Malta & Sicily – Mediterranean Islands small group tour

Sep 09 2020 to Sep 20 2020

Mediterranean Islands small group tour to Malta and Sicily

Odyssey’s Mediterranean islands small group tour of Malta & Sicily is the short tour of this longer program. Our guides lead you on a ten day tour through the region’s culture and history. This fully escorted tour for seniors takes you on a fabulous journey around the Western Mediterranean.
The History of Sicily and Malta

These two unique islands have long held the keys to the Mediterranean. Over centuries, the Phoenicians, Carthaginians, Arabs, Normans, Spanish and French imprinted their distinct history and architecture on the landscape of the islands, making the islands a perfect mix of cultures. From 1530 to 1798, Malta was ruled as a vassal state of Sicily by the Knights of St John. In the 19th century, Malta secured the Mediterranean for Britain and helped make it the world’s major maritime power. Possession of Sicily brought similar benefits to Rome, as did Corsica for France.

Today, Sicily is an autonomous region of Italy, while Malta is one of the more recent independent members of the European Union. Today, however, their inhabitants still retain their own distinctive characteristics and ways of life. Each island visited has its own character, shaped by its history. Odyssey’s small group educational tour compares and contrasts the culture, history, geography and peoples of these two unique islands.

Discover more about the islands of the Mediterranean with our blog post.

Malta & Sicily Small group tour itinerary

Throughout our guided tour you’ll experience a number of cultural and historical highlights, from archaeological sites to idyllic resort towns. Odyssey’s small group tour of these Western Mediterranean islands is a magnificent holiday for those who wish to learn. Odyssey caters to mature travelers, whether couples or those journeying solo. The tour is fully escorted by an Odyssey Program Leader and a local guide who shares their expert knowledge of the history and culture of these wonderful islands.

Malta

On Malta, we make a walking tour of Malta’s medieval history on a trip to the UNESCO World Heritage listed capital city, Valletta, where we
visit the Grandmaster’s Palace and St. John’s Cathedral. We also visit the city of Rabat, where we visit the grotto of St. Paul. According to Christian tradition, St. Paul lived and preached in these catacombs during three months in Malta in 60 AD. Following Rabat, we head to the walled city of Mdina. Our trip to Malta also includes an excursion to Gozo, the second largest of the islands of Malta, where we visit the megalithic temples of Xaghra, an important prehistoric heritage site. We also make the time to take in Malta’s beautiful sandy beaches, including a number of walks along the shore.

We then get the ferry to Sicily.

Sicily

Our tour of Sicily begins with a walking tour of Noto, recognised as a UNESCO World Heritage Site for its grand baroque architecture. We then explore Siracusa (Syracuse), home to ancient Greek ruins and a well-preserved Roman amphitheater. For more ancient archaeological ruins, we then visit Agrigento, home to Greek temples. We also visit the Sicilian capital, Palermo, where we make a stop at the Arab-Norman Cappella Palatina (Palatine Chapel), before making a daytrip to the famous cathedral of Monreale. Finally, we travel to Trapani, where we stay in a hotel for two nights. The streets of this medieval town by the sea remain largely untouched from the period of Arab and Norman rule. From Trapani, we make a day trip to the island of Mozia for an archaeological tour, and then head to Marsala for a wine tasting of its famous drop.

Our tours aim to immerse you in local culture. Sicily and Malta are home to one of the world’s richest food cultures, with subtle differences between the two cuisines. In order to experience the cuisine of both places, we always enjoy breakfast, lunch, or dinner at a local restaurant.

You can learn about Malta and Sicily (Italy) with our country profiles. For more details, 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.

Articles about Malta and Sicily published by Odyssey Traveller:

- About Malta, Sicily, Sardinia and Corsica.
- Mediterranean Islands: Malta, Sicily, Sardinia and Corsica.
- The Sicilians and their Kings
- Early History of Sicily: From the Phoenicians to the Arab Conquest (800 BC to the 10th Century)
- Empires Crossing the Mediterranean: 1130-1300
- Life of Caravaggio.
- Caravaggio: Ten Books to Read
- Learning about Caravaggio’s Paintings
- as well as more articles on Italy [here](https://www.odysseytraveller.com.au)

For all the articles Odyssey Traveller has published for mature aged and senior travellers, click through [on this link](https://www.odysseytraveller.com.au).

