

Fr. Thomas D. Nicastro
of
St. Mary's
Nutley, NJ

The Hidden Secrets
of JULY 2023
A Cultural & Culinary Tour



September 1—12,
2023



Dear Friends,

This fabulous trip, a Culinary and Cultural treat, brings us to the sunny island of Sicily. A unique tour design, aspiring to discover the deepest essence of Sicily, by coupling, Sight-seeing of monuments with natural beauty and the pleasure of tasting this land through its gastronomical traditions and folklore.

We certainly hope you can join us in the once in a lifetime adventure through the magnificent Island of Sicily.

Sincerely,

Fr. Tom Nicastro & Lou Falconeri

Fratelli & Company Group Tours



Day 1 — USA//Palermo, Sicily

We board our trans-Atlantic flight to Palermo, Italy. Dinner and entertainment aloft. *For those not flying with the group, a time schedule and meeting points will be given prior to departure. Also, for those flying independently, overnights in hotels can be arranged through the agent/tour manager.*

Day 2 — Palermo

Welcome to Palermo Sicily, upon arrival meet your Tour director and driver, transfer to the hotel in Palermo. This afternoon an orientation tour of the city will be offered today including Quattro Canti, The Cathedral & Teatro Massimo used for the God father movie while in Palermo. We will take a walk through a typical street market, heritage of the Arab civilization. Tonight enjoy a typical Sicilian dinner (included) at a local restaurant in Mondello Palermo's seaside resort. Overnight in Palermo. (D)

Day 3 — Palermo City Tour/"The Bizarre, the Mythical, the sinister"

Morning departure to Monreale, famous for the splendid Cathedral plated with golden mosaics overlooking the fertile valley called "LaConca d'oro" (the Golden Shell), famed for its orange, olive and almond trees. Visit the Cathedral of Monreale that is one of the greatest existing examples of Norman architecture in the world. It was begun in 1174 by William II, and in 1182 the church, dedicated to the Assumption of the Virgin Mary. Time at leisure for lunch. This afternoon we will also visit the Convento dei Cappuccini, a macabre museum featuring 8000 mummies organized by their life profession or *Bagheria*. As an end to the day's tour we will stop at a local cantina/enoteca for a glass of wine while our local guide tells us a bit about the factors that account for the origin, development and influence of Sicily's peculiar criminal phenomenon known as the "mafia". This evening will be a culinary event at the famous "LoStrascino" trattoria. Entering "Lo Strascino" is equivalent to a dip in the past, reliving atmosphere in which the Sicilian cart and strascinate (typical transport carriage with 4 wheels) walking down the narrow streets of the neighborhoods of Palermo. The restaurant is a veritable Sicilian museum to relive the atmosphere of the narrow streets of the Cape (the famous market of Palermo), populated by carts and the typical figure of the peddlers. Overnight in Palermo. (B,D)



