

ANCIENT HERITAGE OF SOUTHERN ITALY

APRIL 19-30, 2010



AAAS TRAVELS & SIGMA Xi EXPEDITIONS
BETCHART EXPEDITIONS, INC

ANCIENT HERITAGE OF SOUTHERN ITALY

April 19 - 30, 2010

OVERVIEW

Join us as we explore the vestiges of ancient civilizations and see the very best that Southern Italy has to offer. Though criss-crossed and settled by many peoples, it was the ancient Greeks who had the most impact here. Our leitmotif will be the **great thinkers of antiquity** who have shaped Western thought and wisdom, and we will examine the ties between the Greeks in the West and in their original homeland.

We start in Sicily with the ingenious **Archimedes** and visit his home town of **Syracuse** - modern-day Siracusa - in the East of the island. Did he really harness sunlight from mirrors to set fire to enemy ships as they anchored in the Great Bay?

Our second focus will be closer to our base of **Castelmola**, spectacularly situated just above **Taormina**. At sea level in **Giardini Naxos** we see the vestiges of the first Greek colony on Sicily way back in 734 BC against the backdrop of Europe's highest volcano, **Mt Etna**.

We will then cross the narrow **Straits of Messina** to the Italian mainland to explore superb sites in Southern Italy. We will visit the **Pythagorean sites of Croton and Metapontion** on Italy's eastern seaboard, and **Paestum and ancient Elea**, home to the school of **Zeno and Parmenides**, on the western side. Still surrounded by fertile agricultural plains, Paestum south of Salerno has some of the best-preserved Greek temples found in the ancient world.

Our itinerary also takes in several other major **UNESCO World Heritage sites** in Southern Italy: **Castel del Monte**, an enigmatic 13th century castle built by Holy Roman Emperor Frederick II, the beautifully preserved village of **Alberobello** with its curiously-shaped conical houses called *trulli*, and our last destination, **Matera**, with its remarkable dwellings hewn out of the bright limestone.

During the itinerary, we will also focus on Southern Italy's landscape and ecology. **The archaeological sites will be awash with flowers at this time of year, and spring bird migration** from Africa will be under way. Some of our highlights will be walks through *maquis* vegetation, examining plant species and discussing the use of plants in ancient times, or going for an early morning bird walk to hear - and identify - the Mediterranean dawn chorus.

Our itinerary includes:

- o **Alberobello** - This town has a remarkable cluster of age-old *trulli*, conically shaped dry-stone dwellings which are characteristic of the flat plateau lands of Puglia in southeastern Italy. Alberobello has been listed as a UNESCO World Heritage Site since 1996.
- o **Syracuse** - Sicily's largest city in antiquity, Syracuse was home to Archimedes, Greece's best-known inventor and mathematician who lived in the third century BC and died during the Roman siege of the city in 212 BC. We explore the archaeological sites that would have been standing in his day. Our stroll will take in the ancient Greek Temple of Athena, now fully incorporated into the various architectural elements of the cathedral in present-day Siracusa.
- o **Castelmola** - One of the most attractive and best-preserved hill villages in Sicily, perched on a limestone dome about 1600 feet above sea level. Lying well off the beaten track, this historic gem will be our base while we explore the eastern seaboard of Sicily.

- o **Matera** - Like a town in a time-warp, Matera lies in the heart of the region of Basilicata and is a World Heritage Site. On the hillside in the old town, many of the historic buildings are sculpted out of the white limestone. The town is also home to Europe's largest breeding colony of Lesser Kestrel, a major wildlife spectacle as they return from their African winter quarters to breed in Italy.
- o **Castel del Monte** - Built supposedly as a hunting lodge by Holy Roman Emperor Frederick II in the 13th century, Castel del Monte lies in rolling countryside in Puglia. This well-preserved octagonal castle is an architectural marvel of the High Middle Ages. It was designated a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 1996.
- o **Paestum** - Situated south of Salerno, Paestum marked the northern boundary of Greek influence in the 6th century BC. Its three main temples dedicated to Athena and other deities are some of the best preserved from the ancient world.
- o **The Riace Bronzes** - We will visit the archaeological museum of Reggio Calabria to see the two spectacular, larger-than-life bronze statues fished out of the sea off nearby Riace in 1972.
- o **Crotone** - Lying on Italy's Ionian coastline facing Greece, this is where Pythagoras settled in 530 BC after leaving his native island of Samos off the coast of Asia Minor. There is extensive archaeological evidence all round Crotone, especially at Capo Colonna south of the main town, site of an ancient temple to Hera.

