

JEWELS OF THE MEDITERRANEAN – AUGUST 2017

OVERVIEW

Tour Date: 28 August 2017 – 23 September 2017

Duration: 27 days

Tour Cost (\$AUD): \$17,750

Single Supplement (\$AUD): \$3,550

Jewels of the Mediterranean is a magnificent 27-day journey to Malta and some of the less-visited Mediterranean islands – Sicily, Sardinia and Corsica. Steeped in history, these islands are home to ancient Greek and Roman sites, rugged limestone cliffs and caves, volcanic landscapes, forests and mountains, and some of the most spectacular coastlines of the Mediterranean.

Beginning in magnificent Malta, our four-day stay will reveal the secrets of the island's ancient past that have helped shape the Mediterranean 'jewel' we know today. We then cross by ferry to Sicily, where our first stop is the mountain town of Taormina with its ancient Greco-Roman amphitheatre from where we have extraordinary views of one of the world's most active volcanoes, Mount Etna. On Sicily's south we visit what was once one of the greatest cities of the Mediterranean world – Agrigento. The location and exceptionally well-preserved temples that date back to the 6th century BC are simply breathtaking. Next stop is the island of Sardinia, with its wild interior where ancient bronze-age towers and settlements – nuraghi – can be found. We travel the whole length of the island before making the small hop to Corsica and the medieval cliff-top town of Bonifacio. Wonderfully enigmatic, Corsica has an astounding mix of rugged cliffs, mountains, forests, half-moon bays and ancient villages. Finally, we farewell the *Jewels of the Mediterranean* and take our final ferry journey to mainland France and the city of Nice.

Tour Fitness Level: Active

JEWELS OF THE MEDITERRANEAN AUGUST 2017

TOUR ITINERARY

29/08/2017 Australia - Dubai
Check in at your chosen Australian airport for the flight to Dubai with Emirates.

29/08/2017 Dubai - Malta (D)

Depart Dubai Emirates Airline EK 100 02:55

Arrive Malta 14:10

On arrival in MALTA we transfer to our hotel. First settled around 5200 BC, the strategic importance of Malta was recognized by the Phoenicians who occupied it, as did, in turn, the Greeks, Carthaginians, and Romans. The island is steeped in history, and this afternoon is at leisure to explore the beautiful district of Sliema.

Victoria Hotel

30/08/2017 Malta (BLD)

After breakfast we begin to explore the island of Malta and its 7,000-year history. We start in the capital, Valletta, and visit the beautiful Barracca Gardens for superb panoramic views of the Grand Harbour. We also visit the Grand Master's Palace, which is the seat of government and the private residence of the President of Malta. After lunch we head south to the cities of Vittoriosa, Gozoletta and Gzira. Here we discover the narrow, shady streets that make this historic area unique.

01/09/2017 Malta (BLD)

After breakfast we visit Mdina, the old capital of Malta located in the central part of the island. This ancient walled settlement has spectacular views of the countryside from its bastions. After lunch we visit Rabat, a village next to Mdina, where we enjoy a short walk around the narrow winding roads leading to St Paul's catacombs and the grotto. After exploring the catacombs we return to our hotel.

02/09/2017 Malta - Pozzallo - Taormina (LD)

Early this morning we leave Malta on an early morning ferry to the Sicilian port of Pozzallo.

Arrive Pozzallo 05:45

On arrival in Sicily we begin our journey to Taormina arriving around midday. This afternoon we explore Sicily's most picturesque town, located on the terrace of Mount Taormine. Since the end of the 19th century, Taormina has been a world-famous international resort which visitors are captivated by its charming atmosphere, ancient history and superb beauty.

Marina Hotel

Taormina

03/09/2017 Taormina - Mt Etna - Taormina (BLD)

This morning we board ENO vehicles to drive to the base of Mount Etna. To the ancient Greeks, Mount Etna was the realm of Vulcan, the God of Fire. At 3,350m



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high. It is one of the world's most active volcanoes. Eruptions throughout the 20th century occurred frequently from the four active craters at the summit and on its slopes. Etna is monitored by 115 seismic activity centres spread around the mountain and is under constant satellite surveillance.

04/09/2017 Taormina - Agrigento (BLD)

Leaving Taormina and drive to the town of Piazza Armerina. However, it is not the town that most people come to see, but the famous Villa Romana del Casale, which is nearby. Built in the middle of the 4th Century AD as a hunting lodge by a Roman patrician, the Villa is home to some of the best-preserved and extensive examples of Roman mosaics in the world. Almost completely covered by a landslide in the 12th Century, the Villa was not excavated until the 20th Century. Only then did the magnitude and importance of Villa Romana del Casale come to light. It is now a UNESCO World Heritage site. After lunch we continue south to Agrigento.

