



Sicily: Exploring the Layers of History • January 7 – 15, 2025

Rome from Antiquity to Early Modern Era: Legacies and Transformations January 15 – 23, 2025

Join the Selim Center and fellow learners for one or both of these unique study travel programs to explore ancient architecture and history from antiquity and early Christianity to the Early Modern era. Dr. Vanča Schrunk, St. Thomas archeologist and historian of the ancient world, which will help us appreciate the history and rich cultures we encounter. We start on the island of Sicily. The center of the Mediterranean has been a crossroads of history and civilizations. Dr. Schrunk will introduce us to the many layers of this beautiful island, from Palermo to the ancient Greek temples of Selinunte; the historical cities of Agrigento and Syracuse; ending in the stunning city of Taormina, with its views of the sea and Mount Etna. This first program (or first half) will conclude in Rome.

After a rest day, we will begin the second program (or second half) as we explore the transformation of intellectual and physical culture in Rome from antiquity to Michelangelo. Focusing on ancient Roman and early Christian history, we will visit major and lesser-known sites to analyze how ancient landmarks were memorialized or transformed through time. We will explore the Forum, the Colosseum, and enjoy lunch at the top of Il Vittoriano where we will take in the panorama of Rome through a historical lens. We will then delve into early Christian history and archaeology in this Jubilee Year through visits to important sites such as catacombs and early churches. In the three levels of San Clemente Basilica, we will experience the evolution of Christianity from the 1st century through the Middle Ages. We will visit Rome's first cathedral, St. John Lateran, and Santa Maria Maggiore, a beautifully preserved church from the 5th century. We will also spend a day with St Thomas Theology professor Fr. Steven McMichael, visiting St. Peter's Cathedral, the Scavi (excavations under St. Peter), and the Pantheon. He will celebrate Mass for the group. A day in Tivoli, with its setting of Emperor Hadrian's villa and magnificent gardens of Villa D'Este, will be an ideal place to contextualize our study of ancient legacies in an Early Modern landscape. Our program will culminate with a customized guided visit of the Vatican Museums and the Sistine Chapel.

Program Inclusions

Experience educational and inspirational travel with friends and fellow Selim Center students under the leadership and teaching expertise of Vanča Schrunk, PhD.

✱

Opportunity to enroll in one of three customized programs.

✱

Accommodations in moderate Four-Star hotels. Single room accommodations at hotels available at additional cost.

✱

Entrance fees included for visits and activities along with gratuities for tour manager, guides, motorcoach drivers and restaurant staff.

✱

Sicily: eight meals, including breakfast daily and one dinner;
Rome: fourteen meals, including breakfast daily,
two lunches, and three dinners.

✱

Professional, licensed tour manager will travel with the group and provide expertise in both Sicily and Rome. Local guides are included as needed. Use of Whisper audio headset for entire program.

✱

Private motorcoach for transfers and touring.

✱

Group travel insurance from Cultural Insurance Services International, including medical evacuation coverage.

Your Hosts: Dr. Vanča Schrunk and Bob Shoemake

Dr. Ivančica (Vanča) Schrunk teaches ancient history and archaeology at the University of St. Thomas. She has led numerous study abroad courses in Italy, including Sicily, and for more than a decade has involved her students, colleagues, and international volunteers in a collaborative archaeological project on the island of Sveti Klement (St. Clement), near Hvar, Croatia. Her research focuses on Roman maritime villas, island environments, and ancient Mediterranean networks. She has published numerous articles and has co-authored or co-edited several books. In 2017 Vanča was named one of the Croatian Women's Network's "Croatian Woman of Influence."