LEADERSHIP

Leading this expedition will be classicist and naturalist **Mark Walters**, who is well known to Betchart travelers from trips to explore Wild France, Tuscany, Sicily, or the homeland of Alexander the Great in Greece! In March 2009 Mark was a guest speaker at the National Gallery of Art in Washington, DC on environmental quality in Southern Italy during Greek and Roman times. He works as a scientific editor and lecturer for a number of academic institutions throughout Italy, in addition to leading trips and researching and writing travel books. Mark looks forward to sharing the delights of Southern Italy with you.

ITINERARY

DAYS 1 / 2 USA to ROME & CASTELMOLA

Depart from USA gateway cities for Rome, arriving on Day 2. Then take a local connecting flight from Rome to the Catania Airport. Transfer to the *Villa Sonia (3 nights)* in the spectacular hill town of Castelmola, one hour's drive from the airport. In the afternoon enjoy a walk with unbelievable views over the Mediterranean coastline or enjoy a stroll through Castelmola. Welcome orientation and dinner. D

DAY 3 GIARDINI NAXOS & TAORMINA

We will spend today investigating the origins of Greek civilization in Sicily. The first city state to be founded on the island was Naxos, now known as Giardini Naxos, a short distance southeast of Taormina. We drive down to sea level and explore the archaeological remains from the first colony and the museum close to the port. At lunchtime we will head back up the hill to Taormina, and enjoy a guided tour of the main sights in town. There will be the option after the tour for a spectacular walk on ancient mule-tracks back up to our base in Castelmola. B,D

DAY 4 ANCIENT SYRACUSE

Today we head down the coast and stop at the ancient Syracusan quarter of Neapolis, with its well-preserved Greek theatre affording fine views over the city. This is near where Archimedes is said to have been buried. We will hear about the great inventor's life and discoveries, and view several of the ancient sites now in the heart of the old town of Siracusa, where we have a late lunch. This is also one of the main centers for Sicilian baroque, the style used for rebuilding the town after a devastating earthquake in 1693. The afternoon will include a walk along the Great Harbour of Syracuse, the scene of several sea battles in antiquity and Archimedes' defensive stratagems. B,L

DAY 5 THE STRAITS OF MESSINA & REGGIO CALABRIA BRONZES

Today we will head north towards Messina where we will embark on a ferry to cross the straits to the Italian mainland, about 2 miles across at its narrowest point. Apart from being renowned as the setting for Homer's Scylla and Charybdis, this is also a major crossing point for raptors from Sicily to the region of Calabria. We hope to see some glide over on their way north. Our first stop on the other side is Reggio Calabria, home to the National Archaeological Museum. It houses two fine bronze statues from the fifth century BC which were discovered in the sea in 1972. The statues may have been looted by the Romans from Greece and then shipwrecked or jettisoned overboard on their way to Rome. After a late lunch we will continue on to our next destination, Croton, on Italy's Ionian seaboard. *Panoramic Hotel*. B,D

DAY 6 ANCIENT CROTON

This morning we will explore the site just south of present-day Croton, known as Capo Colonna, with its Temple of Hera. Although there is only one column standing, the site is atmospheric, and will be a riot of springtime colors: the blue of bugloss, red of poppies and yellow of wild chrysanthemum. We will follow up our visit to Capo Colonna with a brief tour of the town museum in Croton. Although there is little standing from the ancient city-state of Croton and its great Pythagorean tradition, some interesting finds have been made, including gold jewelry at Capo Colonna, offered perhaps to the goddess Hera. In the afternoon we head northwest towards Cilento National Park for our next stopover in San Marco Castellabate. *Hotel Hermitage (3 nights)*. B,D

