EXPLORE! Tour Notes

PRICE GUARANTEE 100% NO SURCHARGES

Ancient Sicily (SCS 2014)

GUEST SPECIALIST

TOUR DURATION **15** DAYS

Tour Style: Classic
Tour Pace: Moderate
Tour Type: Small Groups
Tour Comfort: Standard
Tour Code: SCS

Tour Highlights - Ancient Sicily

- ✓ Syracusa - Discover the ancient Greek and Roman sites of a city which once rivalled Athens in the Greek world
- ✓ Agrigento - Visit the Valley of the Temples
- ✓ Palermo - Sicily's capital, visit the majestic Norman cathedral at Monreale
- ✓ Taormina - Visit the famous Greek theatre – excellent views of Mount Etna
- ✓ Guest Lecturer - Enjoy informative and entertaining talks from our guest lecturer Mr Antonio Marretta
- ✓ Food and Wine - Sample some of Sicily's delicious food and wine

Tour Essentials

Accommodation:	14 nights Standard Hotel
Included Meals:	14 breakfasts, 0 lunches, 0 dinners
Start Point:	Join tour: Syracusa
End Point:	Tour ends: Catania airport
Transport:	4WD, Bus, Ferry
Countries:	Italy, Sicily

Ancient Sicily

The vine-covered hills of this beautiful island are home to some of the Mediterranean's most important and impressive classical sites. Accompanied by a guest lecturer we uncover Sicily's Greek, Roman, Norman and Baroque history, culture and architecture. We visit many of the country's highlights including the Valley of the Temples in Agrigento, the Baroque city of Noto, the Greek Theatre of Taormina and the capital Palermo.

On this tour your knowledge and experiences of Sicily will be brought to life and greatly enhanced through the information, passion and enthusiasm of Mr Antonio Marretta, your guest lecturer. With a degree in History and Policital Science, a specialisation in Art and Archaeology and 25 years guiding experience, there are not many questions that Antonio does not know the answer to and he delights in sharing his love of Sicily with his fellow travelling companions.

Suitability

We've given each of our tours a comfort rating and a tour pace, walking or cycling grade to give you a general idea about the level of activity on each tour and the standard of accommodation you will be staying in at the end of your day's adventure.

Often you'll stay in different styles of accommodation during your tour; so we make an average rating across the entire tour. For more information on where you'll stay each night, please refer to the day by day tour itinerary.

Tour Comfort: Standard

Our mid-range accommodation offers a good level of service often with other amenities such as a restaurant, bar, garden or swimming pool. Generally rooms will be comfortable with en-suite facilities.

Tour Style: Classic

Packed with adventure, these tours offer inspiring destinations and authentic travel experiences at a reasonable price. Using all kinds of transport and accommodation, we'll take you off the beaten track to discover the true heart of the people and places you visit.

Tour Pace: Moderate

These moderately paced tours provide some busy days with plenty of experiences to enjoy, as well as time to relax along the way.

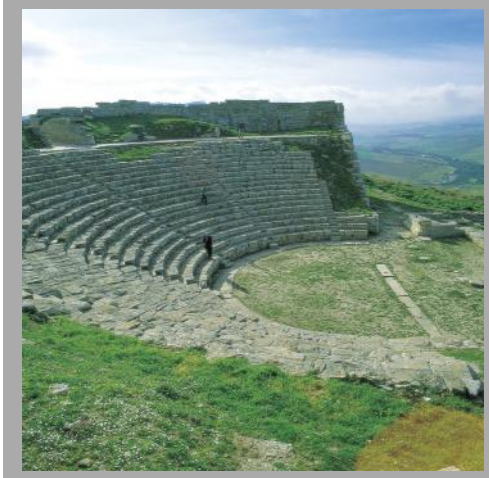
Your tour itinerary

Tour itinerary notes

While our intention is to adhere to the day-by-day itinerary as printed below, a degree of flexibility is built in. Overnight stops may vary from those suggested.

Your Tour Leader

A Tour Leader is an integral part of any Explore tour and your tour will be led by one of our experienced Tour Leaders who have been handpicked and expertly trained. We believe that our Tour Leaders are the key to the success of our tours; they are passionate travellers who are bursting with first-hand local knowledge which they love to share. Your Tour Leader will also take care of all the planning and



organisation throughout your journey. Their passionate approach will make this tour fun and inspiring, bringing the destination to life whether you're travelling alone or with others.