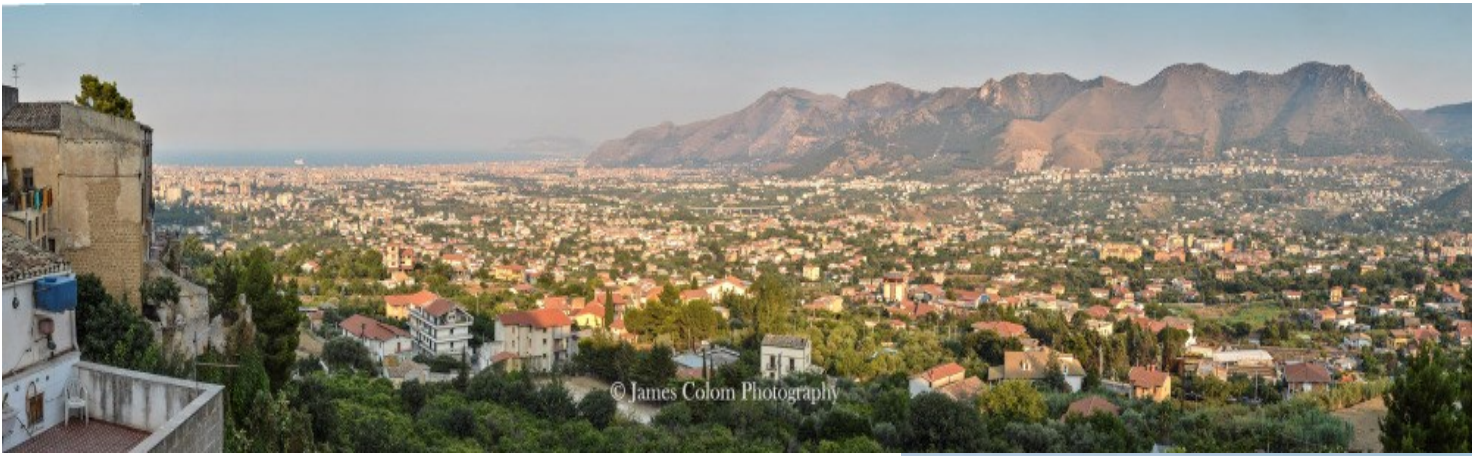
Day 4 — Palermo/Marsala/Cefalu

Today we will set out to the area of Trapani, in the western part of Sicily. The hills of this region produce some of the best wines and olive oils. The first stop on today's agenda will be the most ancient salt plants still in operation in Mothia bay followed by visit of Donnafugata, a top wine producer in this region. Today, wine tasting with "assagi" will be in one of the ancient wine cellars of Marsala. Enjoy included lunch. We will continue in the afternoon to the wonderful city of Cefalu' on the northern coast of the island. One of the Mediterranean's undiscovered jewels, Cefalu, "an epitome of picturesque grandeur" is a good description of this captivating seaside town beneath a steep mountain. Dinner this evening will be on your own and overnight in Cefalu. Overnight in Cefalu. (B,L)



Day 5 – Madonie Mountains/Cefalu

After breakfast today we will depart for the Madonie Mountains Natural Park and a visit to an old, working farm. We will witness the centuries old art of making "ricotta" Ricotta is one of the most renowned of Sicilian cheeses, and a basis for many recipes. Lunch (included) with wine will be at the farm, that is to say, lunch by your own hand! This working farm, with a restaurant attached, affords you the opportunity to get into the kitchen and get your hands dirty. Typical Sicilian dishes will be prepared by you with the guidance of the experts. Overnight in Cefalu(B,L)



Day 6—Cefalu/Agrigento/Taormina

Morning departure for Taormina, en route we visit Agrigento founded as a Greek colony in the 6th century B.C., Agrigento. This splendid archaeological park consists of eight temples (and various other remains) built



between 510 BC and 430 BC: the Temple of Hera, the Temple of Concordia, the Temple of Heracles, the Temple of Olympian Zeus, the Temple of Castor and Pollux, the Temple of Hephaestus and the Temple of Demeter are to be



found on the banks of the Akragas river, all are situated in the same area on rocky crests south of modern day Agrigento. Upon arrival we begin with a sightseeing tour of the Valley, these Temples are among some of the best preserved Greek structures in existence today. Time for Lunch. In the afternoon we continue our journey to Taormina, check in at your Hotel. Dinner (included) and overnight in Taormina. (B,D)

Day 7— Taormina/Mount Etna/Taormina

Today will be one of the most impressive natural sites and experiences of the entire trip. Sicily's famously fiery volcano, the magnificent Mount Etna. Listed as a UNESCO World Heritage Site, Mount Etna is Europe's tallest active volcano, and views from it over Parco dell Etna (the national park) are breathtaking. We will see the famous Monti Silvestri Craters near Rifugio Sapienza. Etna has an elliptical base (38 x 47 km) and a maximum elevation of about 3350 m. The volcano dominates the landscape of NE Sicily, Italy. The first eruptions at Etna occurred 500,000 years ago. Mt Etna has the longest period of documented eruptions in the world. Lunch (included) today will be along the slopes of Etna in the "Wine Farm Barone di Villagrande 1727". The Barone di Villagrande estate sets on Etna's slopes at an altitude of 700 meters above sea level. The vineyards, dominated by the estate, slope down towards the sea into a natural amphitheatre. For more than 10 years now, the company has taken up a project on the island of Salina - the production of the "passito" wine (made from sun-dried grapes) Malvasia. A small and elegant Wine Resort nestled among forests and historic vineyards, home to international wine tourists to discover the proverbial hospitality and cuisine of Sicily. Tonight dinner is on your own and overnight in Taormina. (B,L)



Day 8 – Taormina – Aeolian Islands (Weather permitting)