External articles to assist you on your visit to Malta and Sicily

- Discover Italy – Sicily
- Sicily’s best beaches: warm waters and stunning scenery
- 48 Hours in Sicily
- Why Noto, Sicily is our Italy destination of the summer
- A Local’s Guide to Palermo
- Lonely Planet: Malta
- The Guardian: Valetta on View – the Maltese capital shows off its cultural side
- History of the Knights of St. John
- Megalithic Temples of Malta
Tour Notes

Group size is limited to a maximum of 18 participants.

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Top 5

1. Visit UNESCO World Heritage sites on Malta: Valletta, built by the Knights of St John Hospitaller; and the megalithic temples
2. In Sicily, see the mosaics at the Villa Romana del Casale, the magnificent Baroque town of Noto, and Arab/Norman Palermo
3. Enjoy wonderful scenery and local food and wine throughout all the islands
4. Explore the UNESCO world heritage town of Noto, the finest Baroque town in Sicily
5. Take a ferry to Mozia island and visit its main archaeological sites

Itinerary

Day 1

Locations: St. Julian’s, Malta

Overview: Upon arrival in Malta, we will come to the hotel individually. We will have a welcome drink and tour briefing at followed by dinner at a local restaurant. Our hotel is located in St. Julian’s, just north of Sliema. (D)

Accommodation: 5 nights at the Waterfront Hotel, or similar.

Day 2

Locations: St. Julian’s, Malta

Overview: Today we enjoy a full day tour of Malta, commencing at Paola, home of the enigmatic Tarxien Temples. We visit the Hypogeum for an audio-visual exhibit. We then travel to Birzebbuga to visit the prehistoric Ghar Dalam cave and on to picturesque Marsaxlokk, famous
for its market and continue on to Marsakala where we stop to have lunch. In the afternoon we transfer to Three Cities where we have some free time to explore or perhaps take a cruise along the shore (not included). Late afternoon we transfer back to our hotel. (B,L)

Accommodation: Waterfront Hotel, or similar.

Day 3

Locations: St. Julian's, Malta

Overview: Today’s visits concentrate on Valletta, the capital of Malta. We visit the Upper Barakka Gardens, the Grandmaster’s Palace, St. John’s Co-Cathedral, and the Museum of Archaeology. In the late afternoon we take in the ‘Malta Experience’, an audio-visual attraction set in a purpose-built auditorium overlooking Valletta’s magnificent Grand Harbour. We return to our hotel in St Julian's and take an evening walk to a local restaurant for dinner. (B,D)

Accommodation: Waterfront Hotel, or similar.

Day 4

Locations: St. Julian's, Malta

Overview: This morning we begin our tour of Malta with a talk on the islands that comprise Malta. We’ll learn about Malta’s natural and cultural heritage, strategic Mediterranean importance, centuries-old fortifications, settlements, and religious sites. Typical of the islands of the Mediterranean, Malta hosted many civilisations including the Phoenicians, Carthaginians, Byzantines, Arabs, Normans, and the Spanish. The Knights of the Order of Saint John of Jerusalem, also known as the Knights of St John, were Malta’s Masters from 1530 to 1798, when Napoleon’s French forces invaded. Then, in 1800, the British assumed control until Malta was granted independence in 1964. The island and its people were awarded the George Cross for their bravery during World War II. We then enjoy a full-day tour of local sites, including Ta’Qali craft village with some free time to shop for souvenirs. We visit Mosta to see the Mosta Rotunda, then continue to Rabat for lunch at a local restaurant. In the afternoon we explore St. Paul’s Church and Grotto, and St. Paul’s Catacombs, then make our way through the ancient fortified city of Mdina on a walking tour.
returning to St Julian's the evening is at leisure. (B,L)