DAY 1 Join tour Syracusa

The tour starts in Syracusa. The ancient city was a colony of Corinth which once rivalled Athens as the most important and beautiful city in the Greek world. Its fascinating history is associated with such famous names as Alcibiades, Aeschylus, Pindar, Demosthenes and Archimedes.

Overnight: **Standard Hotel**
Single Rooms Available

DAY 2 Explore Syracusa

Syracuse, a colony of Corinth, once rivalled Athens as the most important and beautiful city in the Greek world. Its fascinating history is associated with such famous names as Alcibiades, Aeschylus, Pindar, Demosthenes and Archimedes. The sites we intend to visit include the Neapolis Archaeological Zone with its famous Greek theatre hewn out of the hillside in the 5th century BC and where Aeschylus once produced his plays; the fine Roman amphitheatre where gladiators once fought wild beasts; the quarries where the defeated Athenians were imprisoned in 413 BC and the fortification at Euryalus. Finally we'll make the journey to Ortygia Island and its promontory to see its unique Baroque architecture and where you will be free to wander.

Overnight: **Standard Hotel**
Single Rooms Available

DAY 3 Drive via Noto to Piazza Armerina

We leave Syracuse and drive to Noto, the most beautiful Baroque city in Sicily, completely rebuilt after the earthquake that devastated this part of the island in 1693. The town was built between 1715 and 1780 and still preserves a unified and homogenous architectural style and town plan, little affected by later developments. Its tufa stone has mellowed to a golden brown colour and its unique buildings leave visitors with an impression that is hard to forget. We visit Ragusa, another Baroque town whose buildings crown the summits of two adjacent hills. After our visit we'll continue to the medieval town of Piazza Armerina for the next two nights.

Overnight: **Standard Hotel**
Single Rooms Available

DAY 4 In Piazza Armerina: visit Villa Romana del Casale and Morgantina

This morning we'll drive to the impressive Villa Romana at Casale, a magnificent country mansion containing some beautiful Roman mosaics. After sightseeing we drive the short distance to the remains of Greek Morgantina, once a large city controlling an extensive area that now lies deserted in the countryside. The scattered buildings of the site are only partially unearthed. We return to Piazza Armerina later this afternoon.

Overnight: **Standard Hotel**
Single Rooms Available

DAY 5 Drive to Agrigento via Enna; visit the Valley of the Temples

Leaving Piazza Armerina we drive via the virtually impregnable hilltop stronghold of Enna located near Lake Pergusa, then drive on to Agrigento, once one of the most prosperous cities in Sicily. The ancient Acropolis, now a modern city, overlooks the valley where the lower city stood and the southern ridge where the temples still stand. We explore the remarkable complex of 5th century BC Doric temples. The romantic aura of the ancient site which lines a ridge overlooking the sea is especially evocative, the golden temples encircled by almond trees and gnarled silver-grey olives. The scene provides a perfect setting for the ancient stonework. Pindar was so moved as to say that Agrigento was 'the most beautiful city built by mortal man'. The Valley of the Temples includes the 6th century Temple of Hercules, the oldest in the complex (nine columns of which were re-erected by Englishman Alexander Hardcastle in the 1920s). The perfectly proportioned Doric columns of the Temple of Concord (c.430 BC) incorporate optical corrections such as entasis and turn honeygold in the late afternoon sunlight. The Temple of Juno, built at the end of the tufa ridge and probably some twenty years older than the Temple of Concord, was probably burnt by the Carthaginians in 406 BC. The temples are particularly beautiful in the late afternoon light.

Overnight: **Standard Hotel**
Single Rooms Available

DAY 6 Morning visit Heraclea Minoa; drive via Selinute to Petrosina

This morning we drive to Heraclea Minoa which legends associate with King Minos of Crete. The excavated settlement commands an isolated and magnificent position overlooking the sea. Legend relates that King Minos was killed here when he was in pursuit of the great architect Daedalus, the designer of the Minotaur Labyrinth at Knossos, who had fled from Crete. We then continue to the vast site of Selinunte, where earthquake-tumbled ruins litter the landscape and some temples have been partially re-erected. We'll see the ancient Acropolis, its fortifications and the town within, perched on a plateau overlooking the Mediterranean. Selinunte was the most westerly of the Greek colonies, and despite its poor natural defences it became a powerful and wealthy city. It was constantly under threat from the Carthaginians and was in a state of perpetual warfare with its prosperous rival, the Elymnian town of Segesta to the north. An army led by the Carthaginian Hannibal sacked it in 409 BC, slaughtering some 16,000 inhabitants, then, in 250 BC the Carthaginians once again razed the city, demolished the temples and moved the population to nearby Lilybaeum (modern Marsala). The site was effectively abandoned afterwards. We then continue to our hotel for the evening, located in the small town of Petrosina, just outside Marsala.