Today we depart early for the seaport city of Milazzo. Small yet stunning, the island of Panarea is a picture-perfect delight boasting a tiny whitewashed village surrounded by pristine beaches. Enjoy some free time to explore, perhaps shopping in the village's quaint stores or relaxing on the beaches. You can also use the time to enjoy lunch (on your own) at a local cafe; ask your host for tips! Return to the port at the pre-arranged time and cruise across the water to Stromboli, an island named after its active volcano. Spend time at leisure in Stromboli village, admiring its black lava-sand beach and pretty houses decked with vibrant flowers. After watching the sun set over the steaming volcano, head back to port and enjoy a light dinner on board your boat. Then, it's time for your evening's highlight: a boat ride around the island to see Stromboli's volcanic activity. Cruise until you reach a clear spot for viewing Sciara del Fuoco, where the most dramatic lava eruptions take place. Small eruptions and detonations occur frequently (usually around every half hour), so have your camera ready to capture bright explosions of liquid lava and rocks propelled into the air, against the backdrop of the night sky. Overnight in Taormina. B,D

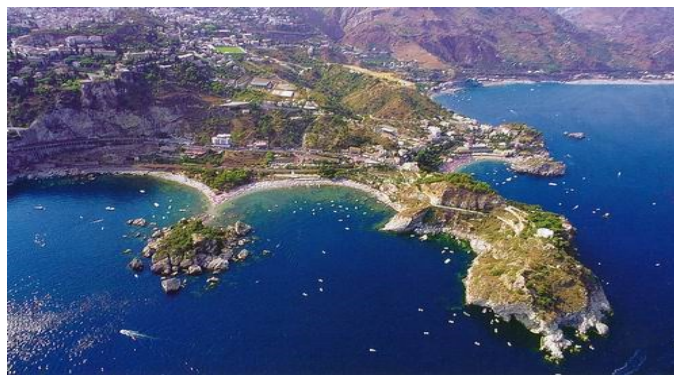


Day 9 —Taormina - Relax ! OR a Day Off the Beaten Path—Agira, Province of Enna

Today enjoy Taormina, one the Europe's most impressive resorts for the jet-setters. It was here, in romantic Taormina, that a self-exiled D.H. Lawrence was inspired to write one of his best selling novels. Taormina has endlessly winding medieval streets and tiny passages, each with its own secrets - great restaurants, cafés and ice cream bars. Taormina is beautiful by day but in the evenings its atmosphere is simply enchanting, whether you stroll through its illuminated streets or indulge in the view of the coast over a delicious dinner. This afternoon, you are free to meander the streets of this breathtaking city or relax by the pool at your hotel with a cocktail before dinner.

OR Agira, Enna Sicily– Village of the Nicastro Family

In Sicily's dramatic hinterland, not far from Enna, sits Agira, an age-old hill-top town, once a thriving Greek colony boasting a population of over 10,000 and important enough during Roman times for Cicero to mention it in his book *In Verrem*. According to the legend the village of Agira was founded before the Trojan war (1194 BC) by Greeks. The village rose on the ancient Greek Sicel city of *Agyrion* and its name derives from the violent tyrant Agyris who was considered one of the most powerful ruler in the centre of Sicily. The archaeological findings also testimonies the presence of an ancient village founded 30.000 years ago by a group of Afro – Asian nomads. The most important monuments of the village are: The Argon, an archaeological site dedicated to the ancient Jewish community of the area; The Castle, built in the Sicani period, became a very important fortress under the Arab domination; The Church of Reale Abbazia, built in the 10th century, is dedicated to the Patron Saint of Agira and includes impressive red marble columns,



many Gothic and Bizantine decorations and over 400 ancient parchments; The Church of SS Salvatore, built in the 12th century, has a wonderful facade characterized by Renaissance sculptures with Norman and Aragonese decorations. Agira itself is certainly worth a visit with its numerous churches, including two fine Norman examples, the remains of an Arab-Byzantine fortress and a synagogue, testifying to the presence of a Jewish population several hundred years ago. On a rather more sombre note, just outside town, in a delightful panoramic setting overlooking Lago di Pozzillo and Mount Etna rising in the distance, is the Canadian military cemetery, resting place of 490 Canadian soldiers who died on Sicilian soil during Operation Husky, the Allied invasion, in 1943.



This day is your choice!. You can opt to stay in Taormina or join Father Tom on this day trip outside of Taormina to visit this quaint and ancient town of his family's origins. We will have a half day guided tour of the town and free time for lunch (on your own) and shopping. We will return to Taormina in late afternoon.

