**Preliminary Itinerary**

**Muslims, Christians, and Jews in Sicily, Crossroads of Medieval Civilization**

**May 17-25, 2020**

Our study tour takes us to South Italy for a warm Mediterranean Spring. Enjoy the rich natural beauty of the rugged mountains and coastline and its distinctive, delicious cuisine, warm and friendly people, its myriad outstanding ancient sites and learning of the island's central role in Mediterranean history. We stay in first class accommodotions in the heart of the cities, from where we visit Palermo, Monreale, Agrigento, Taormina and Siracusa, guided by professional experts. Professor Ross Brann will offer talks and lead discussions focused on the Islamic (827-1061) and Norman periods (1057-1268).

**Sunday, May 17: Depart US**

Depart the United States, generally on evening flight.

**Monday, May 18: Sicily - Palermo.**

Day 2: May 18, 2020 Sicily - Palermo. Welcome to Sicily. Upon arrival at Palermo airport, please proceed to baggage claim and clear customs before meeting your tour manager, who will be escorting you throughout your journey. We reach the hotel in Palermo, our home for four nights. As Sicily's capital, Palermo reflects its many conquerors over the centuries, including Normans, Arabs, Asians, and Greeks, with distinct architectural styles ranging from Arabic to Baroque, from Norman to Art Nouveau. After check in and little time to rest, enjoy an orientation tour with your tour manager and a welcome dinner at local restaurant.

**HOTEL (D)**

**Tuesday, May 19: Palermo**

After our daily breakfast, Professor Ross Brann will offer his introduction to Palermo with a first lecture at the hotel. Later we meet our local guide for a full-day guided tour of Palermo city center. You will explore old avenues and Arabic neighborhoods, iconic cathedrals, and Teatro Massimo, Palermo's elegant Opera House (from outside). Your guided tour will include a visit to the Palatine Chapel inside the Norman Palace, as well as La Cuba, La Zisa Castle, the Archeological Museum, San Giovanni degli Eremiti Church, and the Giudecca, including the Synagogue. Lunch is at local restaurant. Enjoy evening at leisure in Palermo.

**HOTEL (B,L)**

**Wednesday, May 20: Monreale & Cefalù**

Enjoy breakfast at the hotel. After breakfast depart to Monreale, a small hill town. We'll enjoy the panorama from the “royal mountain,” a mighty Norman Cathedral hidden further in among the houses, and the distinguished Cloisters. Later we reach Cefalù, founded on a hillside facing the sea near Palermo. It retains its medieval appearance with the center of the town.
located around a Norman cathedral built in the 12th century. As a leading bishopric, it is home to many churches. The homes in the town have interesting architectural detail and the many shops offer an array of local crafts. There is a beautiful long beach with fine sand in the town. After our guided walk, during which we take in the beautiful Cathedral and the Lavatoio, we'll enjoy dinner on a terrace overlooking the sea. Return to Palermo for evening at leisure.

**HOTEL (B,D)**

**Thursday, May 21: Palermo / Segesta / Salt Road**
After breakfast, enjoy the 2nd lecture by Professor Ross Brann. Later, depart for Segesta to visit the marvelous archeological site and the amazing temple. Then we proceed to an Oil Mill and Farmhouse, locally called Baglio, Baglio Fontanasalsa, to experience the Sicilian traditions and have a country style lunch with simple and delicious Sicilian products passed from generation to generation. We will visit the oil mill and learn about the oil production. After lunch, we'll drive among salt pans and Sicilian windmills, seeing numerous dazzlingly white mountains shimmering in the sun. These are not snow-capped mountains but hills of salt, an unreal scenario created by the salt flats, which form a sort of immense chessboard that ranges in color from off-green to pink. Return to Palermo in the afternoon. Evening at leisure.

**HOTEL (B,L)**

**Friday, May 22: Castello Poggio Diana / Agrigento & Siracusa**
After breakfast, check out of the Palermo hotel. We depart by private motor coach for Siracusa where we will stay for three nights. Along the way, we'll stop to visit Castello Poggio Diana, a Norman Castle of the XII century. We will stop then in Agrigento, where our sightseeing tour takes us to the ruins of the Valley of the Temples, which the city's ancient architects erected most of their sacred buildings during the fifth century BC. The four major temples were—and are—stunning in their effect, reflecting the wealth and luxury of ancient Agrigento. The panoramic view of the Valley of the Temples is truly grand, overlooking some of the most impressive Greek ruins of the Mediterranean. The gently rolling hills surrounding the spectacular temples wear a white mantle of blossoms gleaming on hundreds of almond trees, filling the air with the sweet perfume that heralds the arrival of spring. Return to Siracusa. Dinner at the hotel restaurant.

**HOTEL (B,D)**

**Saturday, May 23: Siracusa**
After breakfast, enjoy a 3rd lecture by Professor Ross Brann. Later we tour Siracusa with our local guide. An ancient city, founded by Greeks from Corinth, and once the most important city in the Western World, Siracusa reached its zenith in the 5th century BC when it ruled all of Sicily. Visit the unique Parco Archeologico, whose impressive ruins include the magnificent Greek Theatre, one of the biggest and best preserved in the entire Mediterranean, situated adjacent to a large Roman Coliseum and an ancient quarry possessing such remarkable acoustics that Caravaggio called it “Orecchio de Dionisos” (the ear of Dionysius). Later we visit the beautiful island of Ortygia. We explore the Piazza Archimede, the legendary Fonte Aretusa, and Siracusa's historically unique Duomo, we explore the Jewish Siracusa including a ritual bath at Casa Bianca. We visit the Regional Gallery at palazzo Bellomo and the Archeological Museum Paolo Orsi. Lunch is at local restaurant. Evening at leisure.

**HOTEL (B,L)**

**Sunday, May 24: Taormina**
After breakfast, we depart by bus to visit Taormina. Standing high on Monte Tauro and dominating the two grand, sweeping bays below, Taormina is Sicily's best-known resort and it is a strong contender for the title of most beautiful place on Earth. Taormina forms a balcony overlooking the sea, facing Mount Etna. This climactic resort of worldwide repute has a peaceful atmosphere, beautiful monuments, spectacular views and lovely gardens that invite exploration on foot. The coast below Taormina is fascinating. Our guided walking tour of Taormina includes Via Piazza Vittorio Emanuele, which is on the site of the Roman Forum, the Palazzo Corvaja, the recently unearthed remains of an imperial Roman bath, and the magnificent Teatro Greco, a Roman reconstruction of an earlier Greek theatre. With some free time, enjoy the local cafes or some shopping. In the afternoon, we visit a local winery on the foot of Mount Etna and have our early farewell dinner tasting some great wines. Return to Siracusa in the evening.

**HOTEL (B,D)**

**Monday, May 25: Depart Catania**
After breakfast we depart by private motor coach to the Catania airport for our flight to US. (B)

**HOTEL (B)**