Agrigento

05/09/2017 Agrigento (BLD)

Sicily's oldest historic site, the Valley of the Temples, was once one of the leading centres of the Mediterranean region. One of the greatest legacies of ancient Greece, this World Heritage listed complex of well-preserved Doric temples, dates back to the 5th and 4th centuries BC and is what remains of the Greek city of Akragas. Today we set out to explore this archaeological treasure.

06/09/2017 Agrigento - Palermo (BLD)

This morning we drive along the west coast of Sicily to Marsala, the famous wine-growing region of Sicily. After lunch at the famous Donatagata winery we head north to Trapani. Here we take a short cable car ride to the magnificent town of Erice. Perched atop Mount Erice, the town boasts one of the most dramatic settings in the world. We then make the short journey to the bustling Sicilian capital of Palermo.

Grand Hotel Piazza Borsa

Palermo

07/09/2017 Palermo (BLD)

Palermo boasts architectural and cultural influences from North Africa, Italy, Spain and Greece and its historic district is unique, having survived many sieges over the years. At the heart of Palermo is a cluster of imposing churches and buildings that surround the central Fontana Pretoria. This huge fountain fits in place with its baroque and neoclassical. The city fought the Saracens in 1072 and later churchgoers dubbed it the Fountain of Shame, due to the flagrant nudity of the pederastic nymphs.

08/09/2017 Palermo (BLD)

Ten Martirini from Palermo lies the historic hill-side town of Monreale, famous for its great Norman cathedral. The Cathedral facade is impressive but given few hints as to the magnificence that lies inside. It was built between 1174 and 1185 by William II, the Norman ruler of Sicily, who wished to dispense the magnificence of his kingdom. The project employed both Sicilian and Byzantine craftsmen, resulting in a magnificent fusion of eastern and western influences.

09/09/2017 Palermo - Capri (Sardinia) (BLD)

Palermo is a unique blend of cultures and influences. The city's history is a testament to its rich and diverse heritage. The city's architecture is a blend of various styles, reflecting its long and complex history. The city's culture is a mix of Sicilian and Italian influences, creating a unique and vibrant atmosphere. The city's location on the coast provides a stunning view of the sea and the surrounding mountains. The city's climate is perfect for a holiday, with warm temperatures and plenty of sunshine. The city's people are friendly and welcoming, making it a great place to visit. The city's history is fascinating, with many interesting stories and legends. The city's culture is rich and diverse, with many different traditions and customs. The city's location is perfect for a holiday, with beautiful views and a great climate. The city's people are friendly and welcoming, making it a great place to visit. The city's history is fascinating, with many interesting stories and legends. The city's culture is rich and diverse, with many different traditions and customs. The city's location is perfect for a holiday, with beautiful views and a great climate. The city's people are friendly and welcoming, making it a great place to visit.

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This morning we will continue our tour of the island with the following highlights in our agenda:
Capri
Depart Catania Victoria Airlines V77754, 19.30
Arrive Capri at 20.50
On arrival we will transfer to our hotel in the city.
Hotel Regina Margherita
Capri

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13/09/2017 Capri (BLD)
The ancient island of Sardinia has been inhabited since the Palaeolithic period. The island has produced flourishing diversified cultures including Phoenician, Roman, Visigoth and Byzantine, which have left their traces in numerous monuments and hand-crafted artefacts. This incredible history has also left its mark on Capri, with archaeological remains, superb churches and several fine museums. The city centre is a medieval square with many taverns and restaurants dotting the cobble piazzas.

13/09/2017 Capri (BLD)
As well as its crystal-clear seawater and one of the most beautiful and longest beaches in the Mediterranean, Capri is an unspoiled natural environment consisting of lagoons, bird sanctuaries and wildlife reserves that are unique in Europe. The lagoon area, a few minutes from the city centre, is home to a vast flamingo colony. These are the only flamingos in the world that never migrate from Capri! Today we continue our exploration of the town.

13/09/2017 Capri - Anghelu (BLD)
Leaving Capri, we head north to the small village of Anghelu. At this UNESCO site we discover the largest Nuraghe on the island. This amazing structure, over 3,000 years old, is more than three storeys high. Built nearly 3,500 years ago, it is surrounded by the ruins of an extensive village with interesting buildings covering the hillside. The site was rediscovered only in 1942. We continue into the Sardinian heartland to the town of Oropo, where the mountains are covered in beautiful houses and wild boar roam freely. This is the land of Sardinian shepherds and we have an amazing lunch of roasted boar on a spit. After lunch we continue to Anghelu.
Hotel Catalunya
Anghelu

13/09/2017 Anghelu - Capo Ferro - Anghelu (BLD)
Although it has been part of Italy for generations, Anghelu was once part of the Kingdom of Aragon from the Spanish region of Catalonia and the residents still speak Catalan. One of the most picturesque of Sardinian medieval cities, Anghelu is also famous for its unique blood-red coral which is often fashioned into magnificent jewellery. We also visit the wonderful and rugged Capo Ferro which is situated on the southern point of a huge limestone triangle that juts out into the sea. There are impressive 300m high cliffs on its west side, but it is the underground labyrinth of mysterious caves for which Capo Ferro is most renowned. We take a boat to one of the most famous coves, Grotta di Nettuno, which is 2,500 metres long. Capo Ferro is one of the wildest and most beautiful places in Sardinia.

