



Italy: From Sicily to Rome, 1943-44: The Soft Underbelly or the Tough Old Gut

MAY 22-30, 2026

Join SMU's Center for Presidential History's Jeffrey A. Engel and Essential History Expeditions' Brian DeToy for an on-site exploration of the people and places of the Italian Campaign that began Europe's liberation from Nazi rule. This intergenerational tour offers course credit for SMU's Hunt Scholar students, and for alumni and friends the opportunity to see the places history took place — and to relive a bit of college life.



Highlights: Interactions with current SMU students and leadership. Sicily, Amalfi and Nettuno to Rome with landing beaches, mountain fighting positions, ancient Greek and Roman civilizations and Rome in WWII! Plus amazing Italian meals and wine!

1 NIGHT CATANIA, 2 NIGHTS SIRACUSA, 1 NIGHT AMALFI,
2 NIGHTS NETTUNO, 2 NIGHTS ROME

Join us for a fully guided and immersive tour of the people and places of the Italian Campaign from July 1943 to June 1944, that began Europe's liberation from Nazi rule. Participants will walk the beaches and cliffs, learn from local experts and guest lecturers, and, if desired, investigate and role-play a renowned (or reviled) figure from history. Enjoy plenty of time to explore these iconic sites on your own and to reconnect with SMU friends and students in some of Italy's most scenic sites. Connect with current SMU students through meaningful discussions and mentorship.

This trip features in-depth guided tours and lectures for all sites, all admission fees and transportation, all lodging and most meals (as detailed on the itinerary). Airfare not included.

Italy: From Sicily to Rome, 1943-44 Daily Itinerary

Friday, May 22: Catania Arrival & Overview

- ◆ Arrive in Catania and check in to lodgings
- ◆ Opening dinner with introductions and an overview of the expedition

Saturday, May 23: The HUSKY Landings & Initial Fights

- ◆ Landing beaches of George Patton's US 7th Army at Licata and Gela
- ◆ Walk the streets of Gela where Darby's Rangers hunted German tanks
- ◆ Visit 1st Infantry Division's inland battlesite at Casteluccio di Gela
- ◆ Visit sites of American advance inland, including Ponte Dirillo Bridge and Biazza Ridge. Some of the stiffest fighting for the 82nd Airborne in the entire war
- ◆ Drive through the rugged mountains to Siracusa in the British and Canadian zone. Siracusa is famed for its millennia of history. A crossroads of empires
- ◆ Walking tour of Siracusa Old Town on the island of Ortigia
- ◆ Group dinner

Sunday, May 24: British Landings & Ancient Siracusa

- ◆ Visit British Commando and glider battlesites at Ponte Grande Bridge and on the Maddalena Peninsula as the British and Canadians attempt to gain a foothold
- ◆ Visit the Commonwealth War Graves Commission Cemetery at Siracusa
- ◆ Afternoon and evening on your own to explore the fascinating Old Town of Siracusa and nearby ancient Greek and Roman sites
- ◆ Dinner on your own

Monday, May 25: 8th Army Advance on Catania & Flight to Naples

- ◆ Drive north along the British 8th Army route to the strategic Catania Plain, the focus of the British advance
- ◆ Visit the incredible dayslong battlesite at Primosole Bridge, perhaps the toughest British action in the entire war
- ◆ Lunch on own at the airport and flight to Naples
- ◆ Visit the famed ancient Roman city of Pompeii, covered with ash by the eruption of nearby Mount Vesuvius in 79 AD
- ◆ Check into lodgings in Paestum
- ◆ Lecture and group dinner

Tuesday, May 26: Operation AVALANCHE and Paestum

- ◆ Explore the landing beaches of Mark Clark's US 5th Army, especially the 36th Division at Paestum in Operation AVALANCHE
- ◆ A visit to the ancient Greek ruins of Paestum is followed by lunch on your own near the museum; This *Magna Graecia* site is one of the oldest, largest and best-preserved in the ancient world
- ◆ Drive to lodgings in Amalfi, the famed town on the idyllic coast of the Sorrento peninsula where we will have on our own time to explore the beautiful cliffside village
- ◆ Dinner on your own in Amalfi

Wednesday, May 27: Battles at the GUSTAV Line and Cassino

- ◆ At San Pietro, observe the brutal fight against a formidable enemy and terrain; the 36th Division sustained many losses but took the town (though totally destroyed and now a national park)
- ◆ Visit Rapido River crossings at Sant Angelo in Theodice
- ◆ In the rebuilt city of Cassino, we will discuss the four attacks by Americans, New Zealanders, Indians and finally Poles to capture the high-ground behind
- ◆ We will visit the amazing Abbey of Monte Cassino, one of the most important sites in all Christendom and one that dominates the road to Rome
- ◆ Explore the nearby Polish Cemetery where we can observe the final fight up the forbidding terrain resulting in its capture
- ◆ Dinner on your own in Nettuno

Thursday, May 28: Operation SHINGLE & Breaking the Line

- ◆ We will walk the beaches of Nettuno, where the American forces landed in Operation SHINGLE
- ◆ At Cisterna, Darby's Ranger force faced overwhelming odds and was itself destroyed in a fierce battle that few survived
- ◆ Group lunch in Aprilia
- ◆ Visit the battle of the Caves, the most desperate action of the beachhead
- ◆ Visit the nearby Sicily-Rome American Cemetery where over 7,000 Americans lie in a spectacularly beautiful resting place

Friday, May 29: The Capture & Liberation of Rome

- ◆ Upon arrival in Rome, we will visit the moving Ardeatine Cave Massacre site and memorial
- ◆ Visit the vibrant Jewish Quarter, synagogue and Shoah museum
- ◆ Group lunch in the Jewish Quarter
- ◆ Farewell group dinner and lecture with SMU's Dr Jeffrey Engel

Saturday, May 30: Departure and Onward Journeys

- ◆ Departures from Rome

For more information, contact the Center for Presidential History at cphinfo@smu.edu or

Essential History Expeditions at

Sheryl@historyexp.com;

call 214.768.3210; see historyexp.com

- ◆ Pricing: \$6,750 double occupancy; \$750 single supplement
- ◆ Itinerary subject to minor changes
- ◆ International airfare not included
- ◆ Hotels as follows or similar:
 - ◆ Catania: Romano Palace Luxury
 - ◆ Siracusa: Ortea Palace
 - ◆ Amalfi: Luna Convento
 - ◆ Nettuno: Astura Palace
 - ◆ Rome: Eitch Borromini

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Jeffrey A. Engel is founding director of the Center for Presidential History at Southern Methodist University and a Senior Fellow of the John Goodwin Tower Center for Political Studies. Author or editor of ten books on American foreign policy, he is currently writing *Seeking Monsters to Destroy: How America Goes to War, From Washington to Biden and Beyond* (Oxford University Press).

Essential History Expeditions' president, expert historian and guide, Lt Col (Ret) Brian DeToy, PhD served as Director of the Defense & Strategic Studies program at the United States Military Academy, West Point from 2007-13. He has appeared in numerous documentaries for programming such as History, Discovery, Fox, A&E and Military channels. He is also an accomplished author and presenter at international history conferences.