**Accommodation:** Waterfront Hotel, or similar.

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**Day 5**

**Locations:** St. Julian's, Malta

**Overview:** This morning we’ll take a morning ferry ride across to Gozo, Malta’s second largest island, where we have a full day island tour. We visit the citadel at Victoria and the coastal village of Xlendi, whose tower guarding the mouth of the bay was built by the Knights in 1650. Following lunch, we travel up the western coast of Gozo to visit Dwejra including a boat ride to Fungus Rock, then on to the Ta Pinu basilica in Gharb, followed by a tour of the **megalithic Ggantija Temples in Xaghra**. In the evening we’ll return via ferry and coach to our hotel. We have dinner at a local restaurant. (B,L,D)

**Accommodation:** Waterfront Hotel, or similar.

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**Day 6**

**Locations:** Syracuse, Sicily

**Overview:** This morning begins with an early morning ferry across to Pozzallo in **Sicily**. Here we join our coach and continue to the UNESCO world heritage town of **Noto**, the finest Baroque town in Sicily, and see the main sights like San Francesco Church, Monastery of Santa Chiara and Palazzo Ducezio. We have free time for lunch, and continue on to Syracuse where visit the Neapolis Archaeological Park followed by Ara di Ierone, the Great Altar of Syracuse, a monumental grand altar in the ancient quarter of Neapolis. Later we attend a traditional "puppet theatre" (Opera dei Pupi - Sicilian marionette show) before dinner at a local restaurant. (B,D)

**Accommodation:** 2 nights at the Residence Acropoli or similar.

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**Day 7**

**Locations:** Syracuse, Sicily

**Overview:** Today we have a full day tour exploring Caltagirone and Piazza Armerina. In Caltagirone we view the Staircase of Santa Maria
del Monte and visit the Museum of Ceramics. After some free time for lunch we continue to Piazza Armerina Armerina to see its famous mosaics during our guided tour of the Villa Romana del Casale. We return to Syracuse and the remainder of the day is at leisure. (B)

**Accommodation:** Residence Acropoli or similar.

**Day 8**

**Locations:** Agrigento, Sicily  
**Overview:** This morning we’ll learn more about the history and culture of Sicily, before travelling on to Agrigento with a stop for lunch in Enna. We’ll visit the Valley of the Temples, one of the most outstanding examples of Greater Greece art and architecture. Later we transfer to our hotel and the evening is free to explore the town on your own. (B)

**Accommodation:** Overnight at the Colloverde Park Hotel or similar.

**Day 9**

**Locations:** Palermo, Sicily  
**Overview:** This morning we leave for Sicily’s capital, Palermo. We visit Quattro Canti, the “Theatre of the Sun”, and La Martorana, the city’s most famous medieval church and a guided tour of Teatro Massimo, Palermo’s magnificent Opera House. Dinner this evening is at our hotel. (B,D)

**Accommodation:** Overnight at Ibis Palermo or similar

**Day 10**

**Locations:** Trapani, Sicily  
**Overview:** This morning we continue our sightseeing of Palermo, visiting Palazzo de Normanni (Palace of the Normans), and the extraordinary mosaics in the 12th century Capella Palatina. We continue to Monreale to visit its cloistered Cathedral followed by Trapani, where the Spanish occupation of Sicily began in the 13th century. Dinner will be at the hotel this evening. (B,D)

**Accommodation:** 2 nights at the Hotel Baia dei Mulini or similar.
Day 11

Locations: Trapani, Sicily

Overview: This morning we’ll enjoy a walking tour of Trapani to view its main attractions, we’ll then transfer to San Leonardo for a ferry trip across to the island of Mozia. We’ll visit the main archaeological sites here, including the Whitaker Museum. We then return to San Leonardo for lunch at a local restaurant. In the afternoon we visit Marsala, home of the fortified wine that bears the town’s name, then back to our hotel in Trapani. (B,L)

Accommodation: Hotel Baia dei Mulini or similar.

Day 12

Locations: Trapani, Sicily

Overview: The tour concludes this morning after breakfast.

Accommodation:

Inclusions / Exclusions

What’s included in our Tour

- 11 breakfasts, 6 lunches, and 6 dinners.
- Applicable entry fees and services of local guides.
- Transport and field trips as indicated.
- Touring by comfortable and modern coach.
- Services of a tour leader.
- Ferry services.
- Service charges and gratuities.
- Detailed tour information booklet.

What’s not included in our Tour

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

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