Overnight: **Standard Hotel**
Single Rooms Available

DAY 7 By Ferry to Mozia Island

A short distance north and ferry ride away brings us to the small island of Mozia, which lies off the western coast and was once owned by the Whitaker family of Marsala wine fame. The island is in an ideal location, surrounded by shallow waters that secure a protected and sheltered anchorage. We visit the museum and the site of the old Phoenician town and harbour works. Returning to Marsala, our afternoon is left free to relax and enjoy the town's old quarter.

Overnight: **Standard Hotel**
Single Rooms Available

DAY 8 To Palermo via Erice and Segesta

This morning we head to picturesque Erice, a medieval town perched on a precipitous 750 metre-high mountain. Magnificent views extend over the Egadi Islands. One tradition says that Erice was founded by the legendary Aeneas who stopped here after the fall of Troy (c1200 BC). Its original inhabitants were a non-Greek race, though they readily adapted to Greek ways. We then continue to the romantically situated Doric temple at Segesta, one of the best preserved and most beautiful of all. It was probably started around 426 BC, perhaps to impress Athenian allies, but it was never finished. Its columns were never fluted and many of the bosses used to hoist the stones into position were not chiseled off. After our visit we drive on to Palermo.

Overnight: **Standard Hotel**
Single Rooms Available

DAY 9 Palermo’s historic centre and Norman Monreale

Sicily's capital stands at the foot of Monte Pellegrino with the fertile valley of Conca d'Oro behind. It was once one of the richest cities in Europe from the 9th to the 12th centuries AD when Islamic culture, Byzantine magnificence and the vigorous world of medieval Europe were merging into a fascinating civilisation. Today the city contains numerous Islamic, Norman and Baroque buildings, together with some noteworthy museums and art galleries. After breakfast we'll visit the Norman palace, a fascinating mixture of styles: Saracenic, Byzantine and Norman influences appear in its architecture and decoration. The rich marble and mosaics in the Cappella Palatina were mostly executed by Byzantine craftsmen. The remaining time before lunch will be spent driving into the hills to the majestic Norman cathedral of Monreale. After lunch we will then go for a walk touring the Gothic Cathedral, founded 1185 by the Englishman Walter of the Mill, and the area around Quattro Canti, the Baroque city centre. Founded in 1174 by William the Good, the cathedral is famous for its extensive mosaics and beautiful cloisters showing both Romanesque and Islamic influences.

Overnight: **Standard Hotel**
Single Rooms Available

DAY 10 Free day in Palermo

Palermo has a fascinating market crammed with exotic goods and is a veritable treasure trove of artistic and cultural sites. The day has been left free for you to explore at your own pace.

Overnight: **Standard Hotel**
Single Rooms Available

DAY 11 Morning excursion to Solunto; afternoon free in Palermo

This morning we drive to the ruins of Solunto, a Roman town abandoned in AD 300. The ancient site was once thought to be Phoenician Solus, but we now know that the Punic settlement was at Cozzo Cannita, some 5 miles away. The excavations are beautifully situated high above the sea on the slopes of Monte Catalfano, and give a fine impression of the variety of buildings and layout of a Roman city. The site includes paved streets, houses (some with mosaics), a theatre, a bouleuterion, cisterns and baths. The afternoon is left free for you to explore more of Palermo.

Overnight: **Standard Hotel**
Single Rooms Available

DAY 12 Drive via Cefalu

Leaving Palermo we drive along the spectacular coastline to the picturesque fishing town of Cefalu. Here we stop to visit the Norman Cathedral, to see the stupendous mosaic of Christ Pantocrator. Next we'll continue along the coast road to the archaelogical site of Tindaris. Our journey today ends in Giardini Naxos, near Taormina.

Overnight: **Standard Hotel**
Single Rooms Available

DAY 13 Walk on slopes of Mount Etna and explore Taormina

This morning we will set out to visit the lunalandscape and lava fields of Etna one of the most active volcanoes in Europe. Taormina, Sicily's most famous resort, is situated 213m up on the slopes of Monte Tauro and overlooked by Castel Mola. It was a favourite place during the days of the 'Grand Tour' and was frequented by Goethe, Edward Lear, D.H. Lawrence and many others. This afternoon we'll visit the Graeco- Roman theatre for possibly the most famous view in Sicily - that of snow-capped Etna acting as a backdrop to the remarkably preserved columned stage. Please note that the coach transfer to Mount Etna is included. However, the excursion to the summit via the ski lift and 4x4 vehicle is optional at an additional cost of €50 per person.

Overnight: **Standard Hotel**
Single Rooms Available

DAY 14 Free in Giardini Naxos

Our last day is free to explore Taormina and Giardini Naxos further.

Overnight: **Standard Hotel**
Single Rooms Available

DAY 15 Drive to Catania

Today we drive to Catania airport where tour ends.

Accommodation and Meals

Food & Drink

Included meals: 14 breakfasts, 0 lunches,0 dinners included in the price of this tour. Please be prepared to pay for non-included meals. Please note that costs for drinks and meals can vary depending on location.

Budgeting for your Tour

You will need some extra money to cover meals and drinks not included in the tour price, any optional sightseeing, souvenirs and items of a personal nature such as laundry.

Other Sightseeing & Activities

The following excursions and/or activities are usually available and may be arranged locally. Estimated costs are provided below for guidance only, are on a per person basis unless shown otherwise, and may depend on the number of participants. Prices quoted are correct as of the date these tour notes were originally issued but may change at any time due to currency fluctuations.

Please note: These activities are booked and paid for direct with the supplier and do not form part of your Explore holiday contract.

Optional Excursions

Palermo - Puppet theatre approx €15 per person.
Giardini Naxos - Mount Etna 4WD & chairlift to Lava fields €52.00 (Please note that anyone suffering from asthma or heart conditions of any kind will not be permitted to partake due to the effects of altitude/sulphur fumes).

Tipping - Tour Leader

At your discretion you might also consider tipping your Tour Leader in appreciation of the efficiency and service you receive.

Tipping - Local Crew

Although entirely voluntary, tipping is a recognised part of life in this region of the world. Some local staff will look to members of the group for personal recognition of particular services provided. Accordingly, you should allow £25 for tipping.

In order to make things easier for you, the Tour Leaders may organise a group's tips kitty and if this is the case, they will account for it throughout the tour.

Foreign Exchange

Italy

ATM Availability: Major towns.

Credit Card Acceptance: Larger hotels and restaurants.

Travellers Cheques: Only in major towns. Please note, the exchange rate for cash and Travellers Cheques is poor.

Local Currency: Euro.

Recommended Currency for Exchange: GBP.

Where to Exchange: Banks or 'Forex' offices in main towns/cities.

Sicily

Joining your Tour

Flight Information

You are able to book this tour on a 'land only' basis or as a 'flight inclusive' package. Your flight inclusive package will be fully protected by the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) ATOL protection scheme.

Booking a land only package with Explore

For passengers making their own travel arrangements, please ensure you join the group as described on day one of the tour itinerary. If you are considering purchasing your own airline tickets, you can book these through any travel agent, directly with an airline or through an online flight consolidator. In all cases, we would be happy to arrange transfers to and from the joining point of your tour if required.

Joining Tour Abroad

Clients booked on **'Land Only'** arrangements should make their own way to the joining point. Please refer to separate **'Joining Instructions'** for time and place of rendezvous with tour leader

Booking a flight inclusive package with Explore

We have a good selection of flights not only from London but from many regional airports around the UK allowing us to compare fares between scheduled carriers as well as low cost and charter airlines. Our dedicated flights team will match the best flight options to your arrival and departure airport.

On our website we display a UK flight inclusive package guide price which is generally based on a London departure. To avoid paying supplements or to secure your preferred flight option, we recommend booking as early as possible, especially for peak travel dates.

