

Sacred Connections October 2017

Lisa and Christine of Mercurial Connections are excited to announce their second Sacred Connections tour of the beautiful regions of Italy and Greece. Come join us on an adventure through the magnificent sacred sites and unique places that leave us spellbound by the secrets that they hold and the enchantment of these rich places.

We would like to guide you through these ancient sites, cities and castles so that we can experience the magic of that leads to our own personal journeys of transformation.

This is a group tour and we will offer group talks and experience as part of the journey. We would love to welcome you...

Day One - Salerno, Italy



Settle into your room at your hotel in Salerno and join us at 6.30pm to meet the group. There will be welcome drinks and nibbles before we step out for the evening for our first meal together. We will share the Italian food, Italian wine and connect as a group. After this we return to the hotel to settle back into our rooms in preparation for our first outing tomorrow.

Day Two - Melfi, Basilicata



Today we will be collected at the hotel and travel to the Castle of Melfi in Basilicata. This is a monument of great importance to southern Italy as its construction dates back to the Normans in the 11th Century. It served as a gateway between Campania and Apulia and had a strategic position to defend from external attacks and was also a refuge for the Norman allies. There are still visible components of the Norman Conquest even though the castle has undergone many changes throughout its lifetime.

Day Three – Benevento



Today is a half day tour of Benevento, Campania, an agricultural area known for products such as vines, olives and tobacco.

The day includes visiting a sacred site with the Arch of Trajan, Santa Sofia Church and a Roman Theatre. Benevento occupies the site of the ancient Beneventum, or originally known as Maleventum or even earlier it was Maloenton. In the Imperial times it was said to be founded by Diomedes after the Trojan War. The Santa Sofia Church in Benevento was declared a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 2011 due to its artistic and cultural significance, along with six other historic buildings inscribed as Longobards in Italy, Places of Power (568-774 A. D.).

The Arch of Trajan is one of the most preserved structures in Campania and was constructed in 114. It was the entrance into Benevento and the Via Traiana, the road built by the Spanish emperor and shortened the path from Rome to Brindisi. There is also the ancient roman theatre to explore next to the Cathedral and Port' Arsa gate. This magnificent building was built by Hadrian and later expanded by Caracalla. It had a diameter of 90 metres and could house up to 10,000 or maybe even 15,000 spectators. This theatre is still currently used for theatre, dance and opera performances.

There is also a bridge, a cryptoporticus (probably an emporium) another arch and the Temple of Isis to explore and the day will provide enough time to investigate this bountiful area, with Santa Sofia and the Cathedral of Santa Maria Assunta. At the highest point of the town is the Castle of Benevento, known as Rocca dei Rettori or Rocca di Manfredi. So the day will be rich with explorations of these ancient structures.

Day Four From Salerno to Matera



Today we pack up and say goodbye to Salerno as we visit Alberobello meaning beautiful tree, a small town of the Metropolitan City of Bari, Apulia. The area is famous for the Trulli buildings of Alberobello, meaning beautiful tree, another UNESCO World Heritage site since 1996. The abundance of calcareous sedimentary material in the area led to these buildings being made of dry stone without requiring mortar. Tonight we head to our hotel to settle in before preparing for the next leg of our journey

Day Five - Sassi Caves – Tuesday October 10th



Today we visit the ancient cave dwellings of the Sassi Caves, houses and the medieval city of Matera. The Sassi originate from a prehistoric troglodyte settlement and are suspected to be the first human settlement in Italy, perhaps as early as 7000BC.

The houses in Sassi are dug into calcarenitic rock which is a rock characteristic to the areas of Basilicata and Apulia. In the 1950's the government forcefully relocated most of the population to areas of the developing modern city.

Day Six – Mentopotum



Today we travel to Mentopontum or Mentapontium, an important city of Magna Graecia, situated on the gulf of Tarentum, near the mouth of the Bradanus (Bradano) River. This was a prosperous ancient Greek Achaean colony from Sybaris and Croton about 700BC and starts quenching our thirst for Greece that is awaiting our arrival. Pythagoras was expelled from the city of Croton and remained at Mentapontum until his death in c. 500. The city sadly declined after 207 when its inhabitants, who had supported Hannibal following his victory at the Battle of Cannae, continued to follow the General into his retreat.

This area is in the Province of Matera, Basilicata. Two temples date back to 570 to 480 BC. We have the Temple of Hera at Tavole

Palatine, which is one of the best preserved monuments of Magna Graecia. The second is dedicated probably to Apollo Lykeios, but only the foundations remain. There is a theatre, tombs and other excavations to explore in this large ancient site.

Day Seven - Italy to Greece



Today we prepare to farewell Italy as we head to the port of Bari. We will have some time to explore the town before boarding our ship as we travel overnight on the ferry heading for the Island of Lefkada. We can relax on the ferry, enjoy a peaceful night's sleep in our cabin and awake in a new country the following morning for the next leg of our sacred journey.

Day Eight – Lefkada



We will arrive at the port of Igoumenitsa, where we will be greeted by our driver, who will be awaiting us at the port. We will drive to Lefkada and on arrival enjoy breakfast until our rooms are ready.

During the morning we will take a bus tour of this beautiful island and on returning to our hotel will have free time until tomorrow.

Day Nine – Lefkada our day trip



Today we take the opportunity to unwind as we take a cruise around Lefkada island this cruise will incorporate beautiful beaches, sites and history of this stunning island, a day to be treasured.

Day Ten – Journey to Patras



Today we will leave Lefkada and travel to the exciting city of Patras, on the way we will take in some of the beauty Greece has to offer. Visiting the Acherousian Lake as the place where the dead began their descent to Hades, and associate Ephyra city located further north, with the ancient cult of the god of death. The nekromanteion attracted people wishing to meet the souls of the dead as these were able to foresee the future after having left their bodies.

Day Eleven – Olympia



After breakfast we will board our bus and travel to the ancient city of Olympia, the home of the first Olympic Games. At this special site we visit the archaeological site and museum and have lunch in the town. The site of Olympia is in a valley in the Peloponnesus, inhabited since prehistoric times. Here we worship the great god, Zeus. There are temples remaining and sports structures from the games that were held every four years from 776BC. The Archaeological Museum of Olympia is an amazing museum, one of the greatest in Greece.

Day Twelve - Patras day trip



Today we will explore the beautiful city of Patras. There is the medieval Patras Castle, Roman Odeon, the Roman amphitheatre, Roman aquaduct, the Turkish baths and the Patras lighthouse. You will be free afterwards to visit the old town yourself and discover its hidden treasures.

Day Thirteen - Corinth Canal & Temple of Sonion



Today we farewell Patras traveling by bus to the sacred city of Athena. We will visit the Corinth Canal on the way, a breathtaking view of the canal can be seen and its beautiful waters. When we arrive in Athens settle into your room at the Hotel Hermes. In the afternoon we will all meet in the foyer and we will board a bus to take us to the sacred site of Sounion. We will explore the amazing

Temple of Poseidon and watch the sunset. This is a spectacular view at a powerful site. Take your time to reflect on the journey we shared as tomorrow is our last full day together.



Sounion (Temple of Poseidon)

Day Fourteen – Athens



Today Lisa and Christine will take you on a guided walking tour of Athens. The afternoon is yours to visit the Acropolis, New Acropolis Museum or explore around the Plaka or Old Town. In the evening we will meet in the foyer and walk to our last meal together, celebrating and revisiting some of our experiences that we have shared together.