

Art & Archaeology ITALY'S SICILY

WITH DR. THOMAS F.X. NOBLE



FAR
HORIZONS

ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND CULTURAL TRIPS

Updated April 2025





SICILY: ART & ARCHAEOLOGY

with Dr. Thomas F.X. Noble



Experience UNESCO World Heritage Sites, Including Agrigento, The Villa Romana Del Casale, The Late Baroque Towns of the Val Di Noto, Syracuse, and Majestic Mt. Etna

Embark on a captivating and educational tour with Far Horizons as we present our uniquely curated trip focused on Sicily's art and archaeology. This immersive 14-day tour promises to be a magnificent voyage through ancient history. Sicily's diverse landscape is dotted with grand monuments – a testament to the waves of conquering armies that once claimed this strategic island as their launching pad for imperial aspirations.

From Phoenicians to Greeks, Romans to Spaniards, Arabs to Crusaders, and the U.S. forces in World War II, each left their indelible marks. This Sicily tour includes exploration of the island's UNESCO World Heritage sites, such as the Valley of the Temples in Agrigento, the Villa Romana del Casale, and five enchanting Late Baroque towns of the Val di Noto: Catania, Caltagirone, Modica, Ragusa, and Noto. We will also visit historical Syracuse and the majestic Mt. Etna.

Traveling in a small, intimate group, you will wander down cobblestone streets, each turn revealing a new slice of Sicilian life. Delight in traditional Sicilian cuisine in charming, authentic restaurants and trattorias that serve dishes steeped in centuries of tradition. This is a Sicily educational tour packed with local delights and cultural gems.

Our educational tour of Sicily also showcases the artistic side of Italy, making it perfect for those interested in art vacations in Italy. Experience the stunning Greco-Roman theaters at Segesta, Selinunte, and Taormina. Marvel at the magnificent Norman Cathedrals in Cefalù, Palermo, and Monreale, offering a peek into the island's religious history.

Embrace the rich, layered history of Sicily and experience the blend of cultures that shaped its unique identity.

Daily Itinerary



Day 1

Arrive in Catania, Sicily, with City Tour

Arrive in Catania, Sicily's second-largest city and one of the UNESCO World Heritage late Baroque towns. Taste some of the city's amazing street food as we enjoy a walking tour of the city.

Overnight in Catania for one night. (L/D)

Day 2

Cefalù, Palermo

Begin today with a drive to Cefalù, captured in the Oscar-winning film "Cinema Paradiso." The Town's Duomo, or Cathedral, designated among UNESCO's Arab-Norman Palermo and the Cathedral Churches, is an incredible structure begun in 1131 and built in the Arab-Norman style. It is dedicated to the Redeemer which is reflected in the giant mosaic of Christ Pantocrator in the great cupola. Explore the cathedral's cloister and admire the Byzantine motifs of the capitals that adorn the paired columns.

In the afternoon, travel to Palermo and visit the recently excavated Punic Necropolis which dates to the 7th century BC.

Overnight for two nights in the luxurious Grand Hotel et Des Palmes, located in the heart of the city. (B/L/D)

Day 3

Palermo, Opera di Pupi

Once the Norman capital of Sicily, Palermo is an architectural testament to the island's multicultural heritage and a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Start at the fascinating Palazzo dei Normanni, the royal palace built in the 12th century for the Norman King Roger II. Within the complex are displays revealing the city's history, from its Phoenician past to modernity, as well as the Cappella Palatina, the royal chapel. Adorned with impressive glittering Norman-Byzantine mosaics and capped with a muqarnas ceiling, an Arab honeycomb stalactite roofing system, the chapel is one of the finest examples of Arab-Norman art in Palermo.

Continue on to the church of Santa Maria dell'Ammiraglio, 'Saint Mary of the Admiral', named after its founder George of Antioch, the admiral of King Roger. More commonly known as La Martorana, this Romanesque structure dates back to 1143. The extraordinary Norman-Byzantine mosaics that cover the interior include a depiction of King Roger II being crowned by Christ.