14/09/2017 Anghelu - Pula (BLD)
This morning we leave Anghelu and head to the most northern point of the island. Here, at the small port village of Pula, we board a boat that will take us to the island of Maddalena. Famous for its pink sand, La Maddalena is the home island in a wonderful archipelago. Its cobble piazzas and food markets contribute to an atmosphere of perpetual holiday.

Hotel Vecchia Fonte
Pisa

15/09/2017 Pisa – Bonifacio (Corsica) (BLD)
After breakfast we make the short journey to Santa Teresa to board the ferry to Corsica and the town of Bonifacio.

Depart Santa Teresa (08:00)
Arrive Bonifacio (09:00)

Visitors from all over the world come to Bonifacio to see its medieval houses **hanging precariously on the edge of the imposing limestone cliffs**. Bonifacio's Old Town, with a **delightful mix of narrow streets and historic buildings**, was built by the Genoese and is a fascinating place to explore. It has a wonderful natural harbour **shaded with unspoiled Corsican beaches** and is surrounded by **staggeringly beautiful mountains**.

Southern Hotel
Bonifacio

16/09/2017 Bonifacio (BLD)
Today we explore the Alta Rocca mountain range, the backbone of Corsica. This magnificent area is home to the spectacular mountain village of Santu Luce de Talano and the intriguing ancient settlements of Sartene and Pianu de Lavie. Deep inside these western mountains lies the heart of ancient Corsica with its archaeological treasures and Bronze Age settlements.

17/09/2017 Bonifacio – Ajaccio (BLD)
This morning we drive to Ajaccio, capital of Corsica and the island's largest city. Its modern history is dominated by the figure of Napoleon, who was born in the city. As we commence our walking tour we visit some delightful narrow streets that contain lovely and varied architecture, until we arrive at Napoleon's house which is now a fascinating museum. The city also has a beautiful harbour area with numerous boats and yachts, arriving from French ports such as Marseille, Nice and Toulon.

Hotel San Carlo
Ajaccio

18/09/2017 Ajaccio – Gulf of Porto – Ajaccio (BLD)
In an island of such extraordinary natural beauty as Corsica, it is difficult to suggest one area which contains the most sublime scenery on the island. Yet the Gulf of Porto is one of the most beautiful spots in Corsica. Towering precipitous and craggy limestone cliffs of rock were formed by volcanic eruptions 200 million years ago and subsequent erosion has fashioned spectacular shapes in the rock. The colours are vibrant and vary from chocolate grey to rufous-brown reds and rusty purples which strike a vivid contrast with the deep green maquis and the cobalt blue sea. The headland and its surrounding waters were declared a nature reserve in 1975 and dolphins and seals thrive here.

19/09/2017 Ajaccio – Bastia (BLD)
Our drive today takes us through some of the most breathtaking scenery on the island. After leaving Ajaccio we arrive in Corte and enjoy a tour of the town before continuing on to Bastia. En route we see both forests, plunging gorges and the amazing Vecchio Viaduct. The viaduct was engineered by none other than Gustave Eiffel, better known for his tower. As we continue toward Bastia we see a panorama of dazzling white granite, obelisks and truncated columns of rock rising savagely against the skyline. On arrival in Bastia we transfer to our hotel.

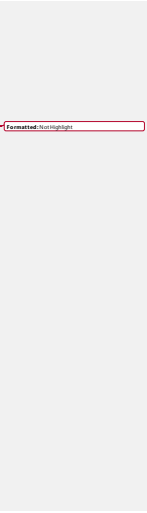
Hotel Aina
Bastia

20/09/2017 Bastia (BLD)
Today we depart for Capé Corse, a finger of land that juts from the northern tip of Corsica where we see some of the island's more dramatic scenery. We stop explore rugged peaks, olive orchards, vineyards, remote bays and quaint fishing villages that feature the historic 'Genoese' towers.

21/09/2017 Bastia - Nice (BD)
After breakfast we leave Bastia by ferry for Nice and the French mainland.
Depart Bastia 11:00
Arrive Monaco 12:15
On arrival in Monaco we transfer by coach to our hotel in Nice.
Buses: Foreign Travel
Nice

22/09/2017 Nice - Dubai (B)
This morning is at leisure in Nice. Early afternoon we transfer to the airport for our flight to Dubai.
Depart Nice Emirates EK 78, 15:55

23/09/2017 Dubai - Australia
Arrive Dubai 03:10
In Dubai we connect with the flight to our chosen Australian city.



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