Customized Program Itinerary

Tuesday 07 January Palermo. Arrival flights to Palermo, Sicily under own arrangements. Transport from airport to hotel under own individual arrangements Upon arrival to Palermo, check-in to [Eurostars Centrale Palace](#) for a two-night stay in Palermo. Meet your Tour Manager who will travel with the group for the entire tour. Enjoy a three-course welcome dinner in a local restaurant. (D)

Wednesday 08 January Palermo. Start your first full day in Sicily with a morning walking tour of historical center of Palermo, led by Dr. Schrunk. Visit the Vucciria market, Fontana Pretoria, Quattro Canti, Ballaro market, and Cathedral. In the afternoon continue with the walking tour with Dr. Schrunk. Visit Palazzo dei Normani and Cappella Palatina; walk to Zisa, Islamic palace & museum. (B)

Thursday 09 January Palermo - Monreale - Selinunte - Agrigento. After breakfast check-out of the hotel and proceed to explore Sicily onboard your private touring coach. Visit the historic town of Monreale and continue to the Selinunte archaeological park with an introduction by Dr. Schrunk. Lunch on own in Selinunte or on our way to Agrigento. In the afternoon visit the UNESCO World Heritage site, Valley of the Temples, the site of nine magnificent temples and the Agrigento Archaeological Museum. Upon arrival to Agrigento check-in to the [Foresteria Baglio della Luna](#) for a one-night stay. (B)

Friday 10 January Agrigento - Piazza Armerina - Syracuse. Journey to Piazza Armerina, the site of a late Roman country Villa Romana del Casale with extensive, figural mosaics illustrating elite life, hunting and import of exotic animals from Africa. Continue to Syracuse and upon arrival check-in to the [Grand Hotel Ortigia](#) for a two-night stay. Dinner and evening on own. (B)

Saturday 11 January Syracuse. After breakfast, depart for a morning guided walking tour led by Dr. Schrunk of the Neapolis Archaeological Park with the largest Greek theater in Sicily and other Greco-Roman remains. Afternoon walking tour with Dr. Schrunk of Ortygia with visits to Fort Maniace, the Temple of Apollo, the Cathedral (which incorporates a temple to Athena and has Christian, Arab and Norman phases), the Fountain of Arethusa and excavated remains of a temple of Artemis. (B)

Sunday 12 January Syracuse – Catania - Taormina. Check-out of the hotel and proceed by private coach to Catania and explore the local fish market. Lunch on own in Catania. In the afternoon, visit a local winery near Mt. Etna for a vineyard tour and tasting. Continue to Taormina and check-in to Excelsior Palace Hotel. (B)

Monday 13 January Taormina. Start the day with walking tour with Dr. Schrunk of Taormina, with visit to the Greek theater with view of Mt. Etna and on-site group discussion and reflection on the role of the epic and dramatic literature then and today. Afternoon and evening free for independent exploration. (B)

Tuesday 14 January Taormina – Rome. Check-out of the hotel and transfer by private coach to the train station for a direct train to Rome. Standard 2nd class train tickets included. Upon arrival to Rome, a transfer by private coach from the train station to the hotel. Check-in to [BW Plus Hotel Universo](#) for a nine-night stay in Rome. Three-course dinner in a local restaurant. (B,D)

Wednesday 15 January Rome. First program ends after breakfast this day. Free day for exploring Rome. In the evening a three-course group dinner within walking distance of hotel for new and extending participants (B,D)

Thursday 16 January Rome. After breakfast by private coach, travel to Capitoline Hill and Museums area. Meet your local guide and proceed with a half-day walking tour of Capitoline Hill and Museums. Lunch on own in Capitoline Museum cafeteria. In the afternoon, we explore Tiber Island and Circus Maximus led by Dr. Schrunk. Evening free. (B)

Friday 17 January Rome. Transfer by private coach to the Roman Forum and meet your local guide for the day and proceed with a tour of the Roman Forum, Palatine Hill and Palatine Museum. Walk to Il Vittoriano, the monument built for Vittorio Emanuele II, the first King of Italy, including entrance to a panoramic view of ancient Rome. Group lunch on the terrace at Il Vittoriano (subject to availability). Afternoon and evening free. (B,L)