Nearby, we view the small Chiesa di San Cataldo, the exterior of which features Saracen-style red domes. Stop in a workshop to learn about puppeteers and how puppets are created. In the evening, enjoy an optional traditional Sicilian puppet show, listed by UNESCO as an Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity. (B/L)



Daily Itinerary *(cont'd)*

Day 4

Monreale, Segesta

A short drive this morning takes us to Monreale, another church designated among the Cathedral Churches. The Cattedrale di Santa Maria Nuova was begun in 1174 by order of King William II and was intended to outshine the Cappella Palatina which was built by his grandfather. The interior of this building is spectacularly decorated from floor to ceiling with shimmering Byzantine-style gold mosaics. Towering over the apse is an imposing depiction of Christ Pantocrator in blue robes with his hand blessing the people below.

In the afternoon, move on to Segesta, one of the three major cities of the indigenous Elymi people. The city contains two of the best-preserved Classical monuments in Sicily and they bear testimony of Segesta's one-time prosperity – a 5th-century BC Doric temple and a theater from the 3rd-2nd century BC with a magnificent view over the landscape towards the nearby Gulf of Castellamare.

Continue to Marsala where we spend two nights. (B/L/D)



Cathedral of Monreale



Erice

Day 5

Erice, Mozia

The origins of the lovely town of Erice are steeped in myth as its foundation is associated with the Greek hero Eryx. Perched on an enormous rock that rises steeply from the sea at the westernmost tip of the island, it is one of the last vestiges of medieval Sicily. Surrounded by a pine forest, protected from the world by imposing ramparts and city walls, and shadowed by an impressive castle, it is without a doubt the island's most picturesque town.

We will walk the narrow, cobbled streets to view the Norman Castello del Venere, built on the remains of a temple to Venus. Also, see the Chiesa di San Giovanni Battista with its 12th-century portal and valuable works of sacred art. Conclude the city visit at the Gothic Chiesa Matrice with its outstanding rose window.

In the afternoon, we travel by ferry through the area's salt pans to the small island of Mozia, ancient Motya, and the Whitaker Museum which houses an impressive collection of Phoenician artifacts. In the evening return to Erice with dinner on our own. (B/L)

Daily Itinerary *(cont'd)*

Agrigento



Day 6

Mazara, Private tour of Selinunte

Drive to the charming fishing village of Mazara del Vallo and the former church of Saint Egidio, now a museum. Here we will view the Hellenistic bronze statue of the Satiro Danzante, the Dancing Satyr, found in the sea in 1997 by local fishermen. Greater than life-size, the stunning 2,500-year-old sculpture represents Silenus, a companion and tutor to the wine god Dionysus.

Continue to ancient Selinunte, named for the wild celery that still grows on the surrounding fertile plain. This was the wealthiest of Sicily's Greek colonies and it is not only impressive for the acropolis and numerous temples but also for its long history of conflict with other Greek cities of the era. Here, we will meet with the archaeological staff for a private viewing of the ongoing excavations.

Drive to Favara, a town near Agrigento that has transformed its historic center into a contemporary art complex.

Overnight for one night in the charming 4-star Alba Palace. (B/L/D)

Day 7

Agrigento, Piazza Armerina

Begin this morning in Agrigento, a UNESCO World Heritage site. The city was founded by Greek colonists from Gela and went on to become one of the major cities of Magna Graecia. This archaeological complex, which includes the magnificent Valley of the Temples, contains some of the largest and most well-preserved ancient Greek constructions found outside of Greece.

In the afternoon, visit the nearby Regional Archaeological Museum before continuing on to Piazza Armerina to visit the Villa Romana del Casale, another UNESCO World Heritage site. After nearly 1,000 years of use, this Roman luxury villa was destroyed by flood in the 12th century. The mud preserved the superb mosaic floors throughout the villa which have been carefully restored, depicting mythical figures, hunting scenes, and the famous "Bikini Girls." Overnight for one night in the Agriturismo Gigliotto, a traditional farmhouse inside a 15th-century monastery in Piazza Armerina. (B/L/D)

Selinunte



Daily Itinerary *(cont'd)*

Day 8

Morgantina and the Aidone Museum, Caltagirone

Our first stop today is Morgantina, a site that has been inhabited during several periods from the late Bronze Age to the Roman Republic, and the Aidone Museum that houses the finds from the various excavations, including a renowned Venus statue and the Morgantina silver.

Continue to Caltagirone, famous for over 1,000 years for its production of vibrantly colored ceramics. Prehistoric earthenware has been found in the surrounding hills, and local potters were world-famous during the Middle Ages; today the tradition is still maintained. Here, walk up the dazzling Santa Maria del Monte Stairway, built in 1608, where each of the 142 steps is decorated with local tiles.

Our final stop is Ragusa, one of the UNESCO World Heritage Late Baroque Towns of the Val di Noto, where we will spend two nights. (B/L/D)

Morgantina



Day 9

Modica, Ragusa

We depart this morning for Modica, another UNESCO World Heritage Late Baroque Town, and enjoy a visit to the small Franco Libero Belgiorio Museum which has a unique collection of local Greek artifacts. Move on to the Duomo di San Giorgio which impresses with its Baroque splendor. The nearby Duomo di San Pietro, constructed in the 14th century and rebuilt in the 18th, boasts a Baroque style enriched by Rococò ornaments. Its beautiful facade depicts the 12 Apostles.

In the afternoon we return to explore Ragusa which has two distinct sections, the lower and older town of Ragusa Ibla, and the higher and newer Ragusa Superiore.

Dinner is on our own to savor one of Ragusa's fine restaurants. (B/L)

Modica



Daily Itinerary *(cont'd)*

Cattedrale di San Nicolò, Noto



Day 10

Noto, Akrai, Transfer to Syracuse

Today takes us into Noto in southeastern Sicily, the heart of UNESCO's Late Baroque Towns of the Val di Noto. Devastated by the 1693 earthquake, the towns of Val di Noto rose from the ashes and were rebuilt in the 18th century with splendid monuments, churches, and distinguished palaces in the Baroque style. The central Cattedrale di San Nicolò which was completed in 1776 has unique Neo-Classical elements woven into its design.

In the afternoon, we continue to Palazzolo Acreide and visit the hilltop Greek Theater that is part of the settlement of Akrai.

Next, we stop at the Castello Eurialo, the Fortress of Euryalus, constructed in 402 BC by Dionysius I as protection against the Carthaginians. Today, it is the finest surviving example of Greek military architecture in Sicily.

Depart for Syracuse and overnight for two nights on Ortygia, a small island that is the historical center of the city of Syracuse. (B/L/D)

Day 11

Syracuse, Gozzo boat tour of Syracuse Bay

The most important Greek city in Magna Graecia and a UNESCO World Heritage Site, Syracuse was first colonized by the Corinthians in the 8th century BC. Our explorations begin in the Neapolis Archaeological Park where we see the great Altar of Hieron built for the public celebration of animal sacrifices; the Greek Theater, one of the largest in the Greek world and still in use today; and a stunning 2nd-century Roman amphitheater. Walk through the latomie, great stone quarries that provided the building materials for the Greek city and later served as an ancient prison. At one end lies the Orecchio di Dionisio, the Ear of Dionysius, a cave with an ear-shaped entrance and unusual acoustics. Legend says that Dionysius listened at the top of the quarry to hear what the slaves were plotting below.

Continue to the Paolo Orsi Archaeological Museum where Sicily's long history can be seen in the artifacts excavated from beneath the city.

After a private boat ride on Siracusa Bay, this evening's dinner is on our own. (B/L)

Greek Theater, Akrai



Daily Itinerary *(cont'd)*

Day 12

Ortygia, Transfer to Taormina

The oldest sector of Syracuse is on the island of Ortygia. The island's long history is still visible in many buildings, particularly the Temple of Apollo which dates to the 6th century BC.

Leave Ortygia for the nearby 4th-century Catacombs of San Giovanni Evangelista and marvel at the frescoes decorating the cavern walls above the ancient crypts.

Drive on to Taormina to enjoy the evening at our own pace. Overnight for two nights in a hotel overlooking the sea in Taormina. (B/L)

Temple of Apollo, Ortygia



Mount Etna

Day 13

Taormina, Mount Etna

Start with a walking tour of Taormina, where we will wander the streets from the Piazza del Duomo, the heart of the town. We will climb to the Roman theater, the second largest in Sicily with its magnificent view of the sea and Mt. Etna. A short drive takes us to Mt. Etna, the still-smoking volcano towering over the surrounding landscape, its snow-capped peak visible for many miles.

After lunch at a local winery, we wind through the fantastic landscapes of rugged lava rivers marking the flanks of the volcano. Enjoy some free time to explore the meandering streets of this charming town to search for last-minute gifts to take home before joining the rest of the group for a farewell dinner at one of the city's fine restaurants. (B/L/D)

Daily Itinerary *(cont'd)*

Day 14

Depart Italy

Transfer to the airport for our return flights home. (B)

PLEASE NOTE: This is a sample itinerary that is typical of our trip offerings. In general, you can expect a very similar program, though days may be swapped depending on availability, opening hours, and other affecting factors.

Pre and Post Trip Extensions

Far Horizons offers pre or post extensions for many of our trips. We can also arrange extra nights at the arrival and departure hotel should you wish to arrive early or depart later. Please contact us for details.

Villa Romana del Casale



Why Take This Tour?

**Led by Professor
Thomas F. X. Noble,
lecturer for
The Great Courses**

**Private tour of
Selinunte by the
director of the
archaeological project**

**Private visit to a
puppeteer workshop**

**See seven of Sicily's
UNESCO World
Heritage Sites:**

Agrigento, Opera di Pupi
(Sicilian Puppet theater),
Norman Palermo,
Villa Romana del Casale,
Baroque Towns of the
Val di Noto, Syracuse,
Mount Etna

**Maximum 14
participants**



Tour Information

Pricing

For current pricing, please visit farhorizons.com and navigate to our trip page.

Inclusions

Price based on double occupancy and includes:

- Internal flights during the trip (if applicable/unless otherwise noted)
- The accompaniment of your scholar throughout the entire trip
- Local English-speaking guide
- Hotel accommodations (3 or 4 stars; or best available based in the area)
- Ground transportation
- Airport transfers for arrivals and departures
- Most meals as noted in the itinerary
- Entry fees to all included sites and museums
- Gratuities to guides, drivers, and restaurant and hotel staff
- Coordination for any private presentations or tours

Trip prices are based on a minimum number of participants. If this minimum number is not met, trip prices are subject to change. Should the prices need to change, Far Horizons will reach out to registered guests to discuss directly.

Single Supplement

Should a roommate be requested and one not be available, the single supplement will be charged.

Exclusions

- International round trip airfare
- A separate donation check of \$150.00 per person to a designated donation project
- Passport or visa fees
- Required vaccines or tests
- Airport or departure taxes
- Alcoholic drinks, beverages or food not included on set menus
- Excess baggage charges
- Personal tips and hotel incidental expenses
- Laundry or other items of a personal nature

Donation Checks

As a tour company that benefits from the cultural and natural riches of our destinations, we have a policy of donating to the scientific and cultural sites and projects which we visit. This has created a bond between Far Horizons and the academic and local communities that has helped us establish an extensive list of lecturers and contacts in each of our destinations. We ask that each participant donate to the noteworthy project we designate. The donation amount is \$150.00 per person. Note that the donation is required as part of your registration for the trip and that it is non-refundable.

Exchange Rate Fluctuations

Prices are based on currency exchange rates keeping below a projected level. While it is unlikely, if the exchange rates should change substantially, Far Horizons reserves the right to charge an additional amount to the trip cost.

Registration

A deposit of \$1000 per person is required along with your registration & health forms, which will be linked in the email confirmation you receive once you pay your deposit on our booking platform. Final payment is due 120 days before departure. Prior to departure, you will be sent a reading list and a tour bulletin containing travel information.



Chiesa di San Cataldo

Tour Information *(cont'd)*

Cancellation

Cancellations received in writing at least 120 days before departure will receive a refund less a \$500 per person administrative fee. Cancellations received less than 120 days before the departure date will not receive a refund. If for any reason you are unable to complete the trip, Far Horizons will not reimburse any fees. Upon registering for the tour, the purchase of travel protection with both trip cancellation and emergency evacuation is strongly advised. Links to recommended insurance policies will be included in the email you receive confirming receipt of your deposit.

Expectations During Travel

Our trips are designed for flexible, energetic people who like to be active, have a spirit of adventure and a positive attitude. We have designed this trip to be as comfortable as possible, while also aiming to visit some remote or unique sites that other companies do not attempt to include in their itineraries. There may be days where we have very long drives and the conditions of the roads may vary. Hotels and transportation in some remote areas may not be up to western standards. There may be times when no bellhops are available; please pack with the understanding that you need to be able to handle your own luggage at times. Sometimes we may be walking over uneven trails for a mile or more; hiking boots are strongly recommended. Not every meal will be haute cuisine and several lunches may be picnics or box lunches. By maintaining a flexible attitude we will soon be captivated by the beauty of the natural scenery, the hospitality of the local people, and the fascinating sites we will see. Your flexibility and patience will be appreciated.

Air Ticketing

International round trip flights are not included in the cost of the trip. If Far Horizons must change the trip dates or cancel the trip for any reason, Far Horizons is not responsible for any air ticket you may have purchased. Please send your complete air schedule as soon as you have it. NOTE: Please contact Far Horizons if you would like for us to handle your air ticketing.

Private Tours and Talks

The private tours of archaeological sites and talks by specialists are scheduled in advance and include a donation to each. Specialists working at these sites are excited about showing their work to interested enthusiasts. However, please be aware that there may be times when the director or a member of the staff may not be on site when our groups arrive due to other commitments.

Walking and Standing

Far Horizons expects all participants to be physically active and able to walk and climb independently throughout the full touring days. This includes walking over uneven terrain (uphill and downhill) for 2 miles or more at each site. You should expect to be on your feet for much of each day, averaging as much as 5 miles of walking per day. **As such, each participant should be able to walk unaided at a pace of 3 miles per hour for at least an hour at a time, and to stand unsupported for at least 60 minutes.** Bearing this in mind, we suggest that, if you have not already done so, you begin walking several miles every day, ideally including stairs and hills. If you have questions about your ability to keep up with the group or the strenuous nature of this trip, please contact the Far Horizons staff.



Travel Insurance

We strongly recommend that you consider purchasing travel insurance. Should illness or an unforeseen event force you to cancel your travel plans after your final payment or during your trip, it would be doubly unfortunate to incur a significant financial loss. Trip cancellation protection will enable you to be reimbursed for the loss of your payment if you are unable to travel for any of the covered reasons in the "Outline of Coverage" section, or should you have an accident or suffer from any medical conditions during the trip.

Far Horizons offers customized protection plans through Travel Insured International (a Crum & Forster Company) with the following benefits:

- Trip Cancellation and Trip Interruption for covered reasons
- Trip Delay
- Baggage Loss and Baggage Delay
- Emergency Medical Expenses and Emergency Medical Evacuation
- 24-Hour Accidental Death & Dismemberment
- 24-Hour Travel Assistance & Concierge Services
- Option to upgrade to 'Cancel for Any Reason (CFAR)

We recommend reviewing the language in detail so you are aware of specific parameters; Depending on the policy, to waive the Pre-Existing Medical Condition Exclusion or to upgrade to CFAR coverage, the plan must be purchased within 14 to 21 days of the initial trip deposit, full trip cost must be insured, and traveler is medically fit at time of plan purchase. Otherwise, coverage may be purchased at any time prior to departure.

To obtain a personalized quote and/or purchase a plan through Far Horizons/Travel Insured International, simply click [HERE](#). For specific questions regarding the Worldwide Protector Plan, please contact Travel Insured International's Customer Care Center at 1-800-243-3174 or by email at customercare@travelinsured.com, and refer to Far Horizons' account number: 54070.

Itinerary Changes

Changes in our itinerary, accommodations, and transportation schedules may occur while traveling. While we are committed to keeping as close to the published details as possible, sometimes it is simply not possible. Weather events, government affairs, or other factors out of our control sometimes come into play. A good book to read as well as patience, flexible attitude, and a sense of humor are essential.



Ragusa



Meet Your Study Leader...

Dr. Thomas F.X. Noble

Thomas F. X. Noble received his MA in History and Latin and his PhD in Medieval History from Michigan State University. He is presently Andrew V. Tackes Professor of History Emeritus at the University of Notre Dame.

A popular speaker for [The Great Courses](#) (formerly The Teaching Company), Professor Noble is a lecturer on ten different series including the 48 lecture course, The Foundations of Western Civilization. Dr. Noble is the author, coauthor, or editor of 12 books and has published more than 60 articles, chapters, and essays including *From Roman Provinces to Medieval Kingdoms*, and his coauthored textbook, *Western Civilization: The Continuing Experiment*, which is in its 7th edition.

Professor Noble has held fellowships from the National Endowment for the Humanities and research grants from the American Philosophical Society. He has been the invited speaker at many national and international conferences including in Italy, the Netherlands, Germany, France, and Scotland. Dr. Noble was the recipient of both the Edmund P. Joyce, C.S.C. and Charles Sheedy Awards for Excellence in Teaching from Notre Dame, and was awarded the Alumni Distinguished Professor Award and a David Harrison III Award for outstanding undergraduate advising, both from the University of Virginia.

