Sicilian Odyssey on the Danube Express: Venice to Taormina

https://www.irtsociety.com/journey/sicilian-odyssey/

Overview

The Highlights

- Accommodation in five-star hotels in Venice and Taormina;

- Accommodation on the *Golden Eagle Danube Express;*

- Discover UNESCO-listed sites such as Valley of the Temples, Alberobello, and San Marino Old Town;

- Visit the Ferrari factory in Maranello, with a museum tour and driving simulator;

- Explore Mount Vesuvius and enjoy a wine tasting;

- Attend a private concert at Teatro Massimo, Italy's largest opera house, in Palermo.

The Tour

Experience the essence of Italy on this luxurious rail journey from Venice to Sicily. Explore the musical charm of Cremona, the culinary delights of Bologna, and the ancient wonders of Pompeii and Alberobello's Trulli.

As you cross into Sicily, immerse yourself in the vibrant markets of Palermo, the Valley of the Temples in Agrigento, and the stunning mosaics of Syracuse. Discover Italy’s rich cultural heritage at each destination.

Finish your journey beneath the towering presence of Mount Etna, with time to enjoy the panoramic views of Taormina and the coastal beauty of Catania. With curated excursions, fine dining, and exceptional service, this is an unforgettable journey through Italy’s most iconic landscapes.

Itinerary

Day 1: Venice

Begin your grand adventure in Venice, where you have time to explore at your leisure.

Upon arrival at the airport, you will be met and privately transferred to a five-star hotel for a two-night stay.

In the evening, enjoy a welcome dinner at the hotel with your fellow travelers to celebrate the beginning of your unforgettable voyage.

Day 2: Venice

After breakfast, join a guided walking tour of Venice and its most iconic landmarks, including St. Mark's Basilica and the Rialto Market.

Alternatively, explore the city at your leisure.

As the sun sets for the evening, enjoy a spectacular private concert in the historic San Zaccaria church, followed by dinner at the renowned Ristorante Carpaccio.

Return to the hotel for one final night before boarding the *Golden Eagle Danube Express* in the morning.

Day 3: Cremona

This morning, join a private boat transfer from your hotel to Santa Lucia Station, following the Grand Canal to where the *Golden Eagle Danube Express* awaits. Settle into your private cabin as the train crosses the causeway over the Venice Lagoon, beginning your journey through northern Italy.

Your first stop is Cremona, a city known for its musical heritage and connection to violin craftsmanship. Visit the 13th-century piazza and enjoy a private tour of the Stradivari Museum, where the story of the city's luthiers is brought to life.

This evening, a welcome dinner is served onboard, featuring regional dishes as you continue south.

Day 4: Bologna, Rimini, & San Marino

Enjoy breakfast onboard as you arrive in Bologna, a city long known for its culinary traditions.

Disembark for a guided tour to its historic center, from the university to the iconic porticoed streets. Once you arrive at Torre di Prendiparte, pause to take in wide views over Bologna's rooftops before continuing to the coastal city of Rimini.

This afternoon, choose between two experiences. Visit the Ferrari factory in Maranello for a look behind the scenes of Italy's most iconic car brand, including a museum tour and driving simulator. Or travel to San Marino, a hilltop republic with a UNESCO-listed Old Town and sweeping views from Mount Titano.

This evening, return to the train for dinner, drinks, and entertainment as your journey continues overnight.

Day 5: Pompeii

Today, explore the ruins of Pompeii, the Roman town buried by the eruption of Mount Vesuvius in 79 AD.

Preserved under layers of ash, the site offers a rare window into everyday life in the ancient world. On your guided tour, you'll also learn about the ongoing efforts to protect and preserve this remarkable site.

Afterwards, travel to the slopes of Mount Vesuvius to visit Casa Setaro, a family-run vineyard rooted in the volcanic landscape. Enjoy a tasting of their wines alongside regional dishes to experience the character and tradition of Campania.

Enjoy dinner and drinks onboard the train as you travel overnight to your next destination.

Day 6: Alberobello & Lecce

This morning, arrive in Alberobello, a UNESCO-listed town in Puglia known for its charming Trulli-conical-roofed stone house that bring a fairytale quality to the landscape. A guided tour explores their unique design and history, with time for a tasting of local wine or olive oil.