Saturday 18 January Rome. Coach transfer to Colosseum and meet your local guide for a guided walking tour of the Colosseum and gladiators' barracks. Visit Constantine's Arch next to the Colosseum then walk to the nearby St. Clemente Basilica, including the visit to Mithraeum (San Clemente Scavi). After a lunch break on own, visit Basilica of St. John Lateran and Basilica of Santa Maria Maggiore. Evening free. (B)

Sunday 19 January Rome. After breakfast, proceed by private motorcoach to visit the Baths of Caracalla and the Catacombs of San Sebastian on Via Appia Antica. After light group lunch, the coach will leave you at the Basilica St. Maria degli Angeli for afternoon visit. Late afternoon and evening free. (B,L)

Monday 20 January Rome. Visit to St. Peter's and a guided tour of the Scavi (Vatican Necropolis, subject to availability). Fr. Steven McMichael, St. Thomas Theology professor, will say Mass for the group. Location TBD. Visit Pantheon. Remainder of the day free for independent exploration. (B)

Tuesday 21 January Rome (Tivoli). By private coach proceed for a day-long excursion to Tivoli and visit to Hadrian's Villa. In the afternoon visit Villa d'Este, with its magnificent gardens and waterfall. Return to Rome for arrival at the hotel. Evening free. (B)

Wednesday 22 January Rome. Meet your local guide in the hotel lobby to depart for customized guided walking tour of the Vatican Museums. Break for lunch on own in Vatican City. Group Farewell dinner at a local restaurant. (B,D)

Thursday 23 January Rome departure. Check out of the hotel and departure under own arrangements. (B)

*Included meals: B=breakfast, L=lunch, D=dinner
Itinerary subject to change due to local scheduling.
[Click hotel names or other sites in blue for website link.](#)*

Passport, Health, Insurance and Travel Information

U.S. citizens need a passport valid at least six months beyond the tour return date. Passport applications are available at the U.S. Department of State website. Non-U.S. citizens are responsible for their own passport and any visa requirements for the countries visited and must travel with a permanent resident card or other documentation to re-enter the U.S. Without proper documents, entry could be denied at participant's expense.

Consult your physician and utilize information on [Travelers' Health on the Center for Disease Control website](#) for precautions and up to date travel and health and safety information. For international travel information, including country specific background, travel advisories and alerts, consult the [US Department of State website](#).

Cultural Insurance Services International (CISI) group insurance included in cost covers evacuation and major medical as described in Statement of Conditions. **Cancellation insurance and coverage for pre-existing medical conditions is not included and highly recommended for health situations that may prevent you from traveling or interrupt your travels.**

We strongly recommend travel cancellation insurance. Options include TravelGuard, [insuremytrip.com](#), and AARP, among others. When purchasing insurance, thoroughly read the coverage to ensure it meets your needs. Pay particular attention to pandemic-related coverage. Purchasing travel insurance within 15 days of enrollment may waive pre-existing medical conditions.

Travelers are required to walk significant distances including uneven surfaces, steps and inclines during parts of the itinerary. This itinerary is not wheelchair, scooter or walker accessible. Consult with Sovereign Tourism or your tour leader if you have questions about the walking and mobility required to fully participate. Sovereign Tourism, in consensus with tour hosts, reserves the right to not accept or withdraw any participant whose ability to participate in the tour or whose conduct is incompatible with the operation of the tour or the interests of the group as a whole.

For travel and destination information, click website link: [Discover Italy: Official Tourism Website](#)

Further Information

Catherine Spaeth
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UST Selim Center for Lifelong Learning
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Registration

To secure registration, you must complete the enrollment form **and** pay the required deposit. You need credit card information, passport details (unless applying for a passport), and emergency contact information to properly fill out the enrollment form.

Step 1: \$600 deposit due immediately to secure registration. Please fill out the enrollment form completely.

Step 2: Click below to fill out one enrollment form per person. There will be a separate form for each of the three programs: Sicily, Rome, or Sicily/Rome. **A letter of confirmation will be emailed after your deposit payment and the enrollment form are received.** If program is full upon submitting enrollment form, you will be notified.

