MEDITERRANEAN SERENADE

Aboard the All-Suite, 114-Guest Corinthian II
August 5–15, 2012

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ROME | CIVITAVECCHIA, Italy | EMBARK
Upon arrival in Rome, transfer to the pier in Civitavecchia to embark Corinthian II.

AGROPOLI | PAESTUM | AGROPOLI
Arrive in the charming medieval town of Agropoli to enjoy an excursion to Paestum. The ancient Poseidonia (city of Neptune) founded by the Greeks in the 6th and 5th centuries B.C., Paestum is one of Italy’s most important archaeological sites—the Greek temples here are the best-examples of early Doric architecture anywhere, including in Greece itself. In the 9th century, the city was abandoned due to economic decline and Arab invasions. Thick forests grew around it, making the site uninhabitable. Rediscovered in the 18th century, the surrounding he forests have since been cleared and the ruins of the city now stand on an open green plain lauded for its herbs, cypress and oleander. The Temple of Hera, once known as the Basilica before its Greek origins were understood, towers over the southern end of the plain. Massive Doric order columns form the still complete colonnade. This early attempt suggests the later grandeur of the Parthenon. Nearby stands the Temple of Neptune, with still intact entablatures and pediments. See the site’s Museum, which features many finds from the site, including metopes from the Temple of Hera, and the famous funerary frescoes from the Tomb of the Diver.

TAORMINA, Sicily
From Messina, we drive to the luxurious resort town of Taormina. Situated high on the slopes of Monte Tauro, and opposite the snowcapped volcano of Mount Etna, Taormina dominates two sweeping bays below. Medieval stone buildings, framed by palm trees and brightly colored bougainvillea, line the streets of the city, which retains hints of its small-town charm even during the high tourist season. Greek colonists discovered Taormina in the 8th century B.C. Theocles, the legendary founder of the settlement, was said to be the only survivor of a ship’s crew that became distracted during a sacrifice to Poseidon and had been punished by the god with a violent storm on Sicily’s east coast. Theocles was possibly the first to fall in love with the area: legend says, he returned to his native Greece and persuaded a group of his countrymen to return with him. They founded the settlement of Nassos (Naxos), just south of modern-day Taormina. The colony prospered peacefully until 403 B.C., when Dionysus, the tyrant of Syracuse, extended his territory to eastern Sicily. The defeated colonists were allowed to move further up on the plateau of Mount Tauro. This new settlement entered historical record as Tauromenion, now Taormina.

After discovering the pleasures of Sicily and, in particular, of Taormina in 1787, J.W. Goethe wrote the travelogue Italian Journey, describing Taormina as a “patch of paradise.” Throughout the 18th and 19th centuries, Taormina was a main destination of the “Grand Tour” undertaken by generations of British and Northern European youths in search of classical heritage and artistic sensibility. A number of 19th and 20th-century writers found Taormina an ideal setting for a retreat, among them D.H. Lawrence, Truman Capote, John Steinbeck, and Oscar Wilde. The 20th century also saw the rise of Taormina as an exclusive, glamorous resort, playing host to celebrities such as Ingmar Bergman, Francis Ford Coppola, and Greta Garbo.

Visit Taormina’s spectacular theater built into the rock face of Mount Tauro. First constructed by the Greeks in the Hellenistic period, it was later transformed and enlarged by the Romans, who used it as a gladiatorial arena. The graduated rows of seats, called the cavia, were carved out of the hillside, and its acoustics are still good enough to allow the theater to be used for festivals, concerts and plays. Later, spend time exploring Taormina at your leisure. Breathe in the scents of lemon, jasmine and other fragrant trees and blossoms in the city’s many gardens, or stroll through the medieval palazzi, mostly Gothic in style with Arab-Norman influences, in the old town. Notice how black lava stone from Mount Etna and white Syracuse stone create geometric patterns reflected in the palaces.