Segesta

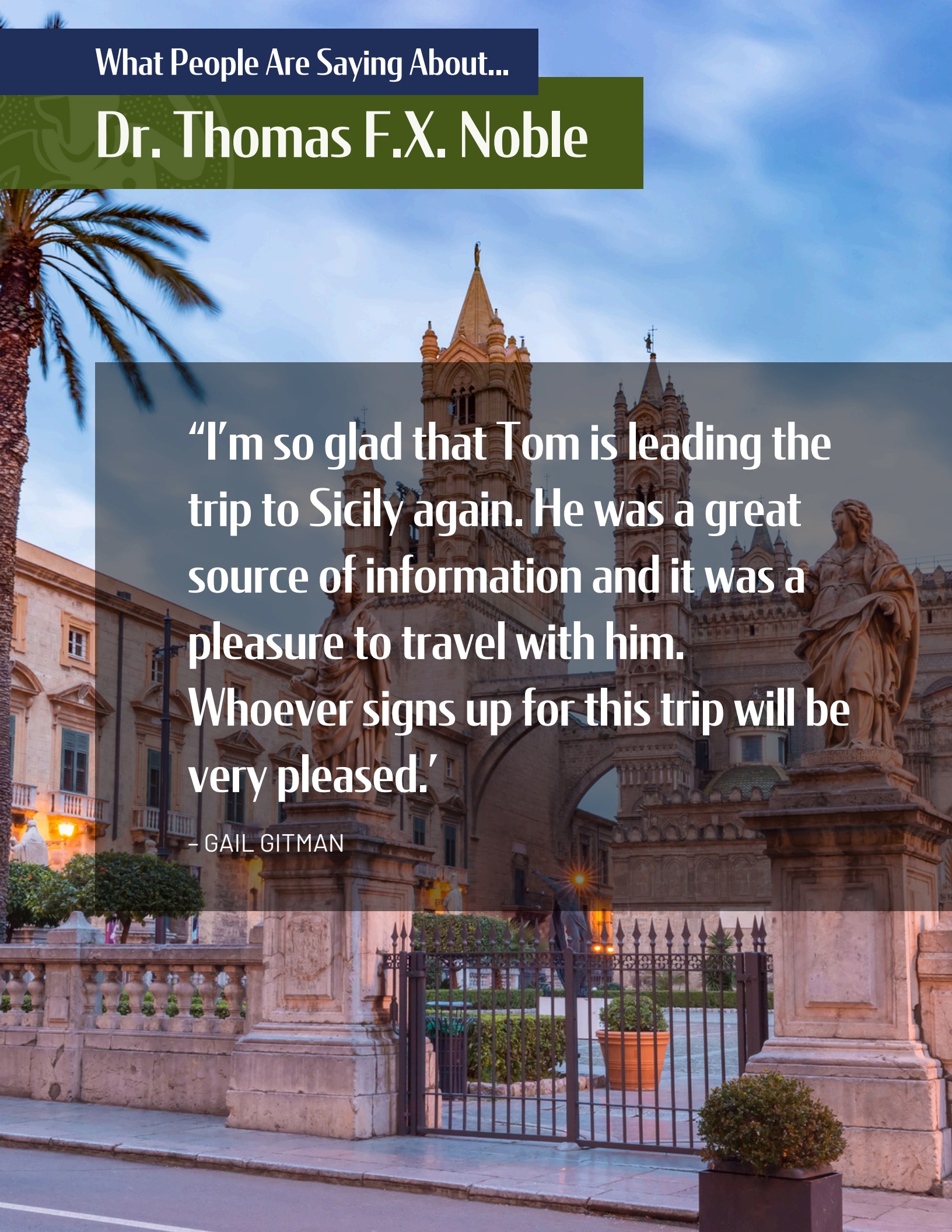


What People Are Saying About...

Dr. Thomas F.X. Noble

“I’m so glad that Tom is leading the trip to Sicily again. He was a great source of information and it was a pleasure to travel with him. Whoever signs up for this trip will be very pleased.”

– GAIL GITMAN



Journeys That Change Your Perspective

✦ **PhD-LEADERS: Your Scholar Is Your Travel Companion**

We place scholars at the heart of each journey, accompanying you throughout your trip. Our experts transform passive tourism into immersive intellectual adventures, offering insights into ancient civilizations through narratives shared over meals, during site explorations, and in evening discussions.

✦ **EXCLUSIVE ACCESS: Venture Beyond the Velvet Ropes**

We negotiate entry to restricted archaeological sites, private artifact collections, and untold cultural stories, creating experiences that transcend traditional tourism and reveal hidden historical wonders.

✦ **TRANSFORMATIVE TRAVEL: Artifacts to Epiphanies**

We believe the most meaningful souvenirs are invisible. Our expertly guided explorations of ancient sites catalyze deeper understandings of human ingenuity and cultural complexity, creating moments of clarity that forever change how you see past civilizations and contemporary society.

✦ **KINDRED COMMUNITY: Small Groups, Lasting Bonds**

We foster intimate interactions where archaeological passion creates unexpected connections. Through shared discoveries at remote ruins, animated discussions over local cuisine, and collective moments of wonder, our travelers forge friendships that extend far beyond the journey's end.

✦ **BESPOKE JOURNEYS: Crafted, Never Common**

We architect each trip as a masterwork of scholarly travel, balancing intellectual depth with comfort and discovery. Our itineraries reflect research, planning, and refinement to ensure every moment offers something meaningful for the curious mind that standard tours simply cannot deliver.

✦ **LEGACY OF EXCELLENCE: Countless Returning Travelers**

Our 40+ years of archaeological exploration and support for preservation have fostered a deeply personal relationship with our guests, resulting in an exceptionally high return rate that speaks to our individualized attention, and the lasting connections we create with each member of our travel family.



READY TO TRAVEL? ITALY'S SICILY

WITH DR. THOMAS F.X. NOBLE

Email with Questions

journeys@farhorizons.com

Book Now

[click to visit our booking page](#)

See Full Details

farhorizons.com



FAR HORIZONS

ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND CULTURAL TRIPS

