Overview

Southern Italy is a feast for the eyes! Not only is its diverse savory cuisine delectable for curious travelers, there are also plenty of walking and hiking excursions within stunning land and seascapes to facilitate guilt-free consumption of the local fare. As well, optional introductions to yoga and meditation throughout the tour can add to the feeling of being in paradise. We will walk from Sorrento to Punta Campanella enjoying the view of Vesuvio and the Gulf of Naples. Exploring the beautiful city of Naples will orient us as a local guide communicates this area’s historical and cultural significance. We will then get a personalized tour of one of the oldest frantoios (olive-oil press) followed by an oil tasting and visit a caseificio (dairy production) to taste their handmade mozzarella. All of these delights will be rounded off with a cooking demonstration in our host’s very own kitchen. Of course, some more relaxing & meditative walking may be needed and the ancient ruins of Pompeii as well as the gorgeous island of Capri with its stunning cliffs, sea vistas, and ruins is just a short train/boat ride away. Amalfi, our next stop on this tour, offers panoramic views following the mulattieri (donkey path) along the stunning coast line and a tour of an ancient paper factory. En route to Sicily, we will visit the Greek temples of Paestum (some of the most well-preserved in the World). Arriving in Sicily, we will stay in the beautiful city of Taormina overlooking the blue waters of the Mediterranean Sea and Mount Etna. The group will then explore this active volcano (the tallest in Europe) with its vast areas of craters and incredible views.

Tour leader Jutta Brendel has been returning to this part of the world countless times for the last 30 years and will be happy to share her knowledge and language expertise with you. Co-leader Pat Lillis spent some of her elementary school years here and is excited to share some of her memories as well. Pat will provide optional introduction to and practice of yoga and meditation late afternoons throughout the tour. Largely, this tour will capture the essence of the Amalfi Coast and Sicily while filling your memories with the many delicious foods and drinks, picturesque landscapes, cultural experiences, and enjoyable walks/hikes that Italy comprises.
Tour Itinerary

Jan. 1, 2016 (Friday) – Travel Day
Fly to Naples (most likely overnight) and arrive in a Mediterranean paradise.

Jan. 2 – Naples and its Pizza
Arrive at the airport in Naples and beat the jetlag by shaking out those legs with a short walking tour of the city of Naples with our very own local tour guide. On our way along the stunning Sorrento coast, a 1 ½ hour bus ride, taste your very first “authentic” Pizza Napoletana in our first group dinner. Be greeted by our local hostess Imma and relax at her “Hotel del Corso”.

Jan. 3 – Olive Oil and Mozzarella
After a nice breakfast, Imma will take us on a tour of the olive-oil press that has been in the family since the 1860s. We will tour the grounds, understand how permaculture is a must in this terrain, and taste the various oils that are produced by the Gargiulo family. From there, we will experience the serpentine roads with its ever changing vistas to observe the making and shaping of mozzarella, or more accurately “fior di latte” (milk flower). Enjoy a proper “pranzo”, the Italian midday meal, in the small osteria “Arcadia”. A nap might be good afterwards? Begin the evening with “lo struscio”, the typical stroll up and down the main street of historic downtown Sorrento sampling a sip of limoncello, choosing your perfect gelato, or a tasting of other delicacies.

Jan. 4 – Hiking and Cooking Demonstration
Travelling with the locals by taking the blue SITA bus up the winding roads of the region, we’ll do some of the many hikes possible. Down to Punta Campanella with its stunning view across the deep blue waters of Capri and an old tonnara (Thuna factory) deep down in a cove below. Or, hike along an old shrine to a windswept plateau and the tonnara below. Or, hike up the mountain for a 360 degree view of both the Gulf of Naples and that of Castellamare. Or, we’ll hike down the mountain to the beach of Re Gommone and its view of the “Galli”; the legendary Sirens turned to stone when Ulysses passed by, not allured by their song. Deciding on the hike the evening before, we’ll have to plan to be back in the hotel early evening to join Imma in her kitchen for a fun cooking demo and group dinner.

Jan. 5 – Free Day
There are many ways to spend this last day in and around Sorrento and the leaders will be happy to assist in choosing the best option for you: explore the “Scavi di Pompeii” (the excavated city of ancient Pompeii) that was buried under the ashes of Vesuvio’s eruption in 79 AD, or: take the boat to Capri and explore this car-free island on foot that has inspired many novels, films, and still attracts the “jet set” just like a hundred years ago but also hosted some famous political refugees in the past such as Lenin and Gorky, or: spend the day exploring Sorrento further with its many artisans of ceramics, in-laid wood objects, and leather goods, or: join the leaders on another hike in this beautiful seascape.
Jan. 6 – Hiking the “Path of the Gods”
After breakfast, we’ll board our little bus for a spectacular ride along the Amalfi side of this coast: hair-pin turns, deep-blue waters way down below on the right, and white cliffs on the left. Bypassing scenic Positano, we will wind our way up to the small town of Agerola. From the central square there, we will begin our spectacular ridge walk overlooking the length of this peninsula with Capri as a mirage at its very tip. Even though this coast is one of the most visited places by tourists in the world, we will not hear anybody but ourselves, the wind, and some tinkling of bells, and mountain goats. Our bus will wait for us at the small hamlet of Nocelle to save us the 700 or so steps down into the town of Positano. We will then have the possibility of exploring Positano on foot with its fashionable shops along narrow streets, one atop the other. Relax for a short while before the nice walk into this small town dominated by a very BIG church. Browse in the many stores and tour the paper factory or the small museum, testament to Amalfi’s thousand-year-old history as a seafaring nation. We will have dinner together in one of the many typical restaurants with local specialties.

