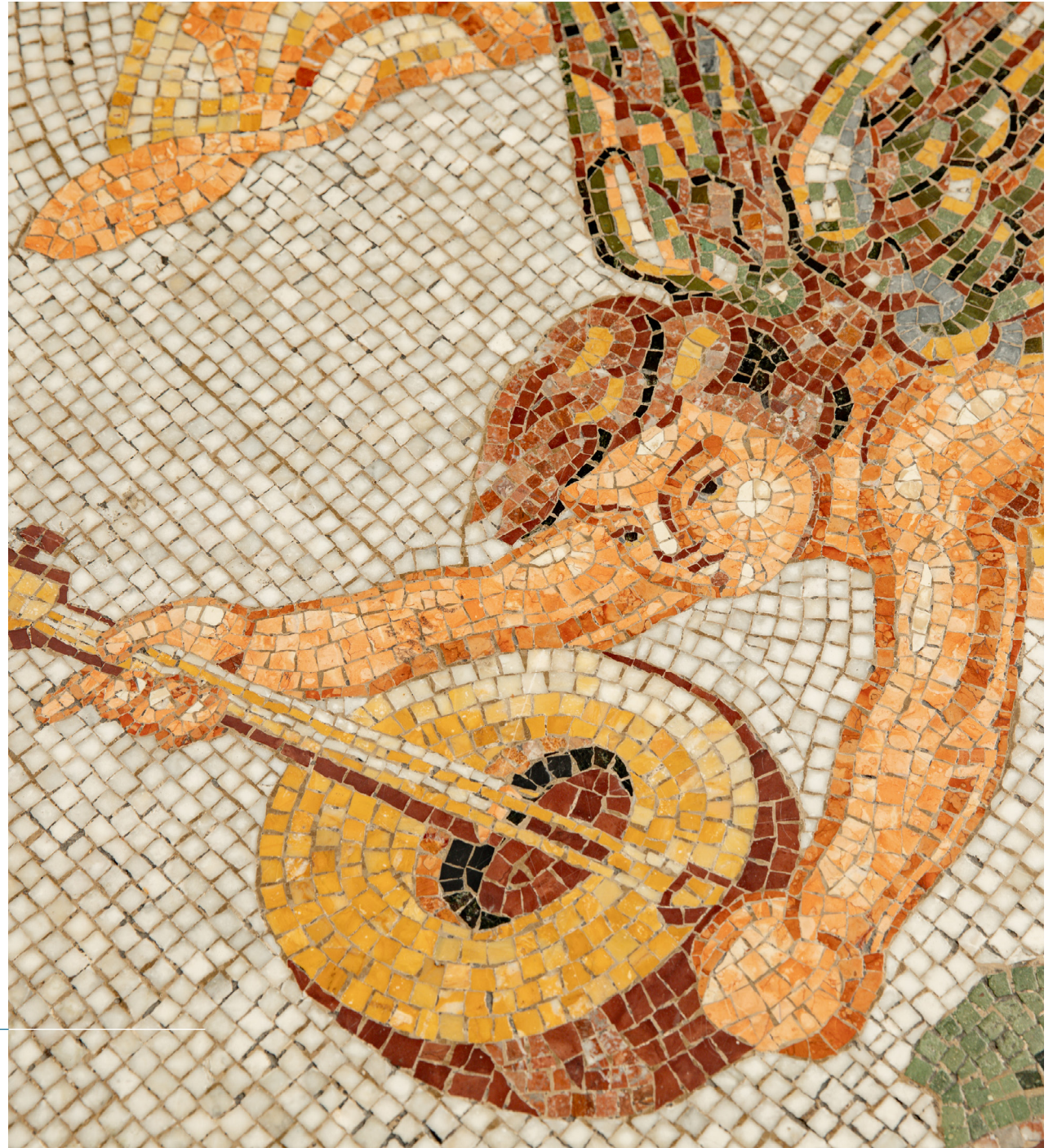


Echoes of the Empire

Aboard *Sylvia Earle* | 14 – 28 May 2025





Echoes of the Empire

14 – 28 May 2025

Rome, Italy

DAY 1 | Wednesday 14 May 2025

After a long journey to Rome airport we met our Aurora Expeditions representative and were transferred to the Starhotels Metropole Rome Hotel. The hotel offered a blend of classic elegance with modern comfort. With just a short walk from Roma Termini station and the Teatro dell'Opera. Its central location makes it an excellent base for exploring iconic sites like the Colosseum, Trevi Fountain, and Basilica di Santa Maria Maggiore—all within walking distance.

We were instantly swept up by the Rome's timeless charm. From the moment we stepped onto the cobbled streets, we were surrounded by echoes of ancient history and the vibrant rhythm of modern Italian life.



Rome, Italy

DAY 2 | Thursday 15 May 2025

Morning experience: Highlights of Rome

Rome tells its tale as we tour its major sights on this morning experience. We encountered the Colosseum, the Roman Forum and the Circus Maximus.

Gifted to the people of Rome as a museum to house the generous number of sculptures and statues left scattered throughout the city, the Capitoline Museum was the brainchild of Pope Sixtus IV. We visited the museum with our art historian guides to piece together the city's past through its numerous artworks before our journey continued with a drive to our drop off point near the Spanish Steps. We walked to the Trevi fountain.