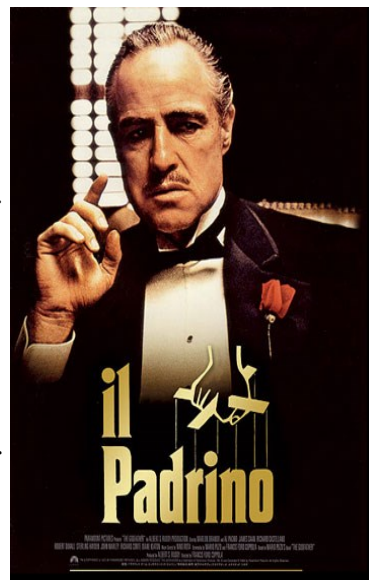
Today, after years of relative obscurity and isolation, Agira is well and truly back on the map thanks to the recent arrival of an enormous Sicilia Outlet Village, the largest fashion outlet in the south of Italy. There are around 100 boutiques, each dedicated to some of the most important Italian and foreign fashion houses, including Prada, Armani, Dolce & Gabbana, Gucci, Fay, Lacoste, Versace, and Trussardi. **Dinner (included) in Taormina in one of the city's many trattorias and overnight.**

Day 10 – Siracusa /“The Godfather” - “Il Padrino” / Savoca



be one of the most attractive places in the environs of Taormina. Bar Vitelli with a gorgeous terrace, has a collection of photographs taken when Francis Ford Coppola shot some scenes of "The Godfather II". The table where Micheal Corleone sat to ask the “padrone” for the hand of his delightful daughter Apollonia is still there. After, we can walk to the church “Chiesa Madre” where Michael's wedding ceremony took place. Then enjoy a few minutes free time for a "granita" in the Bar Vitelli before we return to Taormina for Dinner. (B,D)

After breakfast today you will depart for the 2000 year old city of Siracusa (Syracuse), once one of the most important cities of the ancient world. You will visit the Archaeological Park with its Greek and Roman Theaters and the Paradise Quarry. Afterwards you continue to Ortygia, this is the heart of the ancient city, with its Baroque Cathedral built around Temple of Athena. In Ortygia there will be free time for lunch, shopping. In the afternoon a scenic drive runs inland to Savoca which is considered to



Day 11— Free Day at leisure in Taormina / Farewell Dinner



Today will be a day to totally enjoy yourself, natural rising, no wake up call! Take time to do some last minute shopping and/or sightseeing. Your tour manager will have suggestions if you would like to take a day excursion. Visit the amphitheatre of Taormina on your own; a short walk from city center. Perhaps take the cable car down to the beach and spend some time exploring the gorgeous coast of this outstanding city. Early in the evening we will gather for a lovely farewell dinner with music and entertainment. Tonight enjoy your farewell dinner at "La Griglia" restaurant. (B,D) Overnight will be in Taormina.



Day 12—Italy – USA

Today, we bid not farewell, but *Arrivederci* (see you again) as we transfer to the airport. Upon boarding your flight homebound, not only will we be carrying many kilos of Italy in our luggage, but many memories of fun days, wonderfully interesting meals shared with friends, a bit more culture to add to our already cultured consciousness, but above all the recollection of a stimulating and wonderful journey through Sicily. Dinner aloft and overnight at HOME!!!

SICILY—a brief synopsis

Sicily is located in the central Mediterranean. Its most prominent landmark is Mount Etna, which, at 3,350 m (10,990 ft), is the tallest active volcano in Europe and one of the most active in the world.

The island has a typical Mediterranean climate.

The earliest archeological evidence of human dwelling on the island dates from as early as 12,000 BC. Sicily has a rich and unique culture, especially with regard to the arts, music, literature, cuisine and architecture. It also holds importance for archeological and ancient sites such as the Necropolis of Pantalica, the Valley of the Temples and Selinunte.

After the Italian Unification, in spite of the strong investments made by the Kingdom of Italy in terms of modern infrastructure, the Sicilian (and the wider *mezzogiorno*) economy remained relatively underdeveloped and this caused an unprecedented wave of emigration.

The Mafia's origins are still uncertain but it is generally accepted that it emerged in the 18th century initially in the role of private enforcers hired to protect the property of landowners and merchants from the groups of bandits (*briganti*) who frequently pillaged the countryside and towns. The battle against the Mafia made by the Kingdom of Italy was controversial and ambiguous; although the Carabinieri (the military police of Italy) and sometimes the Italian army were often involved in terrible fights against the mafia members, their efforts were frequently useless because of the secret cooperation between mafia and local government and also because of the weakness of the Italian judicial system.