Jan. 7 – Escursion to Amalfi and Ravello
We will once again board the bus and enjoy the scenic ride along the coast to end up in the beautiful town of Amalfi with its very HUGE cathedral towering the central piazza. Now a rather small town, it was once a seafaring nation and one of the busiest shipbuilding towns. Tour the “Duomo” and stroll the streets peeking into one of the oldest paper factories. In the afternoon, we will take the bus up to Ravello with its beautiful two villas, nice gardens and spectacular views. This is the town that inspired many writers and composers!

Jan. 8 – Paestum and on to Sicily
Say Good Bye to our hostess Imma, board the bus and enjoy the two-hour ride to the Greek temples of Paestum (first photo), which after the Acropolis in Athens and the Valley of the Temples in Sicily, these are some of the most well-preserved Greek temples in the World. The small but very well-done museum nearby provides you with a good understanding of the history and other ancient artifacts. Our bus will take us through the mountains and down the Calabrian coast where we will share a group dinner and spend the night in Vibo Valentia.

Jan. 9 – Taormina
The ferry will take us (and the bus) to Taormina, a beautiful small town overlooking the ocean on one side and the towering volcano of Etna on the other side. Taormina boasts a beautiful Roman amphitheater (built atop a former Greek theater), that in 2 BC was second only to the Collosseo in Rome and that since antiquity and up until now uses the stunning view of the ocean as a backdrop to its plays. Other sights to explore in town are the cathedral, the botanical gardens, and many other churches and piazzas. The famous composer Vincenzo Bellini was born in nearby Catania, and Taormina might be a good place to get acquainted with his specific operatic style.

Jan. 10 – Explore Volcano Etna
Etna, just short of 10,000 feet above sea level, is visible from many places all over Sicily and is the tallest active volcano in Europe and one of the world’s most active. It boasts more than one crater and craters are shifting
with each eruption making a hike on one’s own too treacherous (as well as very strenuous). The bus will take us from the hotel to just shortly below the summit with an option of taking a “funivia” (cable car) to the vast crater area or hike to it along with the trail of the all-terrain vehicles. On our way, we’ll stop and experience a local “azienda agricola” (small farming operation) to taste some of the local specialties.

Jan. 11 – Hike to Castelmola and up Mount Tasso
The five-kilometer hike up to the little hamlet of Castel Mola affords you fantastic views over the whole length of the coast line but is also short and sweet enough to leave you time to do some tasting and/or shopping of the typical product of this area: almonds and almond pastries in all forms and shapes such as a variety of fruit, meat products, and figurines of the Sicilian puppet theater to name just a few. If you feel like more walking, head up the stairs towards the summit of Mount Tasso or take the funivia down to the beach, Lido Mazzaro”, to visit the tiny island of “Isola Bella”, the Beautiful Island. Our group will enjoy a farewell dinner and share what life has in store for future wanderings.

Jan. 12 (Tuesday) – Travel Day
Bid farewell to the masterpiece of Italy. Transfer to the Catania Airport to fly to your home destination.

COST: $2,989 (total USD)
MY OWN ROOM: $650 (additional USD)

INCLUDED: The cost includes all accommodations (3-4 star hotel lodging), all breakfasts and 5 group dinners in country, activities, passes, and guided tours listed in itinerary, all coach bus transfers in country, and 1-2 UWSP Adventure Tours tour leaders (depending on group size).

NOT INCLUDED: Roundtrip airfare to Italy, extra activities, extra meals and drinks, extra purchases (such as souvenirs, alcoholic beverages, and lodging sundries), local drivers’ and guides’ gratuities, laundry services, pre-tour domestic airport transfers, and travel insurance.

PLEASE NOTE: The cost comprises land only rate, per person, with double occupancy accommodations. Single rooms (“my own room”) may be limited. Depending on weather and other variables, some activities or accommodations may change prior to or during the tour. This tour will accommodate most fitness/health levels, however it is suggested that all participants have at least a moderate/fair level of fitness and health. The Yoga introduction and sessions are optional, yet many will thoroughly enjoy and experience deep relaxation as a benefit to participating. There is also some free time built in and the tour leaders can suggest extra activities and ensure a fun and safe wellness adventure for everyone aboard.

TOUR LEADERS: Jutta Brendel & Pat Lillis
Jutta is an ESL-Instructor for the International Students and Scholars Office at UWSP, experienced tour leader (since 1996), and speaks fluent Italian and German. Plus, her Master’s Degree is in Italian Studies. She has also travelled in and led many tours to Italy and other parts of Europe. She has been travelling to the Amalfi coast since the 1980’s and this will be her 4th UWSP tour to this area.
Pat Lillis, M.D., has been to Southern Italy several times and lived there for a couple of years. She has basic Italian skills. She is a certified yoga teacher and a member of the Yoga Alliance and IAYT.

GROUP SIZE: 12-18 participants
CONTACT: Trevor Roark (Program Mgr.), 715-340-8186, adventure.tours@uwsp.edu
REGISTRATION: register online with a check or via credit card OR print registration, complete, & mail along with $300 (pp) nonrefundable deposit
WEBSITE: www.uwspadventuretours.com