Passport Name: Complete this form with your **full name exactly as it appears on your passport.** Include your middle name or initial plus any suffix (Jr., Sr., or III) exactly as printed on your passport. If you do not have a passport at this time, enter your name exactly as it will appear on the passport. There may be a fee for any name changes.

[Click here](#) for link to enrollment form.

Liability waiver: Group leaders and all participants will be required to sign a liability waiver that acknowledges the inherent risks of travel. This waiver form will be emailed by the Selim Center as part of the enrollment and registration process. Once you have paid your deposit, the liability waiver form will be sent to you. Please sign it (electronically) and return to the Selim Center.

Program Cost

Sicily only: \$4,585
Supplement for single accommodations - \$599
Rome only: \$4,875
Supplement for single accommodations - \$949
Sicily and Rome: \$7,795
Supplement for single accommodations - \$1,548

Limited availability of single accommodations. This comprehensive cost includes gratuities and CISI group insurance (approx. \$100 value).

These costs are often not packaged into other travel programs and instead listed as additional costs in the fine print.

Above price based on a group size of 15-19. Price will decrease for a larger group or increase for a smaller group.

Statement of Conditions

Program costs and minimum number group size are based on a group size of 15-19 paying participants. **\$4,585 Sicily only; \$4,875 Rome only; \$7,795 Sicily/Rome.** Program cost will decrease if group size is larger or increase if group size is smaller. *Program cost based on exchange rates, tariffs, and taxes in effect as of May 31, 2024, subject to change in the event that there is a fluctuation of more than 4%.*

Surface travel and transfers: Private deluxe motorcoach will be used for local touring and transportation. Standard 2nd class train ticket from Taormina to Rome.

Accommodations and meals: Shared hotel occupancy in twin-bedded room or room with one double bed as indicated in non-smoking rooms. U.S. king and queen bed sizes are often not available. A double bed may actually be two twin beds arranged side by side. Supplemental cost for single room occupancy is \$599 in Sicily, \$949 in Rome only, and \$1,548 for Sicily/Rome. Sicily: eight meals, including breakfast daily and one dinner; Rome: fourteen meals, including breakfast daily, two lunches, and three dinners. Sicily/Rome: twenty-two meals, including breakfast daily, two lunches, and four dinners. Upon request, Sovereign Tourism and sponsor/host(s) will try to pair participants traveling as a single with a roommate. There is no guarantee of a roommate and if one is not available, the single supplement is assessed at time of final payment. Some hotels provide a smaller room size for single occupancy.

Program arrangements: Professional tour manager from Palermo hotel until departure in Rome. English-speaking local guide services are as indicated in the itinerary; inside visits described in itinerary include entrance fees and donations as needed. Suggested gratuities for tour manager, local guides and motorcoach drivers, and group meals included. NOTE: Participants with special needs may incur surcharges for additional services. Accessibility for people with disabilities varies significantly from country to country. Be advised the Americans with Disabilities Act is not applicable outside of the United States, and facilities outside the United States, such as ramps, elevators and hand railings may be limited. This itinerary is not wheelchair, scooter or walker accessible.

Deposit and payment schedule: \$600 per participant due to secure enrollment no later than July 26, 2024. Registrations above a group size of 25 may need to be placed on a waiting list. Early registration is strongly encouraged. A waiting list is maintained when registrations exceed 25 paying participants. **Full payment due September 7, 2024. You will be sent an invoice in advance of this date.** Upon receipt of enrollment and deposit, confirmation of registration is sent by UST Selim Center via email.

Note: Most countries require passports to be valid up to six months after the scheduled return. Participants are responsible for ensuring that they meet passport and visa requirements of each country visited.

