



# RELIGION, HISTORY, CULTURE OF MALTA & SICILY

## APRIL 2 – 12, 2025

### Day 1: April 2, 2025

Arrival to Malta International Airport (MLA) **Valletta, Malta**. Transfer to the hotel. Rest. Dinner and orientation.

### Day 2: April 3, 2025

We will start our day with a visit to the hilltop fortress of **Mdina** which was established as the colony-settlement in the 8th century BC by the Phoenicians. In the period of Roman domination, it was renamed to Melite by the Romans. According to tradition, it was here where Apostle Paul was taken after he was shipwrecked on Malta. In the Book of Acts, Chapter 28, it is said that the governor of Melite, Publius, greeted the Apostle, and the Apostle cured the official's sick father. Further traditions state that the population of the city converted to Christianity and the governor of Melite became their first Bishop. Next to the city, we will see the grotto that is believed to be Paul's prayer refuge and the catacombs where for centuries Christians, Jews, and pagans were buried side by side. Not far from Mdina, there is a church dedicated to the Assumption of the Virgin Mary. The church that is commonly known as the "**Dome of Mosta**" was built in the first part of the 19th century with a design based on the Pantheon in Rome. The dome of the church is considered one of the largest unsupported domes in the world. Another spectacular visit of the day will be to the **Hagar Qim** and **Mnajdra Megalithic** Temples which are recognized as some of the most ancient religious sites on Earth. Archaeologists suggest





they were built sometime in the 4th Millennium BC. For dinner and overnight we will return to the hotel. Return to our hotel for an overnight and dinner at the Hotel.

### Day 3: April 4, 2025

After breakfast, we will explore the city of **Valletta** - the capital of Malta. Her history is closely related to the Order of Knights Hospitalliers as the city started rapidly developing under their rule in the 16th century. The city has a very charming Baroque character, as well as some additional fine examples of architectural styles. Among other sites, we will visit the St. John Cathedral, the Church of St Paul's Shipwreck, and Domus Pauli. To enhance your experience in Valletta, we will offer a **cruise** through the Harbor Cruise of the charming city that was added to the UNESCO World Heritage Site list in 1980. At the end of the day we will transfer to the airport for a short flight to Catania. Dinner and overnight in **Catania**

### Day 4: April 5, 2025

Today we will have a day excursion to the city of **Syracuse** or the Siracusa of old. This almost 3,000- year-old city is notable for its rich Greek history and culture. Many famous ancient Greek personalities lived or visited here. Among them is the most famous ancient engineer and mathematician Archimedes who was born here. Syracuse is mentioned in the Bible as one of the places visited by St. Paul the Apostle (Acts 28:12). Such could be indirectly confirmed by the known presence of a large Jewish community that flourished in the city from antiquity and even until relatively recent times. Not long ago an ancient Jewish ritual bath, or mikvah, was found during the archeological excavations. The patron saint of the city is **Saint Lucy** as she was born here and, although her relics are in Venice now, she is still greatly revered in the city as she was born in Syracuse. Overnight: Hotel in **Siracusa**



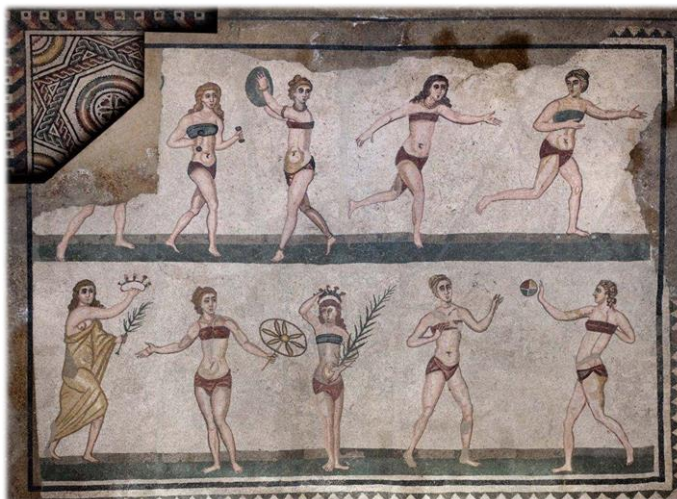
### Day 5: April 6, 2025

This morning we will attend the **Divine Liturgy** at the local Orthodox Church. After Liturgy we will explore the second largest city of Sicily, **Catania**, that lay at the feet of Mt. Etna. Founded in the 8th century BC, this city certainly had its glory days, however it was severely damaged during several earthquakes. Thus, most of the historical city that can be seen dates to the 17th century or later. Today Catania is one of the six Baroque cities of Sicily added to the UNESCO World Heritage list. One of the prominent holy shrines of the city is the cathedral with the reliquary of **St. Agatha of Sicily**. One of the most highly venerated virgin martyrs of Christian antiquity, Agatha was born in Catania and

put to death here during the persecution of the Roman Emperor Decius in 251 AD. For overnight we will remain at the same hotel in **Catania**