INCLUDED

ENGLISH SPEAKING TOUR ESCORT FROM DAY of ARRIVAL to DAY of DEPARTURE
ENGLISH SPEAKING LOCAL GUIDES THROUGHOUT
PERSONALIZED AUDIO SYSTEM TO HEAR EVERY WORD, EVEN FROM A DISTANCE
ENTRANCE FEES INCLUDED
BUFFET BREAKFAST DAILY with coffee, tea, juice
DINNERS & LUNCHESES as per itinerary 7 DINNERS / 3 LUNCHESES
WINE, MINERAL WATER & COFFEE SERVED with LUNCH & DINNER at HOTELS & RESTAURANTS
AGRITURISMO & COOKING CLASS
DE LUXE AIR-CONDITIONED MOTORCOACH
FIRST CLASS 4 STAR HOTELS
PORTERAGE in HOTELS in ITALY
TAXES (22% VAT) & SERVICE CHARGES

EXCLUDED

ROUND TRIP TRANSFERS TO US AIRPORTS
PASSPORTS and/or VISA FEES
GRATUITIES to DRIVER, GUIDES, TOUR ESCORTS
PORTERAGE IN AIRPORTS
ITEMS OF PERSONAL NATURE (Laundry, telephone calls, room service, etc)
BEVERAGES at MEALS UNLESS LISTED IN THE ITINERARY
CITY HOTEL STAY TAXES—TO BE PAID BY CLIENTS PRIOR TO CHECK OUT (approx. 30 Euro per person, subject to change)

FOR FURTHER INFO CALL

Fratelli & Company Group Travel

E-mail — louis@fratelliandcompany.com or fratelco@aol.com – tel. (908)766-8994

Please fill in all areas and sign reverse side of application.

**Land Portion Only - \$3,395.00 per person (double occupancy)
Round Trip Airfare Newark to Sicily \$1,746 per person Economy Class**

Price quoted is based on payments made by check or cash only. **For credit cards please add 3.50%**

RETURN THIS FORM WITH YOUR DEPOSIT — PLEASE PRINT CLEARLY

Sicily—The Hidden Secrets—September 1—12, 2023

Name as it appears on passport: _____ Male _____ Female _____

Street Address: _____

City/State/Zip: _____

Home Tel: _____ Work Tel: _____ Email: _____

Date of Birth: _____ Place of Birth: (City, State, Nation) _____

US CITIZENS

U S Passport #: _____ Expiration Date: _____

FOREIGN NATIONALS

Foreign Passport # _____ Expiration Date _____ Alien Registration # (Green Card) _____

If you DO NOT have a passport at this time, please indicate, then provide to the tour operator/tour organizer with the passport info ASAP.

I wish to room with: _____

Private Accommodations or Single Room: _____ + Single Supplement Fee \$650.

MAKE CHECKS PAYABLE TO: **Fratelli & Co. GTC** 26 Pill Hill Road, Bernardsville, NJ 07924

\$500. Per person. Deposit due with this application

Balance in Full Due 60 days prior to departure date; July 1, 2023

Will you be taking Travel Insurance? It is recommended. Yes ___ / No ___ Your travel professional can assist you.

EMERGENCY CONTACT INFO: Please provide one or 2 Names and telephone numbers in case of an emergency.

1. _____

2. _____

Do you have any SEVERE FOOD or MEDICATION ALLERGIES: (optional) - Please list below or on separate sheet

TERMS & CONDITIONS

Reservations/Deposits/Payments: A deposit of five hundred dollars (\$500.00) is required at the time of booking. No reservation is confirmed until the deposit is received by the tour operator. The balance of the tour price is due and payable sixty (60) days prior to departure.

Minors And Infirm: Children under the age of 18 must be accompanied by a parent/guardian or a responsible adult deemed worthy by the parent/guardian. If a minor is traveling with any person other than parent/guardian then the responsible adult will provide the travel agent/tour operator and have in his/her possession a notarized letter from the parent/guardian giving that adult full permission to make decisions on their behalf and permission to room with the minor. No minor will be allowed to room alone without the parent/guardian or named responsible adult. Due to the physical demands of the tour and the inaccessibility of handicap facilities abroad, no physically handicapped person may be a tour passenger.