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MONOPOLI and the TRULLI VILLAGE OF ALBEROBELLO

From the fishing port town of Monopoli, visit the town of Alberobello, a UNESCO World Heritage site since 1996, known for its cluster of 1,000 trulli homes. Trulli villages are only found in this part of Italy. Theories abound regarding the origin of the trulli—unique, rotund and mortarless limestone structures, with cone-shaped gray stone roofs that are found only in southeastern Italy. The inner rooms are usually small and windowless, while religious or folk symbols are traced on the roofs. Both the interior and exterior walls are painted white each year, which accounts for their pristine appearance. Few of the trulli standing today date from more than a couple of hundred years.

Explore this extraordinary place and then return to Monopoli, which is dominated by its polygonal 16th-century castle. The palace once served as the residence of Charles V and was originally separated from the medieval city. In the 17th century, it was restored, and from the early 19th century until 1969 served as a jail. The palace now houses art exhibitions and cultural events.

KOTOR, Montenegro

Be on deck as Corinthian II navigates the fjord-like Bay of Kotor, flanked by soaring mountains. Disembark in Kotor in the newly formed Republic of Montenegro. Independent from the late middle Ages until 1918, the country was later a part of Yugoslavia and, most recently, the state union of Serbia and Montenegro. After the dissolution of Yugoslavia, when Slovenia, Croatia, Macedonia, and Bosnia and Herzegovina declared their independence in 1992, Montenegro and Serbia united to form the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. Negotiations over restructuring led to the announcement, in February 2003, of a loose federation of the two republics, under the names Serbia and Montenegro. The terms of the constitutional charter allowed each republic the opportunity to hold a referendum on separation in 2006. Based on the results of this referendum held on May 21, 2006, Montenegro declared independence on June 3, 2006, and on June 28, 2006 Montenegro became the 192nd member state of the United Nations.

The old town of Kotor is one of the best-preserved medieval towns in Dalmatia, in part because of UNESCO’s inscription of the Natural and Cultural-Historical Region of Kotor as a World Heritage site after a 1979 earthquake. During the 12th, 13th, and 14th centuries, Kotor was an economic and cultural center on the Adriatic and had a strong influence on the development of education—a grammar school was established here in the 13th century, and an academy of fine arts was founded in Kotor in the 14th century.

On a guided walking tour of Old Town, visit many of the monuments from Kotor’s medieval past, including the Romanesque Cathedral of Tryphon, originally built in 1116. Its rich reliquary contains many gold objects and Renaissance paintings, as well as an early Christian sarcophagus. In the Suranj district, the oldest part of town, Romanesque and Gothic houses line the streets. Also visit the town’s fortifications, which date back to the period of Venetian rule, which lasted from the 15th to 18th centuries.

DUBROVNIK, Croatia

Arrive today in Dubrovnik, aptly referred to as the “Pearl of the Adriatic.” The merging of Slavic and Latin cultures, which began shortly after the area was settled in the 7th century, produced a uniquely Mediterranean culture. Known from this time as Ragusa—a name which came from the island of Laus, first settled by Greco-Roman refugees—the city enjoyed a great deal of independence, even as it owed allegiance first to the Byzantines and then, from 1204–1358, to the Venetians. While Dubrovnik was officially part of the Hungaro-Croatian kingdom after 1358, it was effectively its own city-state, the Ragusan Republic. Mercantile wealth, aided by a privileged trading position with the Ottoman Empire and sparked by competition with Venice, ushered in Ragusa’s golden age in the 15th and 16th centuries. Many of the city’s monuments and landmarks were commissioned during this period. The earthquake of 1667 put an end to Ragusa’s ascendancy, leaving it vulnerable to invasion and trade competition, especially from rival Venice. Napoleon dissolved the city-state in 1808, leading to a bombardment by the British Navy and a siege that devastated the economy. The 1815 Congress of Vienna awarded Dubrovnik to

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the Austrians, who incorporated it into the province of Dalmatia. Though no longer the mercantile center of the past, Dubrovnik retained its importance as a center of Slav culture, and became a desirable tourist destination in the later 19th century. Through the 1980s it was one of the most popular destinations in Yugoslavia. Today, Dubrovnik again welcomes visitors. Much of the damage from the 1991-1992 Siege of Dubrovnik, an episode in the civil war that led to the breakup of Yugoslavia, has been repaired. UNESCO has led reconstruction efforts in Dubrovnik’s old city, a major World Heritage site.