DAY 7 PAESTUM & SALERNO & the Gardens of Minerva

A short journey north of our base is the archaeological site of Paestum, founded by Greeks from Sybaris in the late seventh century BC. We will look around the temples and the adjoining archaeological museum, which will give some terrific insights into Greek culture and life 2500 years ago. After a break for lunch we will head northwards to Salerno to see its old town and the Gardens of Minerva. Salerno's medical school is considered one of the first higher education institutes to be founded in Italy, and the Gardens of Minerva, where its medieval students would have learned about the curative effects of plants, has been recently - and lovingly - restored. After our visit to the gardens we return to our base in San Marco. B,D

DAY 8 VELIA & CILENTO NATIONAL PARK

Today we will work our way southeast along the attractive coastline of Campania to Velia, known as Elea in ancient Greek times. As we walk through the ancient site we will learn about the main tenets of the Eleatic school of philosophers which flourished in Elea in the sixth and fifth centuries BC. We will also explore the backroads of the Cilento National Park, a huge area stretching almost all the way from Paestum to the boundary with the neighboring region of Basilicata. After lunch at a rural estate or *agriturismo* we will visit the WWF nature preserve of Morigerati. B,L

DAY 9

MATERA

Today we leave Campania and head eastward into the wilder parts of southern Italy, the region of Basilicata, also known as Lucania. The jewel here is the old town of Matera. Evacuated in the 1950s for health reasons, the old town, or *I Sassi* as it is picturesquely called, was virtually uninhabited for decades and thankfully spared the ravages of twentieth century building development. It is now a World Heritage Site. We will arrive at our hotel, *Locando di San Martino (3 nights)* in late morning and break for lunch. In the afternoon, a city walking tour will take us up and down winding traffic-free streets to view the best of Matera's monuments: paleo-Christian and baroque churches, as well as a reconstructed 1950s dwelling. In the evening we will sample the regional cuisine at a small trattoria in the old town. B,D

DAY 10

CASTEL DEL MONTE & ALBEROBELLO

This morning, we will cross the rolling plateaulands of the neighboring region of Puglia to see the castle built by King Frederick II who ruled over southern Italy in the thirteenth century. As we walk round the castle we learn about this remarkable sovereign, known for his breadth of learning and cultural enlightenment. There is time after our visit for a light lunch. We then strike cross-country to our next destination, Alberobello. The town, now a designated World Heritage Site, has a cluster of about 1500 *trulli*, curious conical buildings with dry-stone walls. We have a guided tour of the town and view the interior of some of these remarkable buildings. Then it's back to Matera in the late afternoon to enjoy personal exploration of the old town. B,L

DAY 11

METAPONTO

Today we will descend to the fertile plains of Italy's instep and immediately see what originally attracted the Greeks here: good farmland, easy access to the interior, and an abundance of surface water. We will view the temples and theater at the ancient Greek site of Metapontion, now known as Metaponto. This is where Pythagoras is reputed to have started up a school in the late sixth century. We also visit one isolated Greek temple, perhaps marking a boundary and making a powerful statement to neighboring Greeks and barbarians. After a break for lunch, we head back to Matera in the early afternoon. Farewell dinner in a local restaurant. B,D

DAY 12

BARI TO ROME & HOME

Transfer to the Bari airport this morning for our return flights to Rome and the USA. B

COSTS & CONDITIONS

Expedition Fee: \$3,850 per person twin share plus air fare from USA gateway cities to Rome, Italy round trip. Group in-tour flights Rome to Catania and Bari to Rome are approximately \$395.

Singles: We encourage singles to register on a "twin share" basis. Should you desire single accommodations, the additional cost is \$795 and is subject to availability.

Air Fare: Please book flights to Rome from your most convenient gateway city, to arrive by 10 am on April 20th. The group will fly from the Rome Airport on April 20th to Catania. Your return flight from Rome to the USA should be booked in the afternoon on April 30th. **Please call Marisa if questions, phone (800) 252-4910 or (408) 252-4910. AIR FARES ARE SUBJECT TO CHANGE.**

Accommodations: Are in first class hotels which reflect the charm and heritage of Italy and are well situated for visits to archaeological and cultural sites, nature reserves, and shops.