Full day experience: Roaming Rome

We laced up our walking shoes, slipped on a hat and joined the comprehensive locally guided tour of Rome. Established in an era when few Romans owned transportation, the center of historical Rome is perfect for walking. With every square foot offering a fascinating fact, the list of sites we experience is limitless. Architectural highlights include the chariot stadium of Circus Maximus, the underground excavations of Nero's golden house and ancient sites such as the Colosseum, the

Forum, Trajan's column, the Arch of Constantine and the engineering marvel; the Pantheon. Artistic gems and political sites include the Trevi fountain, the Piazza Venezia, Vittoria Emanuele 11 Monument, Spanish Steps, via Condotti and the Piazza Navona, along with the plethora of 'souvenirs' housed in the Capitoline Museum with its artworks, statues and oddities collected from across the city. Each site tells a story as we took time to witness its place in the past with our expert guides.

Evening experience: Dinner at Stadio di Domiziano Piazza Navona

met our fellow passengers. We were welcomed with an event of ancient proportions. The only example of a masonry athletics stadium outside of the Greek world, the Stadium of Domitian languished under the relative anonymity of the church of St Agnese until 1936. Hosting 30,000 spectators the stadium held weekly events under the emperor Domitian's rule. One of the empires' more controversial rulers, Domitian was known for his harshness, luxurious lifestyle, and scandalous behavior. We heard tales of this rebellious ruler from the stadium's front seats this evening as we dined amongst the ruins of this UNESCO World Heritage Site.





Rome, Italy

DAY 3 | Friday 16 May 2025

Morning experience: The Christian Catacombs

As followers of an 'alternative' religion in 1st century Rome, Christians were forbidden to bury their dead within the city walls, the followers of Jesus Christ looked further afield for suitable sites outside of the city. Digging vast subterranean passageways, they formed labyrinths several kilometers long. These hidden, below ground cemeteries constituted the perfect refuge in which the Christians could freely worship and use their Christian symbols without fear of retribution. As modern-day pilgrims we visited the catacombs with expert guides whose stories immersed us in the early days of Rome, when life as a Christian was fraught with danger, and only extreme measures offered safety.

Morning experience: Learn to cook Roman style

For those travelers who love Italian food this morning's excursion was a real treat as what better place to experience true Italian 'cucina' than a Roman cooking class. A European art form, Italian cuisine focuses on fresh, seasonal produce purchased from the market daily, and uses techniques passed from generation to generation. The chef used their inherited talents and passion for their hometown cooking during our 'hands-on'

lesson at a private cooking school. Of course, when in Rome we will do as the Romans do and feast on our efforts like emperors.

Afternoon experience: The Vatican City

We felt the lure of the Catholic church when we toured St Peter's Basilica and the Vatican Museums and Sistine Chapel. A former circus where Nero's barbaric spectacles entertained the masses, the Vatican hill became consecrated ground when Rome's first Christian emperor, Constantine declared the land to be 'the hill of the martyrs'. This sovereign state, gifted independence from Italy in 1929, encapsulates St Peter's Cathedral, the Vatican museums and a labyrinth of corridors, apartments and gardens housing the Pope and the Vatican staff.

Christendom's largest church, St Peter's Basilica, is another Michelangelo masterpiece. At 72 he designed the cupola to cover the sky above the bones of the first apostle, St Peter, and his successors – the Popes. Next door, the 55 galleries that make up the Vatican Museum, house the Catholic world's greatest artistic treasure chest. Ranging from the Vatican library with its 65,000 manuscripts including the original love letter from Henry VIII to Anne Boleyn, to the sarcophagus of

Saint Helen, Constantine's mother. It is capped off by Michelangelo's masterful frescoes of the Sistine Chapel. When we viewed The Sistine Chapel it took our breath away.



Rome, Italy

DAY 4 | Saturday 17 May 2025

This morning there was time for us to explore Rome further on our own. Some of us enjoyed some retail therapy or relaxed at the hotel. We returned to our hotel by midday to being the drive to the port of Civitavecchia for embarkation.

Our cruise began as we embarked *Sylvia Earle*. We enjoyed a warm welcome from the ships exploration team and crew and enjoyed a delicious dinner.

Onboard we total 113 Explorers along with 12 Exploration team and 83 Ship's crew from all over the world.





Naples & Capri, Italy

DAY 5 | Sunday 18 May 2025

This morning, we set out to explore Naples – a city of striking contrasts, where ancient layers and modern life coexist beneath the looming silhouette of Mount Vesuvius.

Our journey began at the grand Piazza del Plebiscito, a sweeping square that offered a moment of quiet majesty amidst the city's energy. From here, we admired the stately façade of the Royal Palace of Naples, imagining the royal footsteps that once echoed across its marble floors.

Just a short walk away, we found ourselves beneath the soaring glass dome of the Galleria Umberto I. This elegant 19th-century shopping arcade, with its intricate ironwork and radiant light, invited us to pause for photos and soak in its timeless charm.

From surface grandeur to hidden depths, our path then took us underground. Beneath the church of San Lorenzo Maggiore, we descended into the ancient city, walking along the decumanus maximus – a Roman road laid over 2,000 years ago. In the cool stillness below, history felt tangible, wrapped in shadow and stone.

Back on board the Sylvia Earle, we enjoyed lunch as our ship gently set sail across the Bay of Naples. With the city fading behind us, we looked ahead to Capri, that island of myth and sunlight, waiting on the horizon.

As we approached the island of Capri in the late afternoon, the sea shimmered in brilliant sunshine, while Anacapri, perched high above, appeared to float in the clouds; a majestic silhouette against the sky.

After tendering ashore, we boarded a fleet of tiny island buses, expertly maneuvered by local drivers who seemed to know every curve of the steep and winding road by heart. The ride itself was a thrill of narrow bends, sudden glimpses of the sea, and plenty of laughter along the way.

Our journey led us first to the Piazzetta di Capri, where we began a leisurely walk through the elegant streets lined with boutiques, flowering terraces, and grand hotels. From there, we continued to the Gardens of Augustus, where the path opened up to a breathtaking view of

the Faraglioni rocks below. As we admired the panorama, we happened upon a local wedding ceremony, a romantic and unexpected moment that made the scene all the more magical.

