A Spring Break in Italy with NOIAW

Marina Melchionda (February 27, 2010)

The National Organization of Italian American Women, in collaboration with ANFE (Associazione Nazionale Famiglie Emigranti), is organizing a trip to Sicily (Palermo, Catania, and surrounding areas) and Rome from April 20 to April 29. Take a break from your everyday life and reconnect with your roots in this relaxing and fun tour! Show-biz stars Joe Bologna and Renee Tayler will accompany you throughout the trip , while former governor of the State of New York Mario Cuomo and his wife Matilda will join the group for some of the activities scheduled! The trip is open to everybody, but very few places are left. Hurry up!

Do you need to get away from your busy life for a few days? Are you tired of snow, rain, and cold days? Are you an Italian-American who wants to reconnect with your heritage and culture of origins? If your answer to one of these questions is "Yes", it's time for you to plan a trip to Italy.

The National Organization of Italian-American Women [2]might have the solution you are looking for: from April 19 to April 28 you can join members and friends of the Italian-American community on a marvelous trip to **Sicily** and **Rome**, where you'll have the opportunity to see, visit, and enjoy two of the most beautiful areas of the country. The trip was planned by the Sicilian Branch of ANFE [3](Associazione Nazionale Famiglie Emigranti - National Association of Emigrant Families) Sicilian Branch of ANFE [4](Associazione Nazionale Famiglie Emigranti - National Association of Emigrant Families), which also contributed to the planning of the itinerary.

Fun will be ensured thanks to the participation of two famous show-biz stars, **Joe Bologna** and **Renee Taylor**, that will accompany the participants throughout the trip. Meetings with local politicians, institutional, regional and local representatives, and members of public and private organizations, will give you a hint of the social and political life of the region of Sicily, while the former governor of the State of New York **Mario Cuomo** with his wife **Matilda** will join the group to share some of the scheduled activities.

Since Sicily is the region where many of NOIAW's members come from, the organization decided to spend the greatest part of the trip there. Three days in **Palermo** and three in **Catania**, will be just enough for you to realize why this is one of the favorite destinations for both Italian and foreign tourists. The limpid, dark blue sea surrounds the whole island and its monuments, ruins and historical sites, that have been witness to a millenary history of colonization and cultural contamination.

Both in Palermo and Catania you'll find Arabian, Greek, Roman, French and Spanish architecture, a mixture that confers a rare charm on both the cities. In Palermo, the capital of the region, sites of particular interest are the **Palazzo dei Normanni** (Palace of the Normans), the antique building hosting the **Sicilian Parliament,** and the **Palatina Chapel,** all monuments that you'll have a chance to visit.

The accomodation at the five-star Grand Hotel Wagner [5], right in the heart of the city, will allow you to spend your leisure time shopping and walking around, enjoying the warm hospitality that characterizes the local inhabitants.

Palermo, as most of you know, is also renowned for its Teatro Massimo [6], the biggest Opera House in Italy and one of the largest in Europe. You'll spend the second evening of your arrival there enjoying an outstanding theatrical representation, before delighting your palate in an up-scale restaurant close by.

As NOIAW finds it of great importance to help you reconnect to your land of origins and learn as much as possible of your background and traditions, you will be invited to take local one-day trips to the surrounding areas, as many of the participants will also have an opportunity to meet majors and/or high representatives of the towns their ancestors came from.

A sightseeing trip to the Greek town of **Segesta** and a visit to its Temple will precede a tour of the province of **Trapani** with its **National Archeological Museum**. From there, you'll have some time for walking and shopping around in **Erice**, a Medieval mountaintop fortress.

A visit to Palermo and its surrounding area cannot be complete without a full gourmet experience. On that day you won't only have lunch in the beautiful wine cellar Fazio Wine [7], where the "Erice D.O.C" red wine is produced, but you'll also enjoy the experience of a dinner at the luxurious Gattopardo Restaurant [8], named after Giuseppe Tomasi di Lampedusa's novel and Luchino Visconti's movie. Tradition and seasonal products combine in the delicate dishes they serve.

Even if you won't want to leave Palermo after these three magic days, on April 23 Catania and its surrounding areas will be ready to give you a taste of their unique beauty. Before arriving at the four-star hotel "Grand Hotel Baia Verde [9]", you'll visit two sites of extraordinary beauty : **Villarosa**, a charming agricultural center, outstanding for the rich cultivation of wheat, olives, almonds, and

grapes and **Villa Romana del Casale**, situated just a few miles from the small town of **Piazza Armerina**. A UNESCO World Heritage Site [10], it has the richest, largest and most complex collection of late Roman mosaics in the world.

Before leaving Sicily, a final tour of **Caltagirone** and **Taormina** is due. While the first, that takes its name from the Arabic qal'at-al-ganom ("Castle of the Genies"), is mainly famous for the production of pottery, ceramics and terracotta wares, the second has remnants of its Greek and Roman ancestry, a fine medieval quarter and the ruins of a castle, and modern shops and restaurants. Perched on the side of **Monte Tauro**, it also offers fantastic views of the coast and **Mt. Etna** volcano.

On the other side of the Mediterranean Sea, is where you will find **Rome**, the "eternal city", where tourists look for and find the "Dolce Vita" they saw at the movies. On April 25 you'll get your share of it, starting from the beautiful accommodations offered at the "Rose Garden Palace [11]", a four-star hotel located right in the heart of Via Veneto, where the famous movie by Federico Fellini was set.

Cocktails, walks, a Vatican tour, and a Tiber River cruise will make it even harder to go back home, but will leave you as glad as ever to have grabbed the opportunity to take this exciting, fulfilling spring trip with the National Organization of Italian-American Women.

If you feel you can't miss it, and can't wait to pack your suitcases, don't wait! Very few places are left.
Call 212 642 2003; email noiaw@noiaw.org [12]; or visit NOIAW's website [2] for all the info you need.

Have a nice trip!

The trip is partially funded by the Sicilian Branch of ANFE [3](Associazione Nazionale Famiglie Emigranti - National Association of Emigrant Families), the Region of Sicily, and others...

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