

Cruising the Mediterranean: Sicily, Sardinia, and Mallorca – with Smithsonian Journeys

From **3/10/2025**
to **10/10/2025**

Ship: **L'AUSTRAL**

From **Valletta**
to **Tarragona**



Shore excursion in each port of call + transfers included

In alliance with Smithsonian Journeys.

This cruise is part of a collection of PONANT voyages that are specially-tailored for English-speaking travelers who want to engage with the world. In addition to the usual elements of the PONANT experience, the listed price for these voyages includes transfers to and from the ship, talks and discussions aboard ship by world class experts, and a shore excursion or activity in each port of call that encourages guests to embrace the sights, sounds, tastes, and smells of the local environment and culture.

This voyage in the heart of the Mediterranean explores four islands that, despite their differences, share a history of successive waves of civilizations that have washed over them from prehistoric times to the present. Phoenicians, Greeks, Romans, Arabs, Byzantines, Italians, British, and Spanish—all have left their mark on the language, art, architecture, and cuisine of Sicily, Sardinia, Menorca, and Mallorca.

From **Valletta**, Malta, your discovery of these very special islands begins with two days on the largest of them, as you visit the **Sicilian** cities of Trapani and Palermo. Rounding Sicily's western tip, you arrive in **Trapani** for an excursion into the countryside and the ancient Doric temple of **Segesta** or to medieval **Erice**, perched on a high triangular plateau sloping down to the sea.

L'Austral then brings you to **Palermo**, founded by the Phoenicians in 827 BC and becoming one of Europe's greatest cities in the 12th century, when the Normans took control. Here you will visit **Cappella Palatina**, a Byzantine-Arab-Norman structure featuring dazzling mosaics and magnificent inlaid marble floors and walls. Or drive to nearby **Monreale** to explore its famed **Norman cathedral**.

Cagliari, Sardinia's capital, is your gateway to the **archaeological site of Nora**. Founded by Phoenicians in the 8th century BC, it was subsequently taken over by Carthaginians, then by Romans. Explore the remains of **Carthaginian warehouses**, buildings from the time of the **Roman Republic**, a Carthaginian-Roman temple, large **baths with splendid mosaics**, and a **theater**,

almost intact, dating to the time of the **Roman Empire**.

On **Menorca**, second largest of the Balearic Islands, visit **Mahon**, the island's main port, where a tour of the town reveals Menorca's varied history through its architecture—classical Georgian sash-windowed town houses sharing pride of place with traditional Spanish homes. Visit the **Museum of Menorca**, and then drive to Torralba d'en Salord, a large and **well-preserved Bronze Age *talayotic* settlement** recently designated a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

In **Palma de Mallorca** on the island of Mallorca, explore the Gothic-style **Bellver Castle**, one of only a handful of circular castles in Europe, or board a **vintage train** through the orange and olive groves, almond and locust-bean trees, lush villages, and pine-covered mountains that define the island's landscape.

Your voyage ends in vibrant **Tarragona**, Spain, just down the coast from vibrant Barcelona.



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YOUR STOPOVERS :

VALLETTA

Embarkation 3/10/2025 From 4:00 pm to 5:00 pm

Departure 3/10/2025 at 6:00 pm

The whole of the Maltese capital Valletta is **UNESCO World Heritage** listed and occupies a peninsula in the north-east of the island. From the fountain of Tritons to Saint-Elme fort, there are as many majestic streets as there are narrow staircase vennels to explore. The painted loggia and carved corbels on the tall houses will accompany you in your explorations, and you'll rarely be bothered by traffic. You can visit the Grandmasters palace decorated with coats of arms and frescoes. **Saint-John's cathedral** and the ramparts which have guarded the city since the 16th century are also among the most emblematic sites of the city. Arranged in terraces, the **Barrakka Gardens** will punctuate your promenade with a green and floral experience.

TRAPANI, SICILY

Arrival 4/10/2025 midday

Departure 4/10/2025 late afternoon

Bathed in the cobalt waters of the **Tyrrhenian sea**, Trapani is the former port of the Greek city of **Erice**, boasting a privileged natural position in western **Sicily**. As you wander through its little streets, you will discover a secular cultural heritage, bearing witness to the many influences of civilisations that came here: **San Lorenzo Cathedral**, Maria Santissima Annunziata sanctuary, the fountain of Triton. On the shaded restaurant terraces, savour some fresh fish from the morning's catch. Or else you can opt for a seafood couscous, a culinary legacy from their Arab neighbours.