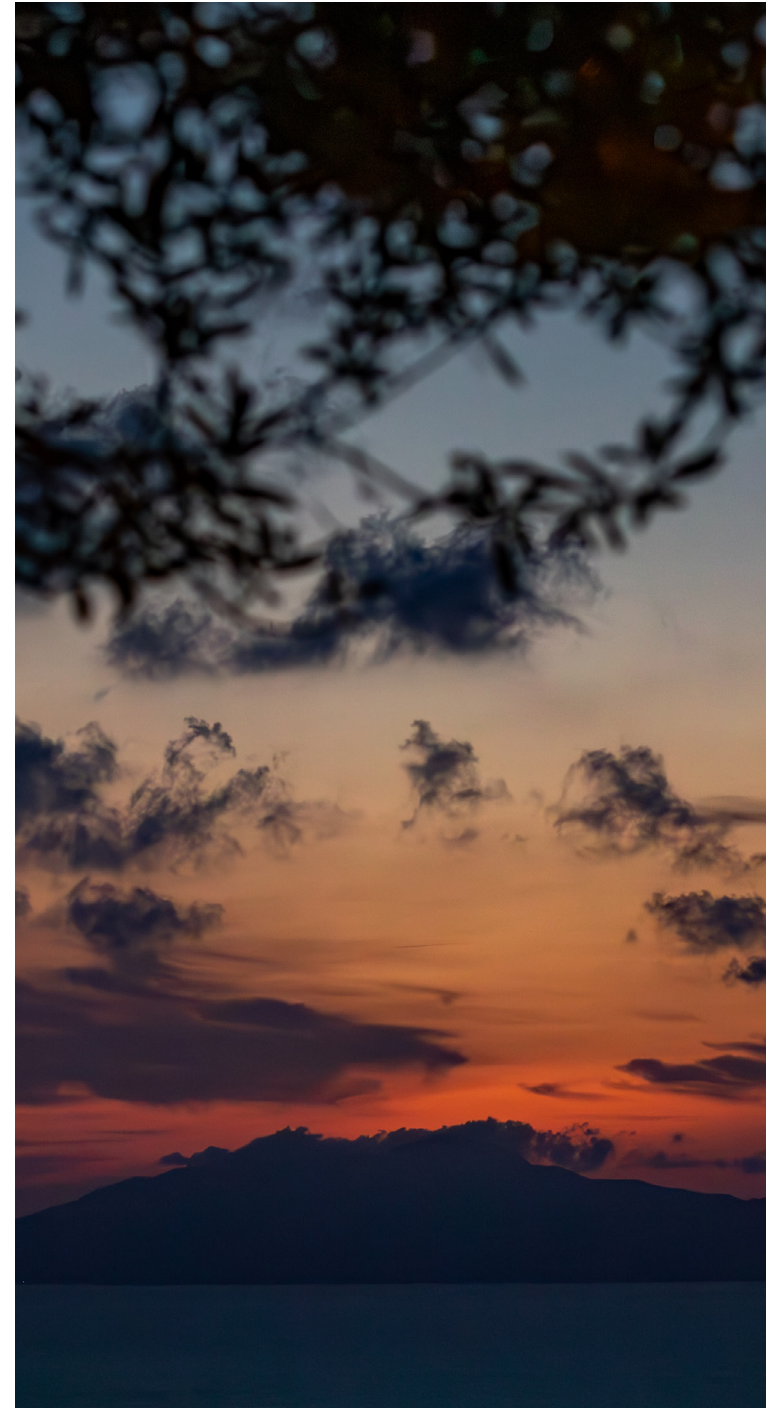
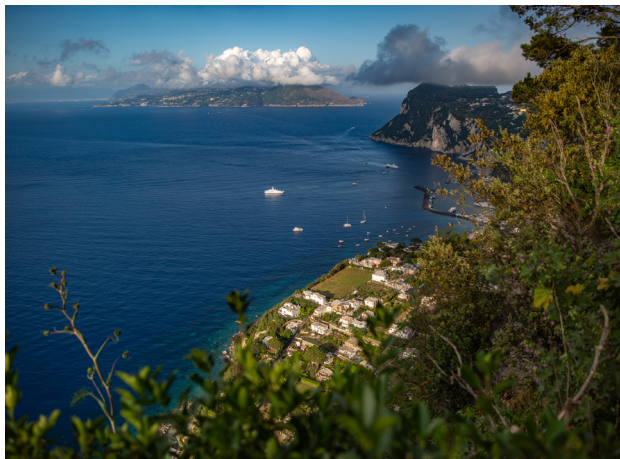
As the sun began its slow descent, we returned by bus to Da Emilia alla Curtiglia, a beautiful terrace restaurant perched above the sea. The sweeping view over the coastline and the Mediterranean was simply unforgettable, as if the whole island paused to admire it with us. There, in the golden evening light, we enjoyed a wonderful dinner and raised our glasses to a day well spent with refreshing drinks that flowed freely and matched the warm, relaxed spirit of the moment.

By nightfall, we made our way back to the Sylvia Earle, sailing off under a canopy of stars toward our next adventure along the Amalfi Coast.