Tour Price: The tour price in this brochure is based upon the U. S. currency vs. the European Euro at the time of printing, November 2022. If changes in these rates occur, it may change the price accordingly. The tour price is based on booking a minimum of 25 paying passengers. A lesser amount could increase the price of the tour. Should the price of the tour change for any of the reasons mentioned above, the passenger will then have the right to cancel the reservation and receive a full refund of payment made to date, provided that written notice be received by Fratelli & Co. within 7 (seven) days of the notification of the price change. Otherwise, the cancellation policy written below prevails. Airport Taxes and Fuel Surcharges are subject to change. No refund will be made if the passenger is dissatisfied with any of the accommodations; fails to use any of the accommodations included in the tour price, or must return home prior to completion of the tour.

Cancellations: Land and Air arrangements may be canceled and passenger may receive a full refund less one hundred (\$100.) dollars cancellation fee if the cancellation is made no less than ninety (90) days prior to the scheduled departure date. If cancellation is made less than sixty (60) days prior to scheduled departure, there is no refund unless a suitable replacement passenger books the tour in his/her place. For these reasons we recommend you take Travel Insurance.

Travel Insurance: Health, accident, Trip Interruption/Cancellation and baggage insurance are NOT included; information can be made available through your travel agent.

Sightseeing & Itinerary: Sightseeing is included as specified in the itinerary with English-speaking guides and customary entrance fees. The tour operator reserves the right to vary the sequence of the itinerary and/or reroute the order of cities, should circumstances arise.

Passports: A valid passport is required, and MUST be shown upon request to the travel agent/tour operator, tour leaders and any airline personal and customs officials.

Responsibility: Fratelli & Co., your tour operator has arranged a vacation package which may include one or more of the following: air, land transportation, hotel accommodations and food service. Neither the tour operator nor the organizer own, operate, manage, or control any hotel, bus company, railroad, cruise line, service provider, restaurant, airline transportation company, person or persons rendering any of the services, and/or accommodations offered in connection with this tour. The tour operator and/or tour organizer do not guaranty any passenger's safety who participates in the tour. Accordingly, the passenger understands that he or she has no claim against the tour operator or organizer for any delay, or other irregularity caused by a third party service provider, damage to or loss of property, injury to or death of the person due to any action or failure to act by the air carrier, bus carriers, private cars, livery carriers, railroad, ships, hotels, restaurants and any service providers in connection with this tour, strikes, war, or any acts of God. Under these circumstances, no portion of the tour price will be refunded. It is advisable that you cover any potential risks with insurance coverage.

Cancellation of Passenger's Rights: In an effort to make the tour pleasant for all, the tour operator reserves the right to: 1. cancel any reservation and refund the tour price, pursuant to the cancellation clause, of any passenger who acts irrational by words, actions and demeanor prior to the tour departure; 2. refuse further participation in the tour once the tour begins, with no refund given, to passengers who: act unruly, irrational, unduly argumentative, incite trouble among passengers, endanger the health and/or safety of the other passengers, tour operator, tour organizer, and/or tour escort, or if they become physically or emotionally disabled and create a burden that the remaining passengers are unwilling to accept. No tour passenger, tour operator, tour organizer, tour escort, will be obligated to assist any infirm, handicapped or injured passenger.

Inclusions: All hotel taxes, service charges, First Class Four Star Hotels, Comprehensive sightseeing as per itinerary, English-speaking guides, all baggage handling and assistance abroad (except in airports for security reasons), Breakfasts, lunches and dinners (including in flight meals) as per itinerary.

Exclusions: Passport and visa fees, tips for tour escorts, drivers, guides, food service personal, hotel maids, phone calls, laundry services, and other items of a personal nature. Rates do NOT include beverages at meals unless specified in the itinerary. Rates do not include transportation to and from US airports or baggage handling in the United States.

Physical and Emotional Limitations: The tour operator cannot be held responsible for any part of the tour missed due to physical or emotional limitations. Anyone who cannot participate in an event will not receive a refund for any unused portion. Further, if anyone must stop or return to a hotel or motor-coach during a tour, and uses public transportation or taxis, it will be their responsibility to pay for the transportation.

Miscellaneous: Any Litigation concerning this tour shall be brought in the State of New Jersey. This agreement shall be construed according to New Jersey and Federal law. The tour operator shall not be responsible for any typographical errors or misprints. The tour operator reserves the right to substitute in its discretion any air, land and sea carrier, hotels, and service providers and itinerary.

I have read terms and conditions of the tour and accept them. I represent I am not physically or emotionally challenged and I am able to meet the physical demands required by this tour.

signature:

date: