
Sicilian Palimpsest: Cultural Memory of the Mediterranean

March 10 through 25, 2016 (including travel days)

Island nations are special and unique places. In the company of Sicily we think of Ceylon, Formosa, Cyprus and Cuba, all places where the *genus loci* is unusually distinct and where the cultural and historical layers are unusually rich and vivid. Sicily, like many of these other examples, also had the good fortune to find itself at the center of the known world during much of its history. Trade routes

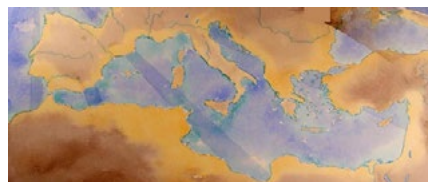


Agrigento, Temple of Concord

by sea and by land are great conduits for the transfer of civilizations across the globe. While the Silk Route connected east with west, the Mediterranean was civilization's maritime conduit from the time of the Phoenicians on to the modern era, and Sicily found itself at the center of it in such a position that ships passing from Spain or the Atlantic towards Constantinople or from Europe to Africa could not avoid it and were drawn to its shores (see map below). It is not surprising that many of the places of Ulysses' adventures described in Homer's *Odyssey* take place on the "Island of the Sun".

Sicily witnessed and bears the stamp of all the major civilizations that the Mediterranean cradled: Phoenicians, Greeks, Romans, Byzantines, Arabs,

Normans, the Holy Roman Empire, and finally the Italians as they moved from a collection of independent kingdoms to one nation. Even then, preserving its island independence or insularity, Sicily maintains its distinct identity today both culturally and politically. These civilizations each left important visual stylistic traces, which we find in the major architectural, urban and artistic monuments. Classical temples, open-air theaters, villas adorned with mosaics and frescoes, magnificently adorned churches and chapels, Islamic cloisters, and Baroque cathedrals are all found in abundance.



Islands are a particular kind of bell jar when it comes to the shaping and melding of diverse civilizations, perhaps because the geography confines them close together to cross-pollinate, whereas on the mainland, different civilizations can just move on to a new patch of virgin ground, leaving the spot previously hallowed unchanged. So, in Sicily it is not unusual to find a classical temple that has been re-cycled as a cathedral like the one in Ortigia in Siracusa where Baroque icing surrounds robust Doric columns. Even the cuisine, always regionally unique in Italy, here reflects these many cultural influences, making it one of Italy's most exotic and varied.

Added to these layers of history and culture the topography and geography

of Sicily are just as varied and dramatic. The terrain is rarely flat (only in the west end of the Island around Trapani and Marsala) and rises precipitously from a dramatic coast line to a mountainous center. Mt. Etna, one of the world's largest active volcanoes offers a constantly changing pyrotechnic display, as we will see in Taormina on our last day.

Our fourteen-night odyssey has been crafted to reveal these aspects of Sicily, and will take us in a leisurely counterclockwise circle around the Island moving from west to east. We will arrive independently in Palermo and depart from Catania, Sicily's two international gateways. As always, our stays have been chosen for the ambience of the place as well as for the quality and comfort of the accommodations and the succulence of the table, and have been planned to avoid one-night stays.



View from Erice of coast enshrouded in fog

Itinerary

Day of departure, Thursday, March 10, 2016 In transit from home

Depart from home with Palermo as your destination. (Connections are available through various European capitals with Milan and Rome offering the most frequent flights to Palermo.)

Day 1, Friday, March 11 Erice

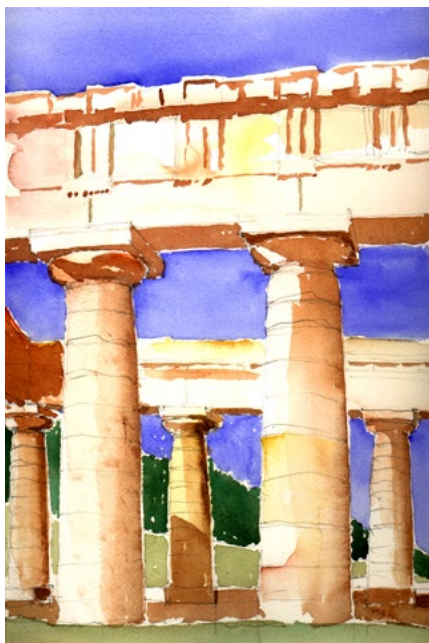
Arrive at Palermo's Falcone Borsellino Airport, where you will be met and brought to Erice, a picturesque hill-town one hour to the west. We have chosen this spot dramatically situated in the clouds above the sea, as the perfect place to spend three days acclimatizing, recovering from jet-lag and making day trips. The simple family run Hotel Moderno in the heart of town is our hotel. Its restaurant is the best in town. Time is unplanned this afternoon so you can explore the town. We will gather for drinks and a welcome dinner at the hotel.

Day 2, Saturday, March 12 Erice

Today we will take an excursion to Sellinunte and Marsala. Sellinus was founded by the Greeks in the mid 7th century BC and was destroyed twice by the Carthaginians (in 409 by Hannibal and again in 250 BC). The toppled columns of its three temples make a picturesque ruin by the seaside. Temple G is the second largest temple in Sicily after that of Olympian Zeus at Agrigento. In the afternoon we will return to Erice around the western coast via Marsala. There we will visit the museum of tapestries to see its eight 16th century Flemish tapestries and then we will stop at the Florio distillery for a tour and taste of their marsala. Back in Erice we will have dinner at our hotel.

Day 3, Sunday, March 13 Erice

Not far to the south lies Segesta, a dramatically isolated site with a great, unfinished Doric temple and a theater



Above: The temple at Segesta

whose backdrop is the panorama of the distant countryside. The Greeks established this site, and the temple was constructed first in 430 BC, and the theater followed in the 3rd century. It is not clear whether the temple's smooth (unfluted) columns and lack of a cella indicate that the construction was not completed, or that these features were intended.

In the afternoon we will visit Gibellina further to the south. This town was destroyed by an earthquake in 1968, and the remains were immortalized by the Tuscan artist Alberto Burri, whose work *il Cretto (the crack)* is a huge concrete mat placed where the town stood, marking the pattern of the streets and the blocks. A new town has been constructed in the vicinity

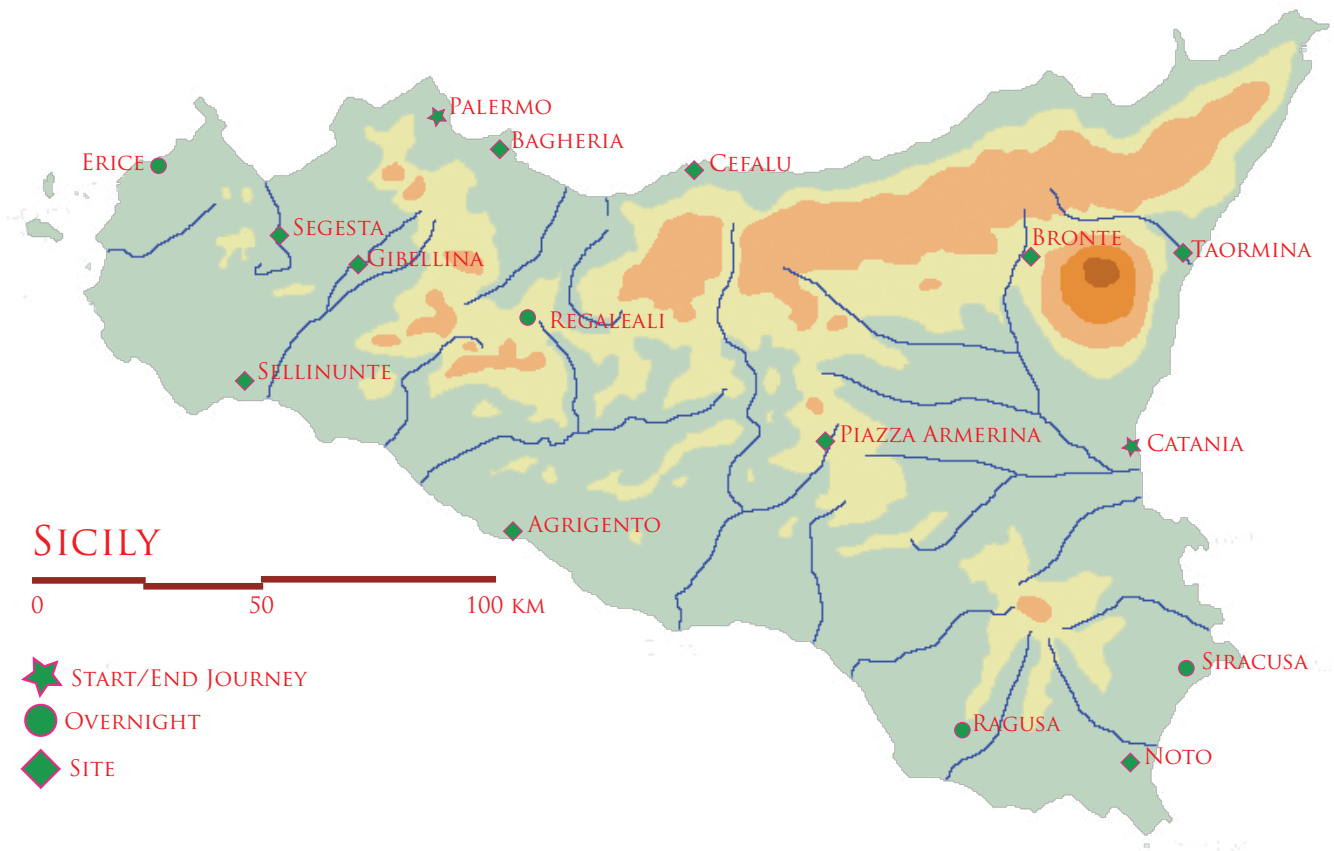
and has become a showcase for works of art, architecture and urban design by contemporary Italian practitioners including Pomodoro, Quaroni and others.

Day 4, Monday, March 14 Palermo

We will leave Erice and begin our circumambulation of the island, heading the short distance to Palermo. We will stop on the way at Monreale, at the top of a valley above Palermo where the Normans (William II) built a great cathedral, abbey and palace beginning in 1172. It is here where we will discover for the first time that melding of Norman and Arabic styles that is so unique to Sicily. The cathedral's essentially Norman form is then covered with Islamic patterns of blind arcades of pointed arches and geometric surface

decoration. Inside there are splendid mosaics depicting scenes from the bible. We will have lunch nearby or on our way into Palermo.

Beginning the descent down into Palermo, we will discover Sicily's capital city and principal port flanked by mountains on both sides and in the center of a great crescent bay. Our first stop will be the Capella dei Normani whose crown jewel is the Palatine Chapel, built by Roger II, grandfather of the king who built Monreale. Nearby is San Giovanni degli Eremiti, also built in the mid 12th century under Roger II and one of the most famous Arabo-Norman monuments in Palermo. It has an elegant central plan with domes supported on Moorish squinches.



We will check in to the Hotel Piazza Borsa, a recently restored former bank. We will dine at the nearby Ristorante Santandrea.

Day 5, Tuesday, March 15 Palermo

In the morning, we will continue with the sites of Palermo. We'll see first some of its great urban places: Piazza Vigliena, (or *Quattro Canti* for its four canted corners) leads to the Piazza Pretoria with its spectacular baroque fountain carved by a Florentine. San Cataldo, the seat of the Knights of the Holy Sepulchre was also built during the Norman period and is a blend of Arabic and Norman styles. Facing the harbor is the Baroque Palazzo Butera, where we have arranged a private visit to its grand apartments. Further afield are the Oratorio del Rosario di Santa Cecilia, the Archaeological museum and some of the buildings in Style Liberty or Art Nouveau. Dinner this evening will be on your own, in order that you can discover some of Palermo's culinary treasures on your own.

Day 6, Wednesday, March 16 Palermo

This morning we will embark from the hotel again on foot, to take in some of Palermo's more rarified sites, including the Mussolini era post office, the fantastically baroque stucco work chapels of Giacomo Serpota (1656-1732), and the Palazzo Abatellis, a medieval palace sensitively renovated by the architect Carlo Scarpa (1906-1978) as a museum.

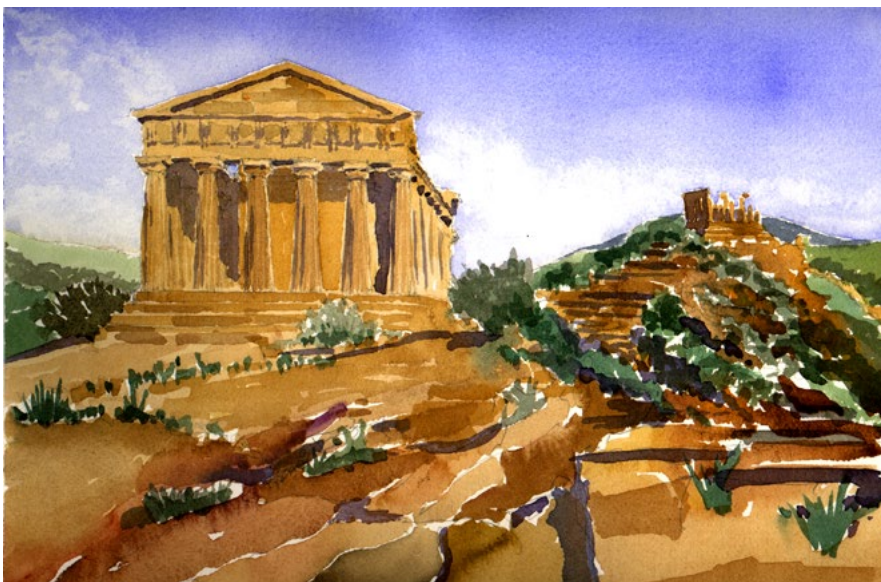
Lunch and the rest of the afternoon is free for individual explorations, and dinner will be at the restaurant Bellotero not far from our hotel.

Day 7, Thursday, March 17 Regaleali

Today we will leave Palermo and head along the northern coast to Bagheria and Cefalu. Bagheria was, beginning in the 17th century, the summer coastal resort for wealthy Palermitani to escape the summer heat, and many fanciful baroque villas were constructed. We will stop to see the Villa Palagonna from 1715. It has an unusual butterfly plan, and its

garden walls are populated by throngs of bizarre figures carved out of tufa. This earned it Goethe's condemnation as a monstrosity.

We will continue on to Cefalu to visit its Duomo, another project initiated by Roger II and built between 1131 and 1240. It sits majestically against the rock escarpment above the sea. We'll have lunch at a local seafood restaurant before turning inland to the mountainous center of the Island where our destination is Regaleali, the Masseria (farm) of Tasca d'Almerita, one of Sicily's oldest and most distinguished wine producers. We will spend two nights here in the recently restored bedrooms of the traditional family villa. (This is the result of popular demand by travelers on previous versions of this trip, when it was a one-night stand!) Here we have arranged our own private wine tasting and dinner of locally produced fare.



Agrigento, Temple of Concord, above left, and Temple of Juno, above right

Day 8, Friday, March 18 Regaleali

This will be a relaxing day to enjoy the agrarian environs and to choose from a variety of optional activities, including a hands on lesson at the winery cooking school; it is renowned for having reestablished some of the best of traditional Sicilian cuisine.

Day 9, Saturday, March 19
Ragusa (day at Agrigento)

Leaving early to continue our drive south through dramatic mountainous countryside, we will reach Agrigento, where we will spend the morning exploring the Valley of the Temples, although “valley” is somewhat of a misnomer as the four golden Doric Temples are in fact prominently sited on a ridge. The city was founded in 580 BC by settlers from Rhodes and Crete. The temples were built during the reign of Theron (488-472 BC) but were burnt by the Carthaginians and later restored by the Romans in the 1st century BC, and finally gradually declined due to seismic activity and quarrying. The better preservation of the Temple of Concord is due to its conversion to a church.

After we have seen the site and had lunch we will continue east to Ragusa where we will spend the next two nights at the Locanda don Serafino. A private dinner will be organized for us in the hotel’s renowned (Michelin Star) restaurant.

Day 10, Sunday, March 20 Ragusa

Ragusa is actually two towns, the new town and Ragusa Ibla which are built along a ridge and separated one from



Above: The Baroque façade of the Cathedral in Siracusa, whose core is the Greek temple of Apollo

another by a deep ravine. We are staying in Ragusa Ibla which is very picturesque with its hilly topography, narrow streets and a number of baroque churches and palazzi.

Today’s excursion is to Piazza Armerina, to see the late Roman (3rd-4th century AD) Villa Imperiale del Casale, known for its grandeur and for the extent of its mosaics. We’ll stop on our return at Caltagirone, famous for its brightly decorated pottery. This evening, we will up the ante from the night before dining at Ristorante Duomo, one of the best tables and wine cellars in Italy!

Day 11, Monday, March 21 Siracusa

We will depart Ragusa today for Siracusa, stopping enroute at Noto, perhaps the most notable ensemble of baroque buildings in Sicily. The town was completely destroyed in 1693 by a severe earthquake and rebuilt 10 km

away from its original location with an expansive and well-organized baroque plan.

On to Siracusa! Occupied by the Greeks from the 8th century BC, from 416 to 413 BC it vied for domination over Athens. The interest of its seaside setting is heightened by the Island of Ortigia which is its oldest part and the place the Greeks settled first. We will stay here at the Grand Hotel Ortigia. Dinner will be at the restaurant Don Camillo.

Day 12, Tuesday, March 22 Siracusa

Today is devoted to exploring Siracusa. We will begin on foot with Ortigia, where the cathedral incorporates a 6th century BC Doric temple. Further afield on the mainland is the Neapolis with its many well-preserved classical monuments, including a Greek theater, Roman amphitheater, limestone caves, and a large 3rd century BC altar. Tonight, we are invited to drinks and a selection of local cheese and salumeria with Baron di Benevento at his palace facing the Duomo. He will show us the grand rooms and his many collections including maps and works on paper documenting the architecture of Siracusa. Dinner (if you still have room) is on your own.

Day 13, Wednesday, March 23
Catania

For our final leg we move to the slopes of Mt. Etna. Our first stop will be La Biviere, where we have been invited for lunch by Contessa Borghese at the villa and garden she created there from desolate swamp land, incorporating

a collection of antique buildings transformed in a unique and personal way. In the afternoon we will visit the monumental center of Catania, including the Piazza del Duomo, the fine palazzi surrounding it (including a private visite to Palazzo Biscari), and the Teatro Bellini, which opened with a production of *Norma* in 1890. We will spend the next two nights here in the small and elegant Hotel Liberty hidden away on a quite residential street. Catania is a hidden gem also for its cuisine, where after being inspired by the raw ingredients on offer in its central market, we will sample the local cuisine at Osteria Antica Marina.

Day 14, Thursday, March 24 Catania

Today we will visit picturesque Taormina and circumnavigate Mt. Etna.

We will head out from Catania up the coast, we will soon reach Taormina, an enchanting town above the sea on the slopes of the mountain. Abandoning our vehicle we will walk through its pedestrian-only streets to reach the ancient theater from which we can enjoy the view, much as the ancients did, over the frons scenae and admire Mt. Etna, its puffs of smoke glowing fiery orange! Taormina has long been a great draw for British aesthetes, and we will visit the emblematic Casa Cuseni, a recently restored arts and crafts villa from 1905 built by Robert Ktison and decorated with murals and furniture designed by Frank Brangwyn. Leaving there and Circumnavigating Mt. Etna, we will marvel at the land's geological interest as we arrive at Bronte, known for its cultivation of pistacios and

where a farewell lunch created just for us awaits us at Hosteria della Stazione, whose young chef, I first encountered in Rome at the neighborhood Sicilian restaurant I often frequent. We will return to Catania with time for a walk to work off our lunch, and if anyone is still hungry, we can have dinner at Trattoria del Mare.

Day 15, Friday, March 25 Travel back home or continue on the extension to the Bay of Naples

Individual or group transfers will be arranged to the airport at Catania for flights home. Buon viaggio e ben'tornato!



Mt. Etna from Taormina

REGISTRATION FORM

Sicilian Palimpsest: Cultural Memory of the Mediterranean, March 10, 25, 2016 (dates inclusive of travel from/to US)

Yes, I would like to attend this journey! Tour price is estimated at \$7,250 per person double occupancy, \$7,750 single occupancy based on a group of at least 10 participants.

Please provide upgraded hotel accommodations for \$1,000 pp add'l.

Costs have fluctuated unpredictably this past year due to changes in fuel costs and exchange rates. The above costs are based on market conditions as of September 1, 2015. They are subject to increase should market conditions change.

To register please complete this registration form and send it with a deposit of \$2,000 per participant by check to Stephen Harby, 718 Cedar Street, Santa Monica, CA 90405-3810. Only written registrations, including appropriate payment will be accepted.

Final payment of balance will be due by January 1, 2016.

Also, please send a photocopy of the picture page of your passport.

Name

Name

Address

City

State

Zip/Postal Code

Home phone

Cell phone

Email

Please select one of the following:

double occupancy with 2 beds

I would like to have assistance booking my flights

double occupancy with one bed

single occupancy

TERMS AND CONDITIONS

WHAT IS INCLUDED

Hotels as indicated on the itinerary based on double occupancy. A limited number of single rooms are available at an additional supplement. We reserve the right to substitute other hotels of a similar quality.

Breakfast, lunch and dinner as mentioned in the itinerary (all meals are included except one dinner, and in Siracusa for one of the nights, a reception in a private palazzo is offered in lieu of dinner).

Admission to all sites as described in the itinerary.

The handling of no more than two medium size suitcases per person

Private Coach transportation throughout.

Use of personal headset to facilitate hearing of on-site lectures and commentary.

WHAT IS NOT INCLUDED

International air transportation to Palermo and from Catania. Incidental expenses such as for telephone calls, fax communications, a la carte orders or items not on the set menus, alcoholic drinks over and above table wine provided at evening meals, laundry, and any other items not specifically mentioned as included.

TRIP INSURANCE

In the event participants cancel their trip, all non-refundable payments will be forfeited. Trip cancellation insurance is recommended for this purpose. In addition, medical/evacuation insurance (included with trip cancellation) is highly recommended.

REQUIRED TRAVEL DOCUMENTS

A passport with validity for at least six months beyond end of stay.

TOUR COSTS

Costs have been calculated on the basis of charges and exchange rates as of September, 2015. Should these change, Stephen Harby reserves the right to make appropriate adjustments to the tour cost.

ALTERATIONS TO ITINERARY

Stephen Harby reserves the right to alter, modify or withdraw the itinerary if air schedules and/or events beyond his control deem it necessary. Itinerary changes made by local travel providers are beyond the control of Stephen Harby and should such changes be made the participant will be bound accordingly.

ITINERARY DEVIATIONS

Stephen Harby assumes no liability or responsibility for any participant deviating from the group tour. Participants arriving and departing independently are responsible for their own transfers.

CANCELLATION

Should cancellation occur prior to 90 days before departure, full refund will be granted less a \$200 service charge; within the following days prior to departure, the specified percentage of tour costs is non-refundable: 60-89 days - 20%; 45-59 days - 30%; 30-44 days - 50%; 29 days or fewer - recoverable hotel, food, travel and communication costs only (likely forfeiture of entire tour cost). Cancellations must be submitted in writing; trip cancellation insurance is strongly recommended. There will be no refund for any tour accommodation, service, or feature not taken, or if participant cancels for any reason while tour is in progress. Any additional costs due to leaving the tour are the responsibility of the departing passenger. In these times of uncertainty in the international realm, we also have to add that should cancellation or alteration of the program occur due to civil disturbances, acts of terrorism, war, natural disaster, and other events of force majeure or acts of God (including threat or fear of same), refunds will be made only to the extent that they are recoverable by Stephen Harby, and that such cancellation or alteration may result in the total loss of funds paid by participants.

RESPONSIBILITY

Stephen Harby and /or agents assume no responsibility or liability in connection with the service of any train, carriage, aircraft, motor coach, or other conveyance or hotel which may be used wholly or in part, in the performance of the tour. Neither will they be responsible or liable for any injury, loss, accident, delay or irregularity which may be occasioned by reason of any defect in any vehicle or through neglect or default of any company or person engaged in conveying or accommodating the passengers; nor for any delays, injuries, damages or losses resulting directly or indirectly from any acts of God, acts of governments, de jure or de facto, wars whether declared or not, hostilities, civil disturbances, terrorist activities, riots, thefts, pilferage, epidemics, quarantines, medical or customs regulations, or from any causes beyond the control of Stephen Harby, and /or agents. In the event it becomes necessary for the comfort or well being of the passengers to alter or modify the itinerary or arrangements, such alterations may be made without penalty to the tour operator and are not grounds for cancellation with refund. Additional expenses, if any, shall be borne by the passenger. The sole responsibility of the airline used is limited to that set out in the passenger contract evidenced by the tickets. This agreement becomes effective upon acceptance into the tour by Stephen Harby. These Terms and Conditions shall be governed by the State of California.

Enrollment in this journey confirms that you have read the Terms and Conditions and accompanying itinerary and agree to abide by its contents. (Each participant is requested to sign below)

Date _____ Signature _____

Date _____ Signature _____