Pompeii & Amalfi Coast, Italy

DAY 6 | Monday 19 May 2025

Full day experience: Pompeii and Mount Vesuvius

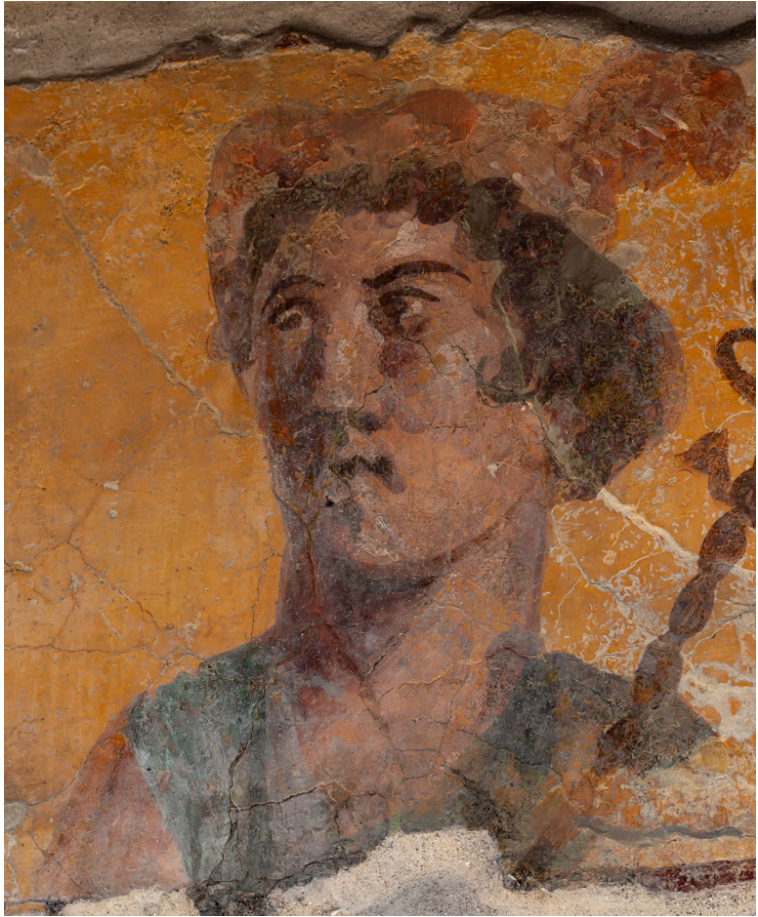
Known to the Neapolitans simply as 'him', Mount Vesuvius towers over the surrounding fertile plains at 13,779 feet (4,200 meters). He has been quiet of late, but it was a different story in 79 BCE, when lava and ash vomited forth engulfing the city of Pompeii. Albeit a tragedy, the excavation of these extensive sites reveal treasure for travelers. Physical evidence of the city's final dramatic moments, preserved forever amongst the volcanic ash, speak louder than words. Each tells a tale of intrigue, returned to life by the ruins and remains, of these Roman cities. Our guided tour was amongst one of the most intriguing in world history.

Full day experience: The Amalfi coast and the lemon walk

A magnet for 'privileged' visitors the Amalfi coast is a modern-day mecca for the rich and famous. We searched for signs of previous imperial guests and conquering entrepreneurs, both private and political, amongst the streets, alleys and sun-umbrellaed waterfronts of its colorful villages and shop fronted towns as we tour the Amalfi. Driving its coastal roads, we couldn't help but wonder about its acres of steep terraced lemon groves. This much maligned fruit has for centuries been at the center of all things in towns like Ravello, Sorrento and Positano. We joined a local expert as they told the 'sweet' story of the lemon and its place in every Italian's heart. Sipped as an aperitif, sales of Limoncello are second only to Campari in Italy. Our guide entertained us with mythical legends and tales of intrigue and of course our stroll through the lemon groves was rewarded with a tasting of Limoncello, making this the perfect Amalfi experience.









Lipari, Italy

DAY 7 | Tuesday 20 May 2025

Full day experience: The volcanic Aeolian Islands

A necklace at Sicily's throat, the Aeolian islands have been honored by UNESCO for their scientific insights in the field of vulcanology. We got up close and personal with them today, as we traded the Sylvia Earle for a smaller craft and sailed to Vulcano. En route we explored the magical Grotta del Cavallo, or horse cave, and stopped at black sand beaches – a leftover from volcanic eruptions. On Vulcano we walked amongst steam rising from the island's fumaroles. A visit to a village was a highlight gifting us an insight into life on an ancient Sicilian Island.

Full day experience: Lipari

This locally guided tour took us to the islands interior where we viewed its villages and ancient wonders gathered at its archaeological museum. Inland from its craggy coastline, Lipari is scattered with villages such as the seaside Canneto and Acquacalda. At Lipari town we explored the Aeolian Archaeological Museum's exhibits, which brings the island's history alive with a range of ancient relics telling a tale of a life connected to the volcanoes which dominate this region.







Trapani, Sicily/Italy

DAY 8 | Wednesday 21 May 2025

Morning experience: The Medieval gem of Erice

The fortified settlement of Erice is one of Sicily's gems. Despite dating back to the time of the Phoenicians, it was the Romans who made Erice a place of pilgrimage, as they believed the hilltop to be the home of the Goddess Venus. Enclosed by city walls, Erice has the appeal of a medieval town. With our guide we stepped into the past and strolled the narrow alleyways of its town center, browsed its traditional shop fronts and explored its streets.

Full day experience: The ancient wonders of Mozia and Segesta

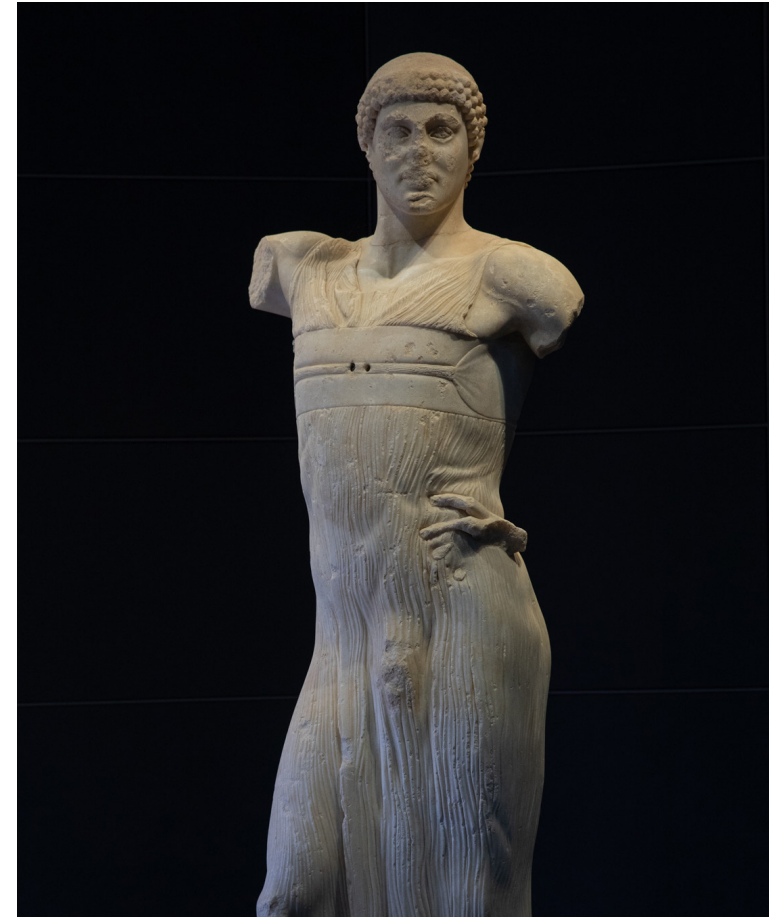
We returned to the sea this morning, with a short ferry ride to the island of Mozia. We may consider salt to be a seasoning sprinkled on chips, but in ancient times salt was known as 'liquid gold'. Exploration was only possible due to salt, with cured foods being a main stay for any vessel at sea. Whilst on the island we toured a salt farm where we learnt about the traditional processes still used today and the importance of this resource to the ancient world.

In the afternoon, we visited the well-preserved ruins of Segesta. We stepped back in time and learnt about how Segesta passed from empire to empire – each leaving their indomitable mark. Segesta's Doric temple, dedicated to an unknown deity, faces north towards the Acropolis, while the city's theatre offers stunning views reaching as far as the Trapani Gulf. The ruins here remain in good condition, affording us an insight into the lives of all those who once called this city home.









Agrigento

DAY 9 | Thursday 22 May 2025

Morning experience: Agrigento – The Valley of the Temples

A highlight of any visit to Sicily, Agrigento, or the Valley of the Temples as it is known, is an archaeological gem. The site brings to life the stories of the people who lived, loved and died here, dating as far back as the 6th century BCE. 'One of the wealthiest colonies in Greece', the city thrived around 2,500 years ago, with an economy based on produce from the rich surrounding land and the trade routes from Greece. Its impressive remains attract travelers from throughout the world.

Full day experience: Piazza Armerina's Villa Romana del Casale

More than simply the ruins of a Roman villa, the Villa Romana Casale offers an insight into the lifestyle of the family that called it home. Their story is told through the artwork housed in the villa which is thought to be the largest collection of Roman mosaics in the world. This elaborate estate is decorated with over 3,000 square meters of mosaics, each telling a tale of Roman heroics, Gods and everyday life. We walk in its rooms and gardens, and become acquainted with its residents through the souvenirs, art and personal items that filled their home.









Valletta, Malta

DAY 10 | Friday 23 May 2025

Half Day Experience: Valletta Walking Tour

Our day was spent in Malta's convivial capital, Valletta, which remains a historical city with streets of fascinating sites telling more than their fair share of stories. We spent time at the Barrakka Gardens to gain a perspective of the city's harbor from a naval point of view before exploring the Grand Masters Palace and Armoury, where we uncovered an impressive collection gathered by The Knights of St John, while the multimedia show, Malta Experience, places thousands of years of Malta into perspective. There was time to explore Valletta at our leisure before we gathered for an evening event.

Evening: Valletta dinner

This evening, we paid tribute to the resilience of the Maltese people with a special onshore event. A local expert shared wartime stories of courage and determination against overwhelming odds. Hotel Phoenicia, begun in the 1930s, saw its construction halted in 1942 due to the outbreak of WWII, when it was used by the Royal Air Force. During the air raid of 27 April 1942, the hotel suffered extensive damage, with over 100 bombs hitting the property and its grounds. After the war, the hotel was rebuilt, and from 1949, it became a gathering place for future Queen Elizabeth and Prince Philip during their time in Malta, where they often danced and hosted parties. A glass was raised at this iconic location, steeped in history, as we immersed ourselves in the rich stories of Malta's past.









Siracusa / Sicily / Italy

DAY 11 | Saturday 24 May 2025

Morning experience: Siracusa and the Parco Archeologico della Neapolis.

Once a rival to Athens, Siracusa is home to one of Sicily's greatest archaeological sites – the UNESCO World Heritage Site of Parco Archeologico della Neapolis. Our local guides told tales of past realms as we viewed the 16,000 capacity Greek Theatre and the 2nd-century Anfiteatro Romano, originally used for gladiatorial combats and horse races, before standing at the foot of the monolithic Altar to Hieron II where up to 400 oxen would be sacrificed in one ritual. Beside the theatre, and just as fascinating we found the limestone quarries which supplied stone for the ancient city. Honeycombed with catacombs and citrus trees, it is also where the 7000 survivors of the 5th century war between Siracuse and Athens were imprisoned.

Full day experience: The Medieval towns of Noto and Ragusa

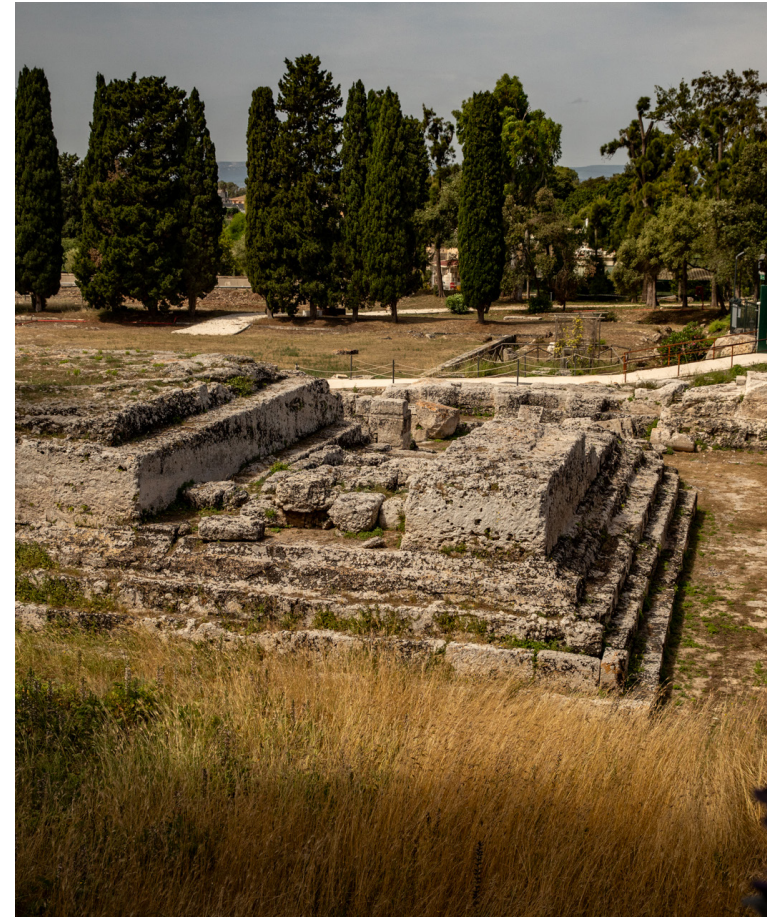
An architectural poster-girl, Noto and Ragusa are two of Italy's most elegant towns. Completely destroyed by the 1693 earthquake, they were rebuilt on a new site under the scrutiny of the Duke of Camastra whose passion for all things baroque is evident at every turn. Flanked by baroque palazzi and churches, their main squares became the symbol of the "Risorgimento", the Italian unification movement of the 1860s.

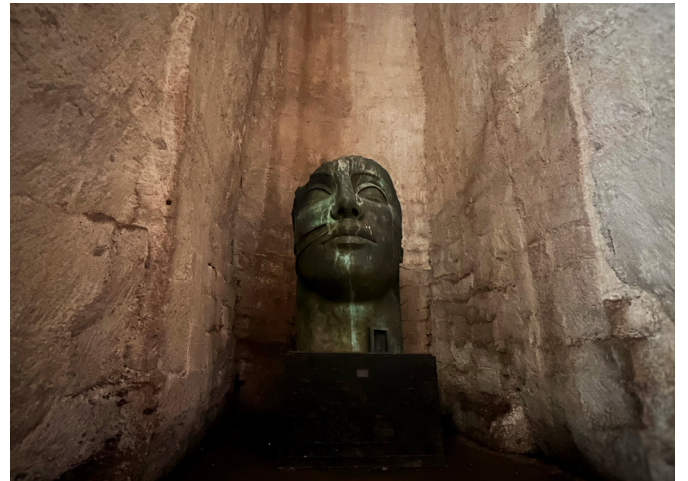
The 17th century Ragusa Ibla is a magical mass of tangled alleys lined with grey stoned houses and handsome squares surrounded by baroque palaces, all leading to Ragusa's classic central square - Piazza Duomo. As Operation Husky stormed Sicily in World War II, British and American forces linked up in Ragusa. The local population welcomed them with 'unbridled enthusiasm,' as one of the first liberated town.