PALERMO, SICILY

Arrival 5/10/2025 early morning

Departure 5/10/2025 late afternoon

Palermo is the guardian of the Sicilian soul. Many have been attracted to this city, the largest capital of the Italian islands. Phoenicians, Carthaginians, Romans, Byzantines, Arabs, Normans... Palermo is a rich culmination of so many cultural influences as seen in the Moorish designs on the **cathedral**, and the Byzantine mosaics of the **Palatine chapel**, which is itself housed within the precincts of the **Norman palace**. You will fall under the spell of the palaces, **baroque splendours** that grace the town with their obsolete beauty. It is thrilling to stumble upon one of those fabulous markets, high in colour, and headily picturesque.

CAGLIARI, SARDINIA

Arrival 6/10/2025 midday
Departure 6/10/2025 evening

The capital of Sardinia, **Cagliari**, like Rome, is built on seven hills. Its Sardinian name means “castle”, in reference to the citadel, its historic centre, which dominates the city. The old ramparts are now pleasant panoramic terraces bordering picturesque streets. The city hosted the Nuragic, Phoenician, Roman and Byzantine civilisations before the rein of the Spanish Hapsburgs and the House of Savoy. The monuments of Cagliari bear the traces of these successive dominations, such as the Bastion of Saint-Rémy or the **Sainte-Marie Cathedral**. On the sea front, Art Nouveau-style public monuments give way to the Poetto beach, a magnificent stretch of sand that is 8 kilometres long.

AT SEA

Arrival 7/10/2025
Departure 7/10/2025

During your journey at sea, make the most of the many services and activities on board. Treat yourself to a moment of relaxation in the spa or stay in shape in the fitness centre. Depending on the season, let yourself be tempted by the swimming pool or a spot of sunbathing. This journey without a port of call will also be an opportunity to enjoy the conferences or shows proposed on board, depending on the activities offered, or to do some shopping in the boutique or to meet the PONANT photographers in their dedicated space. As for lovers of the open sea, they will be able to visit the ship's upper deck to admire the spectacle of the waves and perhaps be lucky enough to observe marine species. A truly enchanted interlude, combining comfort, rest and entertainment.

MAHON, BALEARIC ISLANDS

Arrival 8/10/2025 early morning
Departure 8/10/2025 early evening

You will be welcomed by the colourful houses of **Mahon**, its narrow streets and pretty squares that appear as you stroll around this richly contrasting city. Mahon reveals its different neighbourhoods, alternating between monuments, villas and white buildings. Discover the **Santa Maria church**, a building of neo-gothic inspiration, rebuilt in the 18th Century. It is worth a visit to see its monumental organ with more than 3,000 pipes and four keyboards. Around the Carmen church you will find a **local market**, full of stands selling *avarcas*, typical Menorcan sandals originally made by peasants. Let yourself fall under the spell of this Mediterranean treasure.

PALMA DE MALLORCA, BALEARIC ISLANDS

Arrival 9/10/2025 early morning
Departure 9/10/2025 early evening

Palma de Mallorca will reveal its many treasures: idyllic coves, majestic limestone cliffs that plunge into the clear sapphire- and turquoise-coloured waters of the Mediterranean, and vast plains planted with almond trees, olive trees and vineyards. When your ship calls at the capital of the Balearic Islands, take a walk to discover its emblematic monuments, such as its **famous cathedral**, and amble through its old streets. Here, like a painting, the island's historical heritage forms a backdrop to the lively and warm cosmopolitan atmosphere of the Mediterranean.

TARRAGONA

Arrival 10/10/2025 early morning

Disembarkation 10/10/2025 at 8:00 am

Tarragona is situated on the Costa Dorada, in the south of Spain's Catalonia region. Known as Tarraco in Roman times, the city boasts very important archaeological and architectural vestiges that are magnificently well preserved. These earned it a place on the UNESCO World Heritage list in 2000. Do not miss this opportunity to visit **the Roman amphitheatre**, which is located on a beautiful natural site by the sea and is exceptionally well preserved. A stroll through the streets of the old medieval town to the cathedral, which was completed in the 14th century, is a wonderful way to end your visit to this welcoming city.