In the afternoon, visit Lecce, often called the baroque capital of southern Italy. Discover its limestone churches and ornate façades, including the Duomo and Basilica di Santa Croce, both reflecting the region’s craftsmanship and style.

Rejoin the train and relax onboard as your journey continues through the landscapes of Cilento National Park, bound for the southern tip of the mainland.

Dinner, drinks, and overnight onboard.

Day 7: Palermo

Enjoy breakfast as you arrive in Sicily, following a rare overnight train crossing of the Straits of Messina - a memorable highlight of the journey. Through the windows, the island’s hills and olive groves mark our arrival.

Your first stop is Palermo, Sicily’s capital. A walking tour through the historic center reveals a mix of cultures and styles shaped over centuries. End the morning with an aperitif and private concert at Teatro Massimo, Italy’s largest opera house.

In the afternoon, explore more of the region with two options. Travel to Corleone for a visit to the Anti-Mafia Museum and views across the surrounding countryside, or head to Monreale to see the renowned golden mosaics of its Norman Cathedral.

Dinner and drinks as your overnight onboard.

Day 8: Agrigento & Ragusa

Arrive in Agrigento this morning. A gateway to one of Sicily’s most important archaeological sites, you'll enjoy a private tour through the Valley of the Temples, a UNESCO-listed site where ancient Greek ruins stand prominently against the landscape.

In the afternoon, continue to Ragusa, a hillside town known for its Baroque architecture. Walk its winding streets lined with stone churches and homes, then take part in a hands-on cooking demonstration featuring regional dishes and local ingredients.

Dinner and drinks onboard the train.

Day 9: Syracuse & Caltagirone

This morning, arrive in Syracuse, once an important center of the Byzantine Empire. You will leave the city behind for a peaceful boat tour around the Island of Ortigia, offering a different view of this historic coastal setting.

After lunch onboard, continue to Caltagirone, a hilltop town known for its ceramic traditions dating to the 10th century. Visit a local workshop to see this craft in action before exploring Villa Romana del Casale, where remarkably preserved mosaics reveal daily life in the Roman world.

Dinner and drinks onboard.

Day 10: Catania

Enjoy breakfast in the dining car as you take in the Sicilian countryside en route to Catania, set at the base of Mount Etna. The morning is yours to explore. Stroll through its lively squares or step inside its historic churches at your own pace.

Later, enjoy a hands-on Sicilian pastry class, held at either the Società Storica Catanese or the Palazzo Biscari, where the owner offers a personal introduction to the experience.

In the afternoon, return to the train for dinner and drinks as you embark on the final stretch of your journey towards the cliffside town of Taormina.

Day 11: Taormina

Bid farewell to the train after breakfast this morning.

After breakfast, the day begins with a private visit to the Mount Etna Museum, guided by a local volcanologist who brings the story of this powerful natural wonder to life.

Next, head to the slopes of the volcano for a delightful lunch and wine tasting at a traditional Sicilian Palmento, where the region's volcanic soil shapes the distinctive flavors of its wines.

In the afternoon, explore the medieval streets of Taormina at your leisure. Visit the iconic Greek Theatre and soak in the town's timeless charm.

As evening falls, join your fellow travelers for a delicious Farewell Dinner at a five-star hotel to celebrate our unforgettable journey, complete with a champagne toast. Overnight in hotel.

Day 12: Taormina

After breakfast at the hotel, privately transfer to meet your departing flight. *You can also elect to extend your journey and stay additional nights in Taormina. Contact us for more information.*

Dates & Prices

2027 Dates

August 29 - September 9

Accommodation	Double	Single	Deposit
Deluxe Class	$28,900	$48,800	25%
Superior Deluxe Class	$36,300	$60,800	25%

Prices are shown in USD and are based on quarterly exchange rates. Prices are subject to change quarterly.

All prices are per person.

2028 Dates

September 9 - September 20

Accommodation	Double	Single	Deposit
Deluxe Class	$34,050	$57,250	25%
Superior Deluxe Class	$42,600	$71,450	25%

Prices are shown in USD and are based on quarterly exchange rates. Prices are subject to change quarterly.
All prices are per person.

More

This journey can be extended with our fabulous hotel partners throughout Europe. Contact us for more information about this concierge service.