Taormina & Mt Etna

DAY 12 | Sunday 25 May 2025

Morning experience: Taormina

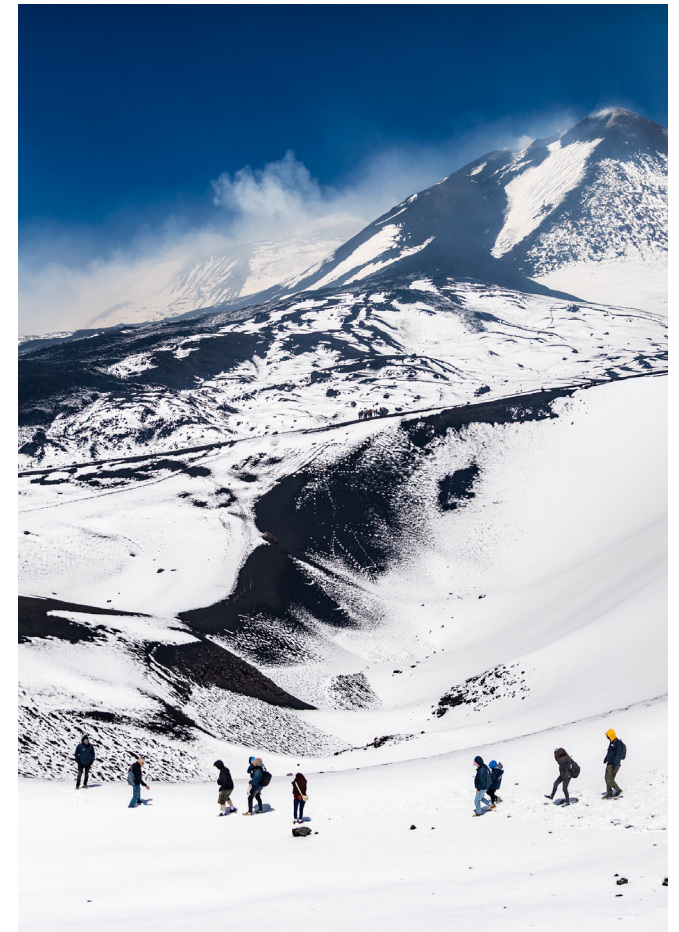
Topped by an ancient Greco-Roman theatre, with spectacular views of Mt Etna, the hilltop enclave of Taormina is at the top of the list when it comes to visiting Sicily. Once a holiday resort for Greeks and Romans, it attracted numerous foes, however today it fights a different form of invasion with the town performing solidly on the Hollywood A-list bucket list. Its luxurious hotels, restaurants and tile-terraced piazzas appear on the front page of Vogue, and with views across the Mediterranean, no wonder it is a 'must see' for all travelers to Italy.

Full day experience: Mt Etna

At 10,900 feet Mt Etna is the highest active volcano in Europe. Her constant state of irritation is monitored by volcanologists worldwide, yet it is the people who live in her shadow who know her best. We joined a local guide and took a cable car up her slopes, before joining a 4WD tour. We drove through charming villages imbued with history and tradition before finding the winding dirt roads which took us along the edge of extinct craters where we experienced the life cycle of an eruption, while we viewed Etna in all her glory with a deeper understanding of her eruptive power.

Full day experience: The Saracen Walk and Taormina

We hiked the Path of the Saracens as a trazzera – or 'dirt road' in Sicilian dialect. An ancient route used by the Saracens to sack Taormina, the path connects the towns of Castelmola and Taormina. Its story is one of myths, legends and curiosities which our guide weaved into our walk. At our path's end, the hilltop enclave of Taormina offered dramatic historical sites combined with panoramic views and five-star wonders. It is no wonder that this cliffside town, supported by sea forming coves and sandy beaches at its base performed solidly on the Grand Tour itinerary, and in recent years Hollywood 'discovering' the town with its 'dolce vita' lifestyle.







Paestrum

DAY 13 | Monday 26 May 2025

Half Day Experience – Agropoli

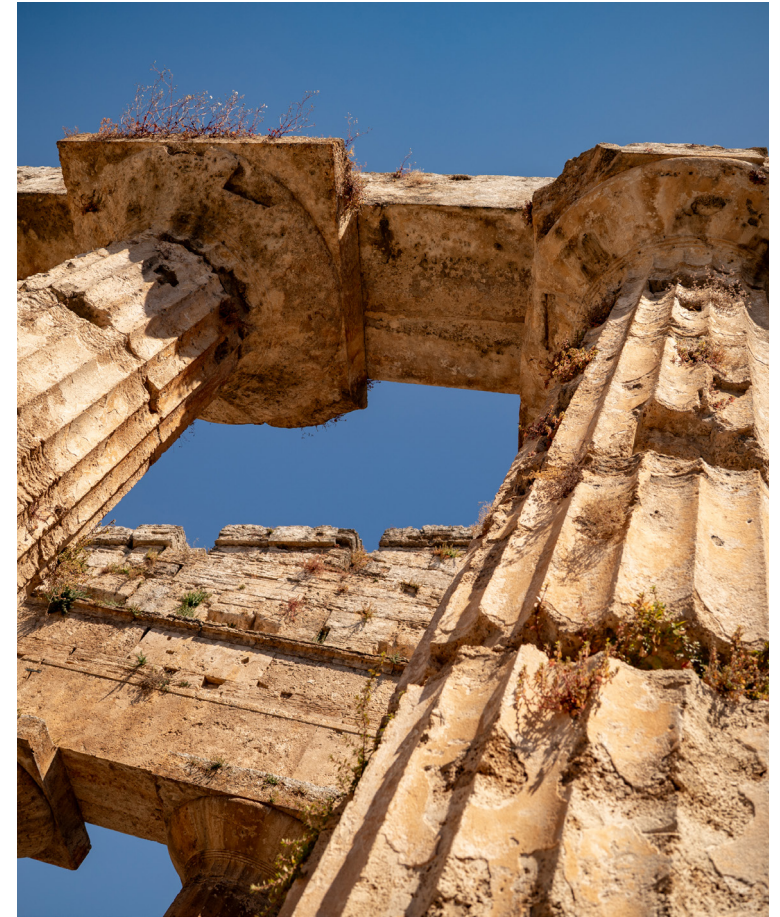
The Sylvia Earle sailed to the mainland of Italy today where we found the surprising treasures of Paestum. As a sun induced glow catches the fluted columns of three of the world's best-preserved Greek temples, we reflect on the power of ancient Greece and its former colony of Magna Grecia.

Founded over 2,500 years ago, the UNESCO World Heritage Site of Paestum houses not only Greek ruins, but the remains of the conquering Roman metropolis that replaced it.

We assess the site across the plains from the sea, in the footsteps of the Allied forces from September 1943, when the 36th Infantry Division of the US army landed here during Operation Avalanche.

Graffiti can still be viewed on the ruins that provided a place of protection for the soldiers. Rediscovered in the 1970s this uniquely preserved site, which attracts lesser numbers of visitors, offered us a chance to slow down and linger amongst its' ruins.