Expedition Fee Includes: Group airport transfers; land transportation as indicated; accommodations twin share in first class hotels which reflect the heritage of Southern Italy; some meals; tips to local guides and drivers; group entrance fees; baggage handling; leadership, administration.

Expedition Fee Does Not Include: Air fare (quoted separately); some meals; independent airport transfers; gratuity to expedition leader; personal items such as alcoholic beverages, laundry, phone calls, bottled water, snacks, passport, insurance; foreign airport departure tax.

Reservations, Deposits & Payments: To reserve a place on this expedition, please phone **Marisa Eide at Betchart, (800) 252 4910** and mail a deposit of \$500 per person to: **Southern Italy Expedition, Betchart Expeditions Inc., 17050 Montebello Road, Cupertino, CA 95014-5435**. Balance is due 60 days before departure.

(see back side of page)

RESERVATIONS

#1127

YES! I/We want to join the **Ancient Heritage of Southern Italy Expedition, April 19-30, 2010**, offered by Betchart Expeditions Inc. Please reserve _____ space(s). As a deposit, I/we have enclosed a check for \$_____ (\$500 per person), payable to Betchart Expeditions Inc. Trust Account.

Name(s) _____ Age _____ Sex _____

_____ Age _____ Sex _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ ZIP _____

Phone: Home (____) _____ Work (____) _____

Email #1: _____ #2: _____

Membership (please circle): AAAS Sigma Xi ACS Planetary Society

Accommodations Preference: _____ Twin _____ Twin share _____ Single
_____ Nonsmoker _____ Smoker

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Please mail to: **2010 Southern Italy Expedition**
Betchart Expeditions Inc.
17050 Montebello Road
Cupertino, CA 95014-5435

What to Expect: This expedition is planned for the travel enthusiast who would enjoy exploring and learning about the archaeological, scientific, and cultural heritage of Southern Italy. Travel is by motorcoach, with daily outings on foot of 1 to 2 miles at a leisurely pace suitable for exploring archaeological sites, museums, villages, medieval cities, and nature preserves. Exploration requires some walking uphill and sites may be extensive. Please be prepared to actively explore on foot. Binoculars are recommended. Temperatures will be in the 70's to 80's with a sea breeze. This expedition is a tremendous experience for travelers with an appetite for adventure and discovery who would like to explore Southern Italy led by a Mediterranean classicist and naturalist. (No smoking in vehicles, during lectures, or meals, please.)

Questions? Please phone **Marisa Eide (800) 252-4910 or (408) 252-4910.** Fax: (408) 252 1444. Email: marisa@betchartexpeditions.com

Cancellations & Refunds: The initial deposit is refundable up to 60 days before departure less a handling fee of \$100 per person. There is no refund after the 60-day period unless your place is resold, then only the \$100 per person handling fee is withheld. There are no refunds for unused meals, or other expedition features.

Responsibility: *Betchart Expeditions Inc. acts only as agent for the passenger with respect to transportation and hotels and exercises every care possible. Betchart can assume no liability for injury, damage, delay, loss, accident, or irregularity in connection with the services of any airplane, ship, motorcoach, or any other conveyance used in carrying out the arrangements of the tour. We cannot accept any responsibility for losses or additional expenses due to delay or changes in air or other services, sickness, weather, strike, war, terrorism, quarantine, acts of God, or other causes beyond our control. All such losses or expenses will have to be borne by the passenger, as tour rates provide for arrangements only for the time stated. We reserve the right to substitute another leader of similar expertise or to cancel any tour prior to departure in which case the entire payment will be refunded with no further obligation on our part. The right is also reserved to decline to accept or retain any person as a member of the tour. No refund will be made for the unused portion of any tour unless arrangements are made in sufficient time to avoid penalties. The price of the program is based on current tariffs and rates, and is subject to change. Any tariff, exchange rate, or fuel increases will be passed on to participants. Baggage is carried at the owner's risk entirely. It is understood that the air ticket when issued shall constitute the sole contract between the passenger and the airline concerned. The airlines concerned are not to be held responsible for any act, omission, or event during the time passengers are not on board their plane or conveyance.*

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