ODYSSEY TRAVELLER

Malta & Sicily Mediterranean Islands small group tour

Recommended reading for your journey

01

The Great Sea: A Human History of the Mediterranean

David Abulafia

Connecting Europe, Asia, and Africa, the Mediterranean Sea has been for millennia the place where religions, economies, and political systems met, clashed, influenced and absorbed one another. In this brilliant and expansive book, David Abulafia offers a fresh perspective by focusing on the sea itself: its practical importance for transport and sustenance; its dynamic role in the rise and fall of empires; and the remarkable cast of characters-sailors, merchants, migrants, pirates, pilgrims-who have crossed and re-crossed it. Ranging from prehistory to the 21st century, The Great Sea is above all a history of human interaction. Interweaving major political and naval developments with the ebb and flow of trade, Abulafia explores how commercial competition in the Mediterranean created both rivalries and partnerships, with merchants acting as intermediaries between cultures, trading goods that were as exotic on one side of the sea as they were commonplace on the other. He stresses the remarkable ability of Mediterranean cultures to uphold the civilising ideal of convivencia, "living together."

02

Empires of the Sea: The Final Battle for the Mediterranean, 1521-1580

Roger Crowley

In 1521, Suleiman the Magnificent, Muslim ruler of the Ottoman Empire, dispatched an invasion fleet to the Christian island of Rhodes. This would prove to be the opening shot in an epic clash between rival empires and faiths for control of the Mediterranean and the center of the world. In Empires of the Sea, acclaimed historian Roger Crowley has written a thrilling account of this brutal decades-long battle between Christendom and Islam for the soul of Europe, a fast-paced tale of spiraling intensity that ranges from Istanbul to the Gates of Gibraltar. Crowley conjures up a wild cast of pirates, crusaders, and religious warriors struggling for supremacy and survival in a tale of slavery and galley warfare, desperate bravery and utter brutality. Empires of the Sea is a story of extraordinary color and incident, and provides a crucial context for our own clash of civilisations.

03

The Great Siege: Malta 1565

Ernle Bradford

Suleiman the Magnificent, the most powerful ruler in the world, was determined to conquer Europe. Only one thing stood in his way: a dot of an island in the Mediterranean called Malta, occupied by the Knights of St. John, the cream of the warriors of the Holy Roman Empire. A clash of civilizations the likes of which had not been seen since Persia invaded Greece was shaping up. Determined to capture Malta and use its port to launch operations against Europe, Suleiman sent an armada and an overwhelming army. A few thousand defenders in Fort St. Elmo fought to the last man, enduring cruel hardships. When they captured the fort, the Turks took no prisoners and mutilated the defenders bodies. Grand Master La Vallette of the Knights reciprocated by decapitating his Turkish prisoners and using their heads to cannonade the enemy. Then the battle for Malta began in earnest: no quarter asked, none given.

04

The Knights of Malta

H.J.A Sire

This is the most complete history in any language of the Order of St John, or Knights Hospitaller, successively known as the Knights of Rhodes and of Malta. Founded in eleventh-century Jerusalem, the Order has played an important military, religious and political role over succeeding centuries. H.J.A. Sire not only provides a full narrative account, but describes and illustrates the architectural and artistic legacy of the Knights, from Crusader castles in the Holy Land, to the medieval city of Rhodes, the Maltese capital of Valletta, and manors, churches and fortified villages throughout Europe. These, as well as religious art, portraiture and illuminated manuscripts are copiously illustrated, revealing the wealth, culture and longevity of the Order. This is moreover the first general work to do full justice to the Order’s international character by including a detailed account of its European Priories and the role played by the Knights in the history of their respective countries. It includes chapters on Crac des Chevaliers and other Hospitaller castles of the crusading period, on the career of Grand Master Heredia as a statesman and patron of medieval learning, and on the caring traditions of the Order. The chapter on the Navy of the Knights offers the first rigorous study of the Order’s strategic naval role in the Mediterranean. The final section describes the resurgence of the Order since Napoleon’s conquest of Malta in 1798, and its efforts over two centuries to recover an effective role. It considers the attempt in the 1950s to subject the Order to Vatican control, and its position today, under the first English Grand Master in its history. With its traditional rights of sovereignty widely recognised, and diplomatic relations established with an increasing number of countries, a modernised Order of over ten thousand Knights continues nine centuries of hospitaller work throughout the world.

