.

The afternoon is free to continue sightseeing at your own pace.

Accommodation:

Hotel Assisi or similar.

Day 11

Locations: Sliema

Overview:

Today we travel to Malta.

Accommodation:

Victoria Hotel or similar

Day 12

Locations: Sliema

Overview:

We start the day with a city tour of Valletta, including a visit to St John's Co-Cathedral to view what many consider to be Caravaggio's crowning achievement, The Beheading of John the Baptist. Also present is the melancholy and evocative Saint Jerome Writing. Separated by only one or two years, this image is a striking contrast to the painting of the same name in the Galleria Borghese.

We also make a stop at the Grandmaster's Palace, for an insight into the power and influence of the Order which was Caravaggio's patrons during his time on Malta.

In the afternoon, we take a tour of the Three Cities of Vittoriosa, Senglea, and Cospicua, across the bay from Valletta.

Accommodation:

Victoria Hotel or similar

Day 13

Locations: Sliema

Overview:

In the evening, we take an excursion to the pretty fishing village of Marsaxlokk for dinner. Here, the pace of life has changed little since Caravaggio's time, and we have the chance to try local delicacies and wines.

Accommodation:

Victoria Hotel or similar

Day 14

Locations: Taormina

Overview:

This morning, we depart the hotel early in the morning and take the 6:30 ferry to Pozzallo in southern Sicily.

On arrival in Pozzallo, the Sicilian touring coach takes us to Syracuse, where we meet with the local guide for a tour of the main sights including entrance to Santa Lucia alla Badia, to view Caravaggio's unusual Burial of Saint Lucy.

After lunch at a local restaurant, we visit to the gallery at the Palazzo Bellomo, to view important pieces by Sicilian painter Mario Minniti. Minniti was a lifelong friend of Caravaggio's, and is also believed to have been the model for many of his early pieces. Minniti was also instrumental in procuring many of Caravaggio's Sicilian commissions.

In the afternoon, we continue north to the charming town of Taormina.

Accommodation:

Hotel Del Corso or similar.

Day 15

Locations: Taormina

Overview:

This morning, we visit Messina to tour the Regional Museum here. As well as Caravaggio's Raising of Lazarus and the Adoration of the Shepherds. The museum also houses the Miracle at Nain, another major work by Mario Minniti.

We head back to Taormina in the afternoon, for a walking tour of the town including entrance to its spectacular Greek theatre.

Accommodation:

Hotel Del Corso or similar.

Day 16

Locations: Palermo

Overview:

Today, we travel across the heart of Sicily to the tiny town of Agira, where we visit the church of Sant'Antonio da Padova, with its magnificent painting of The Five Wounds of Christ, by Minniti.

Afterward, we continue to Enna, perched high above the plains, where there is free time to find lunch, before we continue on to Palermo, in the far northwest corner of Sicily.

Accommodation:

Hotel Centrale Palace or similar

Day 17

Locations: Palermo-Naples

Overview:

We start the day with a guided tour of the one remaining Caravaggio work in Palermo: the Seven Works of Mercy at Pio Monte della Misericordia.

Afterward, we visit the beautiful Oratory of San Lorenzo, which now houses a high-tech reproduction of Caravaggio's Nativity with St Francis

and St Lawrence. The original was stolen in 1969, and remains one of the most valuable paintings on Interpol's unsolved art crimes list.

The oratory's interior, in wedding-cake white stucco by Giacomo Serpotta, is a beautiful artwork in itself, and well worth a visit.

In the afternoon, we enjoy free time before coming together to board the overnight ferry to Naples.

Accommodation:

Overnight Ferry to Naples.

Day 18

Locations: Naples-Sorrento

Overview:

On arrival in the morning,we head to a local café for breakfast.

We then enjoy a full day tour of Naples, including entrance to the Museo del Capodimonte to view the painting of The Flagellation of Christ, as well as Titian's Annunciation, which used to hang with it in the church of San Domenico Maggiore.

We transfer to Sorrento in the afternoon, and check in to our new hotel.

Accommodation:

Carlton Hotel or similar.

Day 19

Locations: Sorrento

Overview:

This morning, we begin the day with a visit to San Domenico Maggiore, before heading to Sant'Anna dei Lombardi, where weview the stunning terracotta Lamentation by Guido Mazzoni. Caravaggio is known to have been influenced by the closely-observed, naturalistic figures in Mazzoni's work.

In the afternoon, we visit the Palazzo Zevallos Stigliano, another palace owned by the Colonna family, Caravaggio's patrons and protectors. Here we see Caravaggio's last work, completed mere months before his

death: the Martyrdom of Saint Ursula.

In the evening, we enjoy a farewell dinner at a local restaurant.

Accommodation:

Carlton Hotel or similar

Day 20

Locations: Rome

Overview:

This morning, we transfer north to Rome. There, we say our farewells and the tour draws to a close.

Inclusions / Exclusions

What's included in our Tour

- 19 nights hotel accommodation.
- Breakfast daily and 10 dinners.
- Applicable entry fees and services of local guides.
- Transport, field trips and excursions as indicated.
- Touring by comfortable and modern coach as well as public transport.
- 1 internal Milan to Sliema (Malta) (limits may apply to luggage allowance)
- Ferry services as per itinerary.
- Gratuities and necessary tips.
- Detailed Tour Information Booklet.
- Services of an Odyssey program leader.

What's not included in our Tour

- International airfares and departure taxes.

- Comprehensive travel insurance.
- Items of a personal nature, such as telephone calls and laundry.
- Meals not specified in the itinerary.

Level 2 - Moderate

Participants must be able to carry their own luggage, climb and descend stairs, be in good health, mobile and able to participate in 3-5 hours of physical activity per day, the equivalent of walking/hiking up to 8 kilometres on uneven ground.

Please do not hesitate to contact us with any requests for further information about this tour or any others offered by Odyssey Travel.