## Day 6: April 7, 2025

There are many places in Sicily that could be described as unique and one of a kind. One of them is **Villa Romana del Casale** at Piazza Armerina. Here we will see phenomenal (the largest and most diverse) collection of Roman floor mosaics that adorn every room of the villa that likely was in the first quarter of the 4th century AD. Here you can see a unique picture-like presentation of the Ancient Roman life: hunting scenes, the capture and transportation of the exotic wild beasts for the games in the cities, dances, feasts, and even strikingly modern looking exercises in a women's gymnasium. Those of you who are familiar with ancient mythology will find fantastic illustrations to the variety of olden tales and poems. In the afternoon, we will visit town of **Caltagirone**, of the six Southern Baroque cities of Sicily added to the UNESCO list of the World heritage site. For dinner and overnight we will transfer to the town of **Agrigento**.

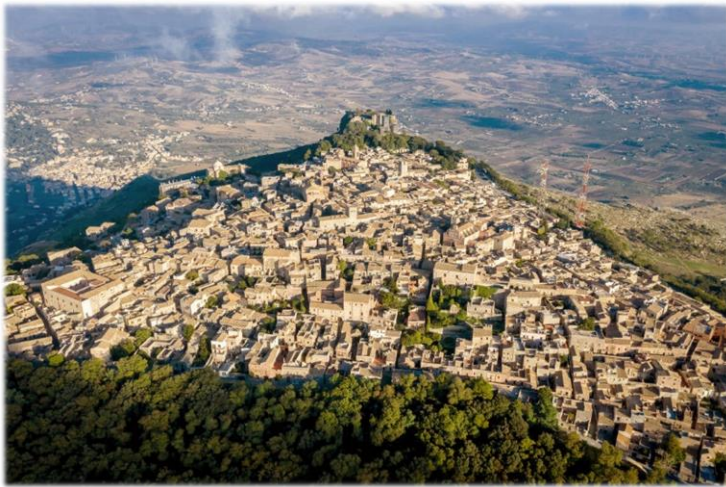


## Day 7: April 8, 2025

Breakfast at the hotel and check out. Our hotel is located in relative proximity to one of the most Ancient and important Greek settlements of Sicily, the mighty city-state of old **Agrigento**. The **Valley of the Temples** in Agrigento is part of the Via Sacra or the Sacred Way of the large colony established by Greek settlers at some point before the 6th century BC. Just prior to the war with Carthage, the city grew to be one of the largest in all Magna Grecia with an estimated population between 100,000 and 200,000 people. However, just as its western neighbor Selinunte, it came to decline during the

Sicilian and then Punic wars. It kept its existence but in a much smaller and less influential fashion until the present day. Most of the ancient city is built over by modern structures, however the so-called Valley of the Temples is well preserved and gives a glimpse into the cultic life of the ancient peoples. Not to miss is a well preserved Greek temple, now turned into a church on the Western side of the Valley. After lunch, we will visit yet another important Greek site of **Selinene**. Majestic and poetic remnants of the temples here are accompanied by the actual remains of the fortifications, streets and other civil and military structures of the Ancient Greek city. At the height of its glory in the 5th century BC population of city reached 30,000 people. But, severely damaged during the wars with Carthage, the city never fully recuperated. It came to decline and was known already during the Roman times as an extinct city. For dinner and overnight we will transfer to the city of **Marsala**





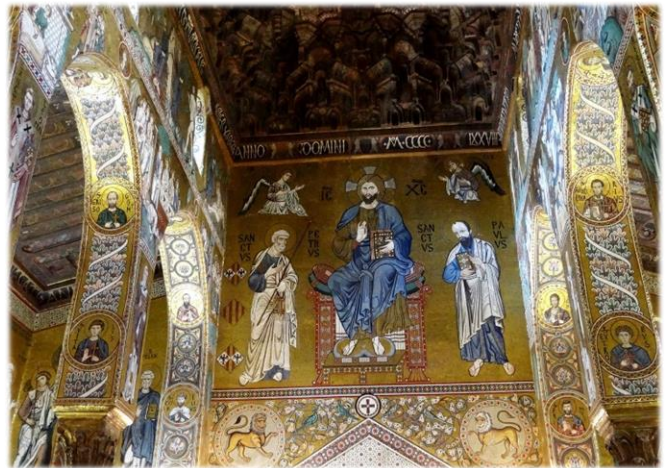
## Day 8: April 9, 2025

**Marsala** is known largely due to the production of the dry or sweet Marsala wine produced in the region that surrounds the city. However, development of Marsala wine dates back about 250 years, when English merchants settled in Sicily. Improved trade led to the economic expansion in Marsala. However, the city itself is known from the BC era, and remnants of the Phoenician colony of Motya can still be seen in the vicinity of the city. Marsala is also known as it's from here that the process of Italian unification under Giuseppe Garibaldi started in the Spring of 1860. North of Marsala there are famous salt plains, the center of major salt