Important Information

Travel Insurance

It is a condition of joining **any** of our tours that you must have valid travel insurance. It must indicate that you have cover for (at least) medical expenses and emergency repatriation in the event of illness or injury. Medical and repatriation insurance cover is not mandatory for UK residents who are travelling in England and Scotland. We also strongly recommend your policy includes curtailment, personal effects and cancellation protection as all deposits paid are non-refundable.

If you require travel insurance for your tour, Explore Worldwide is an appointed representative of Campbell Irvine Limited, who is authorised and regulated by the Financial Services authority. Our travel insurance policy is specially tailored to the needs of the adventure traveller and will cover you for any included activity on any Explore trip. You can either purchase this at the time of booking or call us on 0844 499 0903 after you have booked.

Visa Information

Visas are not required by UK, E.U Nationals, Australian, New Zealand, US and Canadian citizens. Other nationalities should consult their local embassy or consular office.

All visa information is subject to change. You should confirm all visa related questions with the relevant Embassy prior to departure.

Vaccinations & Protection

Italy

Nothing required. Tetanus recommended. The above is not an exhaustive list. Further information regarding vaccinations and travel health advice can be found by following the NHS and NaTHNaC links at http://www.explore.co.uk/Travelhealth/ and from your local healthcare provider.

Sicily

Preparing for your Tour

Climate

Italy

April/May and October/November are pleasantly warm. June/September are the hottest months. Showers are common in Autumn.

Sicily

Clothing

Pack essentially for 'All Tours'. Women should avoid bare arms and shoulders in churches (scarf or stole recommended). Dress for hot conditions although light rainwear and warm fleece/jacket for nights when temperatures can drop (especially in March and October/November).

Equipment

Sunhat and sunscreen are recommended. You should bring a 2 litre water bottle, torch, as well as insect repellant. You may wish to bring swimming costume.

Footwear

Comfortable walking shoes and sandals.

Luggage: On Tour

Should consist of a main piece of baggage and a daysac.

Luggage allowance on tour: 20kg

General Information

Food

The prices for meals and drinks can vary greatly depending upon location and the prices detailed below are an average guide. In general you would expect that drinks purchased in a supermarket or local bar to be less expensive, whilst drinks in an upmarket bar or restaurant may be more expensive. The costs for meals may vary depending upon location, type of restaurant and number of courses eaten and so the prices given are an average guide.Local restaurants located off the beaten track may be less expensive, whereas an upmarket restaurant located in the centre of a major city may charge more.

Italy

Lunch £: 23.00

Dinner £: 32.00

Sicily

Drink

Italy

Bottle of Beer £: 4.00

Water £: 2.20

Sicily

Country details

Italy

Population: 60,681,514

Size of Country: 301,338

Major Language: Italian

Religion: Roman Catholic

Time Difference to GMT: +1

Sicily

Electric Supply & Plugs

Italy

2 Pin Round

Sicily

Why Choose Explore

We've been creating award-winning pioneering adventure holidays for over 30 years, earning the trust of thousands of delighted customers, who feel safe in our hands. Our tour leaders have expert local knowledge and our tours are designed to take you off the beaten track to see the most exotic, inspiring and dramatic places in the world.

- With over 30 years experience, we are passionate about what we do.
- Pioneering small group adventures & tailormade holidays.
- Award winning tour leaders who you can trust.
- Responsible travel is and always has been one the driving principles of Explore.

Our adventure holidays are full of exciting things to see and do, exploring in small groups travelling by bus, boat, plane, rickshaw, camel, elephant, or any number of unusual forms of transport . Often you will stay in family run hotels and village houses and enjoy authentic local cuisine. In this way, it's easy to discover the true heart of the people and the place you travel to – and make some new friends along the way. Each tour is uniquely different, so please feel free to browse through our tours to see what may whet your appetite.

Our commitment to the environment

We are passionate about sustainable travel and work hard to create tours where your holiday delivers real benefits to the local communities. We minimise our impact by travelling in small groups, respecting local cultures and traditional, reducing waste and offsetting 100% of the CO2 from our flights.

When you travel with Explore, you are directly contributing to local economies and helping empower the people you meet. We currently support a range of charities and good causes, including: The Sunshine Orphanage (which cares for abandoned children in Luxor, Egypt), Education for All (sponsoring children through their secondary education in Morocco), The Hope Foundation (helping an Indian Village to recover from the 2004 Tsunami) and the Mufindi Orphanage, which support AIDS orphans in Tanzania.