05

A Brief History of the Knights Templar

Helen Nicholson

Much has been written about the Knights Templar in recent years, most of it highly speculative and with no historical foundation. Helen Nicholson is a leading specialist in the history of this legendary medieval order and offers here a full account of the knights of the order of the Temple of Solomon, bringing the latest findings to a general audience.

06

Sicily: Three Thousand Years of Human History

Sandra Benjamin

Tourists, armchair travelers, and historians will all delight in this fluid narrative that can be read straight through, dipped into over time, or used as a reference guide to each period in Sicily s fascinating tale. Emigration of people from Sicily often overshadows the importance of the people who immigrated to the island through the centuries. These have included several who became Sicily s rulers, along with Jews, Ligurians, and Albanians. Greeks, Romans, Vandals, Goths, Byzantines, Muslims, Normans, Hohenstaufens, Spaniards, Bourbons, the Savoy Kingdom of Italy and the modern era have all held sway, and left lasting influences on the island s culture and architecture. Sicily s character has also been determined by what passed it by: events that affected Europe generally, namely the Crusades and Columbus s discovery of the Americas, remarkably had little influence on Italy s most famous island. Maps, biographical notes, suggestions for further reading, a glossary, pronunciation keys, and much more make this unique book as essential as it is enjoyable.

07

Sicily: A Short History from the Greeks to Cosa Nostra

John Julius Norwich

Critically acclaimed author John Julius Norwich weaves the turbulent story of Sicily into a spellbinding narrative that places the island at the crossroads of world history. "Sicily," said Goethe, "is the key to everything." It is the largest island in the Mediterranean, the stepping-stone between Europe and Africa, the link between the Latin West and the Greek East. Sicily s strategic location has tempted Roman emperors, French princes, and Spanish kings. The subsequent struggles to conquer and keep it have played crucial roles in the rise and fall of the world s most powerful dynasties. Yet Sicily has often been little more than a footnote in books about other empires. John Julius Norwich s engrossing narrative is the first to knit together all of the colourful strands of Sicilian history into a single comprehensive study. Here is a vivid, erudite, page-turning chronicle of an island and the remarkable kings, queens, and tyrants who fought to rule it. From its beginnings as a Greek city-state to its emergence as a multicultural trading hub during the Crusades, from the rebellion against Italian unification to the rise of the Mafia, the story of Sicily is rich with extraordinary moments and

dramatic characters. Writing with his customary deftness and humour, Norwich outlines the surprising influence Sicily has had on world history the Romans fascination with Greek civilization dates back to their sack of Sicily and tells the story of one of the world s most kaleidoscopic cultures in a galvanizing, contemporary way.

08

Sicily: A Short History, from the Greeks to Cosa Nostra

John Julius Norwich

Sicily is the key to everything' Johann Wolfgang von Goethe The author of the classic book on Venice turns his sights to Sicily in this beautiful book full of maps and colour photographs. 'I discovered Sicily almost by mistake . . .We drove as far as Naples, then put the car on the night ferry to Palermo. There was a degree of excitement in the early hours when we passed Stromboli, emitting a rich glow every half-minute or so like an ogre puffing on an immense cigar; and a few hours later, in the early morning sunshine, we sailed into the Conca d'Oro, the Golden Shell, in which the city lies. Apart from the beauty of the setting, I remember being instantly struck by a change in atmosphere. The Strait of Messina is only a couple of miles across and the island is politically part of Italy; yet somehow one feels that one has entered a different world . . . This book is, among other things, an attempt to analyse why this should be.' The stepping stone between Europe and Africa, the gateway between the East and the West, at once a stronghold, clearing-house and observation post, Sicily has been invaded and fought over by Phoenicians and Greeks, Carthaginians and Romans, Goths and Byzantines, Arabs and Normans, Germans, Spaniards and the French for thousands of years. It has belonged to them all - and yet has properly been part of none. John Julius Norwich was inspired to become a writer by his first visit in 1961 and this book is the result of a fascination that has lasted over half a century. In tracing its dark story, he attempts to explain the enigma that lies at the heart of the Mediterranean's largest island. This vivid short history covers everything from erupting volcanoes to the assassination of Byzantine emperors, from Nelson's affair with Emma Hamilton to Garibaldi and the rise of the Mafia. Taking in the key buildings and towns, and packed with fascinating stories and unforgettable characters, Sicily is the book he was born to write.

09

Midnight in Sicily

Robb Peter

A journey into the heart of Sicily, using art, food, history and literature to shed light on southern Italy's legacy of political corruption and violent crime. The book takes as its starting point the ongoing trial of seven-times Prime Minister Giulio Andreotti.

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