production from Antiquity until the present day. Windmills, which once pumped seawater and ground the salt crystals, still stand. They were likely of Turkish design, built when Sicily was under Spanish rule, however the suggestion is made that the flats themselves may have been built already under the Phoenicians. Our last stop of the day will be at the Medieval town of **Erice**, dramatically located on top of Mount Erice, almost 2,500 feet above sea level. Erice preserves a lot of its Medieval charm and is one of the most dramatic localities in all of Sicily. It is said that on clear day you can see the shore of Tunisia in Africa from the city's ramparts.

## Day 9: April 10, 2025

Today we will spend a full day in **Palermo**. That doubtlessly most precious jewel, not only of Sicily but all of Italy. Palermo is very large and in parts unfortunately somewhat run down. Still, it keeps a lot of splendors around every corner. There are a few monuments we are planning to visit during our day-long tour of the city. Most special of them all is the **Palatine** or Royal Chapel in the former Norman palace. Fantastic glittering Byzantine **mosaics** in connection with the most thoughtful and exquisitely executed Romanesque features leaves all visitors in awe of the beauty. Damaged by several earthquakes some of the compositions have been



retouched. However most of the mosaics are preserved in a pristine state. Another church special to an "Eastern" visitor in that lavishly Baroque city, is the Martorana church also known as **Santa Maria dell'Ammiraglio** ("Saint Mary of the Admiral" or "built by the admiral"). That name derives from the founder of the church, the Greek

admiral in Norman Service, George of Antioch. Here beautiful Byzantine mosaics are intricately fitted into a very Eastern looking structure.



## Day 10: April 11, 2025

In the morning, we will transfer to the ancient town of **Cefalu** known since the Roman times. That beautiful coastal town will provide us with the first taste of the mixture of different cultures, as each left its unique and special impact on the city. The main attraction of Cefalu is its **cathedral** built in so-called Sicilian Romanesque style with very fine Byzantine mosaics inside. Built and adorned in the first half of the 12th century, the cathedral is very

well preserved and the image of the Pantocrator is recognizable to anyone who is even a little familiar with the Byzantine Art. After our lunch break, we will **climb up the mountain** that is towering over the city of Palermo. Here in the town of Monreale, we will see the most splendid Normano-Byzantine monument, the **Cathedral of Monreale**. Covered by mosaics in every corner, that mammoth structure serves as perhaps the largest and certainly one of the most beautiful examples of the Medieval Byzantine art anywhere. One can wander endlessly through the Cathedral exploring countless Biblical scenes and episodes of lives of some of the most prominent ancient saints.

Dinner and overnight at the hotel in **Palermo**

## Day 11: April 12, 2025

Breakfast at the hotel and transfer to the airport in Palermo for our return flight home.



## PRICING AND INCLUSIONS:

### Price includes:

- 10 overnights at the mentioned 4\* hotel with breakfasts daily
- Dinners included at the hotels – drinks not included
- All transfers & transportation by air-conditioned motor-coach 35/50seats
- Meet and greet with local assistant at the arrival in Malta
- Flight from Malta to Catania
- Headsets whisper sets whenever required
- Hotel city tax
- Catania/area (according to the availability): Tasting of wines and typical Sicilian products
- Erice/area (according to the availability): taste one of its typical almond cookies.
- English-speaking government licensed local guides:

### Price does not include:

- Meals (lunches) and drinks not mentioned in the program
- other entrances not mentioned above
- Health, medical, travel and baggage insurance
- Porterage
- International flights
- Tips and personal expenses
- Whatever not mentioned as being included

### Financial arrangements:

USD 3500per person, in double occupancy in a group of 26 participants; Single supplement: USD 850 extra. Please factor that the final price may fluctuate due to the actual number of participants or due to a significant difference in exchange rate of local currency vs US dollar at the time of the final payment. In case of need for financial adjustment you'll be informed right away.