Naples, Italy

DAY 14 | Tuesday 27 May 2025

We ended our journey with a visit to the northwest shore of the Gulf of Naples at one of Italy's most unique archaeological sites. Spanning seven terraced levels, the remains of the ancient city of Baia offer a unique insight into the opulent lives of the Roman empires rich and famous. Partially submerged, Baia Archaeological Park invites travelers to explore its grand villas, intricate mosaics, and resident population of statues both above and beneath the waters of the Gulf of Naples.

While much of this former seaside resort lies underwater, the region is rich with remnants of its luxurious past, once home to Roman elites such as Julius Caesar, Nero, Caligula, and Augustus, all of whom built lavish villas here. Our locally guided tour of the site, a glass-bottom boat excursion to view the submerged ruins, and a visit to the nearby museum provide an immersive insight into the lives of the wealthy and powerful figures who once ruled the Roman Empire, making Baia the perfect place to frame our voyage.

At the end of the tour was the highlight: eating incredible pizza with dough that was light and chewy with just the right char from the blazing-hot pizza oven.

We farewelled our journey this evening at the Hotel Palazzo Caracciolo. Dating back to 1309, this former palace was originally gifted to Landolfo Caracciolo by the King of Naples, after which it earned a reputation as a prestigious venue for high-profile events, particularly royal weddings. Now transformed into a luxury hotel, it hosted our intimate dinner this evening in true Neapolitan style.





BBQ









Our Explorers

Lila Agent	Sandra Cloke	Steve Hearn	Trevor Lund	Jim O'Shaughnessy	Yvonne Thaxton
Phyllis Allen	Kathy Coaker	Kay Henderson	Ann Lusk	Ellen O'Shaughnessy	Verna Thomas
Stu Ball	Charles Coaker	Dyke Henderson	Jim Macomber	Rose Petersen	Donna Triebe
Kathy Beekman	Sharon Cotter	Darcy Herr	Jane Macomber	Helen Roosli	Patty Underwood
Linda Bessette	Byron Cotter	Vince Herr	Kristen Mahlin	Ellen Rosenbaum	Patricia Vanderhoof
Alan Bird	Kathy Couture	Dale Hutchinson	Heather McDaniel	Wayne Rosenbaum	Dolores Vargas
Leslie Bird	Dick Dawson	Susan Hutchinson	Barbara Meyer	Nancy Rouelle	Janet Vermette
Robert Bourgeois	Bob Day	Jerry Juchelka	John Meyer	Bob Royse	Kathy Wachter
Pamela Bourgeois	Paula Dolan	Marie Juchelka	Doreen Mohney	Carol Royse	Bill Wachter
Phil Brandler	Pamela Fadul	Bill Kleinsorge	Jim Mohney	Elizabeth Sewell	Cheri Whalen
Rosemary Brandler	Ona Flores	Sharman Kovach	Mary Lou Morris	Jamie Sewell	Tom Whalen
Dena Canty	Richard Flores	George Kovach	Thomas Munley	Stan Shadwell	Gary Wood
Edda Cardenas	Peggy Fuller	Leo Kremer	Karen Munley	Gail Shadwell	Sharon Wood
Gerry Carroll	Elizabeth Gallagher	Eva Kremer	Val Murphy	Kathy Sindmack	
Aurora Castro	Ilene Gillander	Sue Lammert	Bob Murphy	Greg Sindmack	
John Castro	Karen Gisel	Dave Larson	Lina Nesbit	Connie Sliva	
Hannah Charlton	Jeff Gisel	Jan Lembo	Kevin Nierman	Dave Sliva	
Lou Cioletti	Karen Gordon	Larry Lembo	Marilyn Oliver	David Stauffer	
Mary Cioletti	Paulette Gregg Schulte	Ronald Levin	Ruth Omodt	Jody Stauffer	
Dave Cleland	Karen Hearn	Marie Lund	Rich Omodt	Art Sulzer	

Exploration Team

Cruise Director: Konstantin Patschke

Shore Excursion Manager: Monica Matos Nogueira

Shore Excursion Manager: Justine Bornholdt

Tour Host: Jamie Sewell

Tour Manager: Ania Baranek

Tour Manager: Amani Armanious

Tour Manager: Rafi Wirth

Tour Manager: Sabine Bruchmann

Tour Manager: Cybele Cardoso

Photographer: Pia Harboure

Musician/Entertainment: Fran Kelly

Musician/Entertainment: Gus McKinstry

Senior Officers & Heads of Department

Master: Jorge Alexis Ferdinez

Chief Officer: Viktor Koshelets

Second Officer: Marko Vuksan

Safety Officer: Iaroslav Prykup

Bosun: Leo Francis Marzan

Ship Doctor: Juan Nicolas Diaz Rodriguez

Chief Engineer: Artem Vyshnevskyi

First Engineer: Sergii Luba

IT Officer: Rene Antoine Reyes

Hotel Director: Balvant Singh

Chief Purser: Caroline Sabrina Papenfuss

F&B Service Manager: Narendra Seeram

Head Bartender: Sheenie Landauz

Executive Chef: Cristiand Carlos

Sous Chef: I Gusti Ketur Purnawirawan

Hotel Controller: Romat Nurhidayat

Receptionist: Angela Manuel

Receptionist: Jonathan Valdez

Head of Stateroom: Florante Lusong

Deck Cadet: Rodrigo Vigario Pinto

Able Seaman: Anthony Jovhn Brosas

Able Seaman: Rosendo Cruz

Able Seaman: Rajiv Rauniyar

Able Seaman: Eduardo Aloyan

Able Seaman: Ferdy Noel Diaz Roque

Able Seaman: Lexter Fadriquela

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