Visit the Franciscan Monastery, perhaps the most significant monument in Dubrovnik. Though the 1667 earthquake destroyed much of the monastery, a remarkable Pietà is preserved above the church door. The 14th-century cloister dates from the late-Romanesque period, and the richly decorated capitals are topped by various figures—human heads, animals, and floral arrangements. Inside is one of Europe’s oldest operating pharmacies, opened to the public in 1391. Near the old harbor is the church and cloister of the Dominican Monastery. Built in the Gothic and Renaissance styles of the 14th and 15th centuries, the monastery has been subsequently restored in Baroque style. The graceful cloister, though quite small, has a garden and fountain at its center. The apothecary, originally founded in 1317, has many jars and pots; the treasury holds a silver reliquary alleged to contain one of St. Blaise’s hands. The library is the richest in Dubrovnik.

Continue to Dubrovnik’s Baroque Cathedral of our Lady, built from 1672 to 1731 to replace a 13th-century Romanesque basilica that was destroyed in 1667. Legend holds that the original structure was built with a gift from Richard the Lionheart, who was said to have been shipwrecked on the coast of Ragusa on his way back from the Third Crusade. In 1981, foundations and frescoes were uncovered from an even earlier Byzantine cathedral built in the 6th century. The surviving cathedral exterior is decorated with sculptures of saints, while the interior features a large polyptych of The Assumption attributed to Titian. Above the entrance to the treasury is a work by the noted Renaissance artist Andrea del Sarto. The treasury contains some 138 reliquaries, most of which are carried through Dubrovnik on the Feast of St. Blaise on February 3.

Also view the wonderful courtyard of Rector’s Palace, which was built in the 12th century and renovated several times. The Rector, or head of the Republic, was elected from the members of the Grand Council and lived in this palace during his one-month term. Note the Asclepius column on the far right of the façade—the relief shows a bearded figure believed to represent the Greco-Roman god of medicine at work in a laboratory. Inside the atrium of the palace, see the bust of Miho Pracat (1522-1607), who left most of his fortune to the city-state, becoming the only resident honored with a statue.

KORCULA

As Corinthian II approaches Korcula, view its skyline of white towers and green hills. Korcula was one of the first Adriatic cities to fall to the Venetians in the 10th century, and was ruled by them for most of the next eight centuries. Many of Korcula’s buildings were constructed during its golden age—the 13th to the 15th centuries—when Mediterranean trade brought a great deal of wealth to the town. Korcula is also known as the site of a 1298 battle where the Genoese fleet defeated a stronger Venetian navy and captured Marco Polo.

Narrow step-streets of stone lead to the splendid St. Mark’s Cathedral, a hybrid of Venetian and Gothic styles. Among the notable features of the façade is a cornice with carvings of strange beasts and woman in the middle. No one has been able to identify her, but it has been suggested that she represents the wife of the emperor Diocletian, or one of the Hungarian queens who helped build the church. St. Mark stands in relief above the door of the church. Inside, several notable paintings, including one by Tintoretto, are displayed. A 13th century icon of the Virgin Mary, said to have given miraculous help to the Venetians at the 1571 Battle of Lepanto, is taken to Badija Island each August 2 for a special thanksgiving mass. Next door, the Bishop’s Palace, built in the 17th century, houses the cathedrals’ rich Treasury and contains Caracccio’s Portrait of a Man and a painting of the Virgin and Child by Bassano.
Also see the **Church of All Saints**, the three-aisled parish that occupies one of the most prominent locations in Blato’s old town. First built in 1350, All Saints was reconstructed in 1672, when the bell-tower was added. Blato is also a center for the preservation of Dalmatian tradition. The **Kumpanija**, a chivalrous tournament with its roots in the Middle Ages, is still performed on the square in front of All Saints. Continue to the **Icon Museum**, which is comprised of a unique collection of 13th–15th century Byzantine icons painted on wood or gold, as well as 17th and 18th century ceremonial pieces, many of which were acquired by the islands sailors on their voyages, particularly to Crete.