We also care passionately about the world's wildlife. We are patrons of the Born Free Organisation, Travel Operators for Tigers (helping save the Bengal Tiger from extinction) and Friends for Conservation. We have also adopted a beautiful Sri Lankan Elephant called 'Serendip'.

We are delighted to have received a Five Star sustainable tourism status from the Association of Independent Tour Operators in recognition of our on-going commitment to sustainable tourism.

Cool Earth

Explore are delighted to support Cool Earth to reduce carbon emissions through preventing the illegal deforestation of the South America rainforest. One of the top sources of global carbon emissions, rainforest deforestation equivalent to the USA's annual emissions, it also destroys flora and fauna, sometimes to the point of extinction. It also degrades the lives and communities of the 350 million residents of the rainforest.

Cool Earth prevents the deforestation through its support of local communities as forest guardians and by focussing on areas in immediate danger of deforestation. It has so far protected over 350,000 acres of rainforest, with each acre saving an emission of 260 tons of CO2, as well as protecting rare animals and plants. When you travel on an Explore holiday we make a donation to Cool Earth that exceeds the impact of our customers flights each year. In addition to mitigating emissions, when you travel with Explore, you are helping to protect the source of 20% of the world's fresh water and oxygen, as well as the livelihoods of the 1.6 billion people who are reliant on the rainforest. www.coolearth.org

Earth Matters

- The Travel Foundation

  Explore are active members and supporters of the Travel Foundation which has established a variety of sustainable tourism projects in destinations and works with industry to improve practice. Visit their website www.thetravelfoundation.org.uk
- Tourism Concern

  Explore support the work of Tourism Concern who campaign for fairly and ethically traded tourism, and are part of its Ethical Tour Operator Group www.tourismconcern.org.uk
- For further information on responsible travel go to http://www.explore.co.uk/ResponsibleTourism/

Know before you go

We strongly recommend that you check your government's travel advisory for up-to-date information and advice about your destination: safety and security, entry requirements, health, local laws and customs. For UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office Advice follow the link at http://www.explore.co.uk/essential-travel-information/travel-resources/travel-safety

Booking Your Holiday

Peace of mind - book with confidence

You can book your Explore holiday with confidence, as all monies paid to us for your trip are fully protected. Explore is a fully bonded tour operator licensed by the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) and by ABTOT.

The air holiday packages (Tours including flights) that we advertise are ATOL protected, since we hold an Air Travel Organiser's Licence granted by the Civil Aviation Authority. Our ATOL number is ATOL 2595. In addition, As a member of the Association of Bonded Travel Organisers Trust Limited (ABTOT), Explore has provided a bond to meet the requirements of the Package Travel, Package Holidays and Package Tours Regulations 1992. Please note that packages booked outside the UK are only protected when purchased directly with Explore.

Reserving your place

To reserve your place on this tour you will need to check availability on the Explore website or through our dedicated call centre based in the UK where you can. Our tours can fill up quickly so you are advised to book as early as possible. If your chosen date is 'Available' or 'Guaranteed' we will be able to provisionally hold you a space for up to 48 hours.

The easiest way to confirm your booking is through our website. When you are ready to book, we normally require a 10% non-refundable deposit, but for some holidays this may be more to cover such items as permit fees, internal flights or other non-refundable services. If your travel starts within 60 days of booking, full payment will be required at the time of booking

100% No Surcharge Guarantee

The price paid for our holidays is no longer subject to change. Once booked and confirmed we will guarantee the price you pay will not increase, whatever the circumstances. You will not be approached to pay fuel surcharges unlike the vast majority of other adventure tour operators. The price guarantee applies to all new bookings departing between 1st January 2013 and 31st December 2014.

Tour Itinerary Versions

Itinerary details may vary depending on departure date and alternative itineraries for this tour may exist. Please refer to the dates and prices page on our website to check which itinerary operates on each departure date.

Please ensure that you have an up-to-date copy of these tour notes immediately before you travel, as from time to time our itineraries may be amended, either for operational reasons or in response to feedback from customers. You will be informed of any major changes to your tour but small changes may just be added to these tour notes.

Please note: 2014 itinerary versions are applicable to tours departing in 2014. 2015/16 itinerary versions are applicable to tours departing from 1st January to 31st December 2015.

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