Group medical and evacuation insurance: The following Cultural Insurance Services International (CISI) group insurance coverage is included for each participant. **This insurance does not include individual trip cancellation and pre-existing medical condition coverage; additional insurance is highly recommended.**

Schedule of Benefits

Coverage and Services Maximum Limits:

- Accidental Death and Dismemberment Per Insured Person \$10,000
- Medical expense limit (per Covered Accident or Sickness), \$100,000@100%
- Deductible \$0
- Emergency Medical Reunion up to \$3000
- Team Assist Plan (TAP): 24/7 medical, travel, technical assistance
- Call-a-Doc Telemedicine Services
- Emergency Medical Evacuation 100% up to policy limits
- Repatriation/Return of Mortal Remains 100% up to policy limits
- Security Evacuation (Comprehensive)\$100,000
- Trip delay (outside home country only and covers one delay only) up to \$500

Trip delay: In the unforeseen circumstance your program experiences travel delays and unexpected expenses are incurred, Sovereign Tourism will invoice participants for any additional costs associated with the delay minus the CISI trip delay coverage, if qualified. Obtaining additional travel insurance as recommended may offset these expenses.

Cancellation and refund policy: The following policy is based on the contracts required to secure the services for this customized program, the commitments to other participants and the services rendered on behalf of all participants by Sovereign Tourism as described in this Statement of Conditions. Should cancellation occur prior to 90 days before departure, the initial deposit will be refunded less a \$100 fee per person. The following specified costs are non-refundable: 90-61 days = full deposit; 60-46 days = 50% of program price; 45-31 days = recoverable costs only (possible forfeiture of entire program cost); **cancellations received 30 days or fewer from departure will receive no refund. Cancellations must be submitted in writing; the date such notification is received by Sovereign Tourism is the cancellation date. Trip cancellation insurance is strongly recommended.**

The cancellation and refund policy remain as stated. Sovereign Tourism, in consensus with the tour hosts, reserves the right to not accept or withdraw from a tour any tour participant whose ability to participate in the tour or whose conduct is incompatible with the operation of the tour or the interests of the group as a whole. Should this occur, cancellation and refund policy apply as stated. *Cancellation and refund policy is subject to change based on confirmation of travel arrangements.*

Leadership: The person(s) identified as the leader/host is subject to change in the event of unforeseen circumstances beyond the control of Sovereign Tourism. In the unlikelyhood of the need to change leadership, a qualified replacement will be selected by sponsoring organization or previous leader. Sovereign Tourism will operate the program as planned and is not responsible for the change in leadership.

Exclusions: Items not listed above, including but not limited to meals other than those indicated; beverages except at breakfast and where indicated with dinner; optional entertainment and excursions; any baggage charges; all personal items, such as telephone calls, laundry expenses, individual room service; trip cancellation insurance; non-tour-related gratuities; passport fees; possible visa fees for non-US citizens; increases in airport taxes or fuel surcharge; increases in the VAT of any country visited in the itinerary; increases in city or hotel taxes.

NOTE: If political/civil unrest, health risk or other force majeure would change the travel conditions and Sovereign Tourism, along with the sponsoring organization and/or program leaders become concerned about the safety and wellbeing of participants, the program will be adjusted, postponed, or possibly cancelled. In the case the travel program is cancelled at 45 days or fewer from departure, the refund will be based on recoverable costs only with possible forfeiture of the entire program cost per the cancellation and refund policy above.

Management and responsibility: Sovereign Tourism and their representatives act only as agents for the tour members in making arrangements for hotels, transportation, sightseeing, restaurants or any other services in connection with the itinerary, and they will take reasonable care in making such arrangements. Sovereign Tourism will not be liable for any loss or damage arising out of or in connection with the program where performance and/or prompt performance of the contract is prevented by reason of war or threat of war, riot, civil strike, industrial dispute (affecting employees or any person other than those of the company), terrorist activity, natural and nuclear disasters, pandemics, fire, adverse weather conditions, hostilities or political unrest and other similar conditions beyond the control of the company.

Sovereign Tourism, Ltd.

Sovereign Tourism, with over 50 years of experience crafting faith-based, educational, performing arts and special interest programs, is proud of a proven record in providing attention to detail, safety, security, creativity and value. Our services allow leaders to focus on the purpose and goals of their program while we take care of the travel logistics, providing peace of mind from beginning to end.