**SPLIT**

An ancient city on the Adriatic coast, **Split** assumed importance in A.D. 305 when the Roman Emperor Diocletian arrived. During the 9th century, Split was one of Dalmatia’s leading Byzantine cities. Today, it retains importance as a central and scenic port city.

In the morning, explore the extensive **Palace of Diocletian**. Built around A.D. 300, the palace originally served as the Emperor’s summer residence. By the middle Ages, enclosed within a strong wall fortified by square towers, the palace had become a town within itself, its narrow alleys lined with houses. Gradually, however, people moved outside the walls and the city center moved westward. The buildings of the palace combine Romanesque, Gothic, Renaissance, and Baroque styles, and are enhanced by elegant arcades and loggias, medieval paintings, marble columns, and impressive statues. The best-preserved structures are located in the palace center. The Peristyle, the ceremonial entrance court to the royal residence, now functions as a popular meeting place. Adjacent to the Peristyle is the **Cathedral of St. Domnius**, originally built as Diocletian’s Mausoleum. Octagonal in shape, it has a domed interior with 24 Corinthian columns and a frieze of Emperor Diocletian and his wife. Note the oldest part of the building, the wooden entrance doors, which depict scenes from the life of Christ. Guarding the cathedral is a black granite sphinx that was imported from Egypt. The **Temple of Jupiter**, later converted into a baptistery, has one column that dates from the 5th century. The domed vestibule is the best-preserved part of the imperial residence. Today its cellars double as a crafts marketplace.

Spend the afternoon at leisure to explore Split on your own. Alternatively, take an excursion to **Trogir**, one of Croatia’s best preserved old towns. Located on a small island, the town is renowned for 2300 years of continuous urban culture, boasting Greek, Roman, and Venetian influences. The town’s orthogonal streets boast palaces, churches, and towers, leading UNESCO to inscribe the town as a World Heritage site. Spend time exploring the best preserved-Romanesque complex in Europe on your own.

**PIRAN, SLOVENIA**

Dock in **Piran**, one of the jewels of the Adriatic. Superbly located on the tip of a long peninsula, picturesque Piran boasts elegant Venetian-inspired Gothic architecture and arched alleyways that accentuate its medieval past. Settled originally by Illyrian Histori tribes, its name is believed to come from *pyr*, the Greek word for fire. The Romans renamed the settlement Piranum after their victory over the Illyrians and Celts and were followed by the early Slavs, the Byzantines, the Franks, and the Patriarchs of Aquileia. In the late 13th century, Venetian rule began, lasting in various forms for 500 years, and was the town’s most prosperous era. From the early 19th century until World War II, Austrian and Italian rule saw a period of economic stagnation. However, the town was able to maintain its medieval character, making it one of the best-preserved in the Adriatic.

On a guided walking tour, visit the historic buildings around **Tartini Square**, named after Piran’s most well-known violinist and composer, Giuseppe Tartini. See the **St. George Cathedral**, dating from the 12th century and named for the town’s patron saint. Among its most important pieces is the church organ, made by Petar Nakić, a Dalmatian Franciscan monk, which was reconstructed in the 1950’s after much of it was used for weapons during World War II. Visit the **Sergej Masera Maritime Museum**, occupying the splendid
19th century Gabreilli Palace that rises above the harbor. The museum is named in honor of the WWII commander of the Zagreb, who was lost with his ship off of the Croatian coast. Piran’s long connection to the sea is on display, from Roman amphora to the beautiful collection model ships, built as a teaching aid to future naval officers in the 18th century.

VENICE, Italy | DISMEBARK | USA
Disembark in Venice and transfer to the airport for return flights to the United States.