All payments should be made by check to: "Palomnik, LLC" and mailed to 1613 Campus Drive, Vestal, NY 13850. Any returned checks are subject to \$25 fee. For payment with a Credit Card; domestic or international bank wires, please contact Fr. Ilya directly.

A deposit of \$900 is required when you sign up for the trip. The deposit is non-refundable, unless pilgrimage is cancelled by the organizers due to lack of participation or for some other valid or unforeseen circumstance. To avoid any money loss, emergency/travel cancellation insurance strongly recommended.

### TERMS AND CONDITIONS

**REGISTRATION DEADLINE:** The deadline for signing up for the trip is January 1, 2025. The entire amount is due 91 days prior to departure, January

1, 2025. Failure to pay in full by January 1, 2025 without written notice of explanation may lead to the cancellation of your participation, with no refund of any previously committed funds. If you would like to join us after the deadline, please check with the coordinator regarding availability.

**CANCELLATION POLICY:** If you need to cancel after you signed up, penalty is:

- 25% of the tour cost, 91 to 61 days prior to the departure
- 50% of the tour cost, 61 to 31 days prior to the departure
- 100% of the tour cost 31 or fewer days prior to the departure

All cancellations must be done in writing as well and sent directly to agent/coordinator - Fr. Ilya Gotlinsky and must be received for reimbursement by the dates shown in the cancellation schedule. We also have to add that should cancellation or alteration of the program occur due to COVID and associated emergencies, civil disturbances, acts of terrorism, war, natural disaster, and other events of force majeure or acts of God (including threat or fear of same), refunds will be made only to the extent that they are recoverable, and that such cancellation or alteration may result in the total loss of funds paid by participants. It is assumed each participant has reviewed the same with respect to their own comfort level of risk and personal safety. A decision to withdraw from the trip for these reasons or any others will be bound by the same terms of cancellation.

### ALTERATIONS TO ITINERARY:

Fr. Ilya Gotlinsky reserves the right to alter, modify or withdraw the itinerary if air schedules and/or events beyond his control deem it necessary. In the event it becomes necessary for the comfort or well-being of the travelers to alter or modify the itinerary or arrangements, such alterations may be made without penalty to the tour operator and are not grounds for cancellation with refund. Fr. Ilya Gotlinsky assumes no responsibility over any consequences as a result of any participant deviating from the group tour. Because of the difference in language and customs, it is expected that the traveler will follow the directions of the Tour Director at all times. Tour Director reserves the right to restrict a person's participation in the group's activities, including exclusion from the group, when, in the opinion of the Director, such action is necessary.

**REQUIRED TRAVEL DOCUMENTS:**

A passport with validity for at least six months beyond end of stay  
Egyptian visa to be obtained on arrival to Egypt, at the airport. Meet and assist will be arranged.

**IT IS STRONGLY SUGGESTED THAT YOU:**

- Obtain insurance covering medical needs and coverage of personal property
- Be aware that financial coverage for all emergency medical and other emergency needs will be your sole responsibility. We will provide all possible logistical and personal assistance, but the financial aspect is your responsibility.
- Act in a manner consistent with the surrounding environment
- Make arrangements to have access to sufficient funds to cover personal needs and unexpected events
- Be aware that the places that we will be visiting may not have the same amenities that you are accustomed to. Medical facilities in some areas may be limited. The financial coverage for all emergency medical and other emergency needs (including those related to COVID hospitalization, treatment, or quarantine) will be your sole responsibility. We will provide all possible logistical and personal assistance, but the financial aspect is your responsibility.

This agreement becomes effective upon acceptance into the tour by Fr. Ilya Gotlinsky

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**REGISTRATION FORM:  
RELIGION, HISTORY, CULTURE OF MALTA & SICILY  
April 2 – 12, 2025**

*To register: please complete this registration form and return it along with  
your deposit check (\$700.00) made to PALOMNIK, LLC to the following address:  
Palomnik, LLC, 1613 Campus Drive, Vestal, NY 13850.  
Please write "Malta & Sicily 2025" on the memo line.*

Full Name (exactly as in your passport):

Date of Birth (day/month/year):

Nationality, Passport # :

Issue and expirations date (day/month/year):

Address:

City, State, Zip/Postal Code

Home phone:

Alt. phone and Email:

Emergency Contact Information (Name, Phone, Relation):

Medical restrictions:

Dietary restrictions:

Would you prefer single accommodations at additional costs specified in the itinerary?

Please let us know if there is anything else that we should know in order to make your travel experience more comfortable and pleasant:

*Your signature below confirms that you have read the itinerary and agree to abide by Terms and  
Conditions that accompany the itinerary.*

NAME/SIGNATURE:

DATE: