



VILLA GUSTO
la dolce vita

Join our Gusto Sud Tour



Colin McLaren, the owner of the Italianate Villa Gusto in Bright, Victoria, has been hosting tours of southern Italy since 2006. He's become an expert in the ways of Italia Sud. A best-selling author of books on the mafia, and one time undercover cop, his first book – *Infiltration* is soon to be an Underbelly film. Each year Colin leads 14 guests (only) on a tantalizingly dangerous food tour! The air conditioned luxury coach collects guests at Rome airport where they commence to amble through the lower regions of old Italy – the real Italy! Dining on scrumptious degustation menus and sampling the best produce in Europe. To compliment the food Colin hand selects wines from the famed Gambero Rosso guide, ensuring the finest wines on the tables. And each night guests stay in a unique, grande villa or hotel, the best accommodation available. This once-a-year opportunity is now open for bookings.

From: 27th September – 10th October. (14 days, 13 nights)

Gusto Sud – food, wine and luxurious Villas with a touch of the old mafia!

Day One – Three.

Once we get to know each other our bus driver – Davida points southwards to Caserta where we take in Italy's finest Palazzo-Reggia. A breathtakingly beautiful location and host to many feature films, like Tom Cruise's *Mission Impossible 2*. On the grounds is a marble fountain bearing an inscription that: "the poor southerners be blessed with fertile soil and regular crops". Then it's off to Naples, birthplace of pizza & mozzarella, to sample the world's first pizzeria. By late afternoon we arrive on the Amalfi coast for two nights at our stunning 1,100 year old Luna Hotel and have our first grande dinner overlooking the seaside, haunt of the infamous 1950's Rat Pack. The following morning we tour Positano or Ravello, your choice! For dinner it's back to Amalfi town where we dine degustazione on a classic seafood menu at the beautiful La Gemma restaurant, before an evening of bella figura. This location needs to be seen to be believed!

Day Three – Six.

Weaving our way along one of the world's great coastal drives, we head past hilltop towns, down to the boot of Italy. Two and a half hours later we land in Basilicata, the poorest region of Italy, her population emptied out after WW2. Maratea is the town that offers a perfect holiday environment: peace & an ancient village overlooking turquoise waters. Shhh! It's a secret but that's where Colin plans to retire, it's so beautiful! We stay at Villa Cheta on top of a cliff and dine in their private room: a big night, wine tasting Aglianico red wines. The next day we visit the Cross of Christ on the peak of the mountain before exploring the village, riddled with 500 year old facades. You can shop, take coffee, or check those horrid emails, before a late lunch at Trattoria Cesare, on the coast. The following day we laze about our extraordinary Villa and enjoy the seaside, before a private pasta cooking lesson (hands on) by our head chef followed by a typical Basilicata degustation late lunch in the garden. The views reach all the way to the Eolie Islands!

Day Six – Eight.

We sneak into Calabria, home of the contemporary mafia, and head for a light lunch stop at Rende, past the 3,500 year old town of Morano. We drive across the rugged Aspromonte mountains; where kidnapped victims were stashed in caves whilst ransoms were negotiated. For those with a touch of the colly-wobbles about this jaunt, Colin advises that most of the Mafia have been gaoled and had their cell keys thrown away long ago! Our destination is the picture perfect town (safe haven) of Gerace, overlooking the Mediterranean and a luxury hotel that was once a magnificent convent. You'll have time to sit in a lazy piazza with a novel or just sip San Pellegrino. This town has been asleep for centuries and is a photographer's dream. We dine at the Casa di Gianna for dinner, with background music. Our second day will include a very unique lunch, in an old farmhouse, eating house-made antipasto, and being served a farmers' BBQ by our skilled chefs. You will be saddened to leave this tiny village.



Gusto Sud Tours



Day Eight – Eleven.

Following the coastline, past the mafia controlled city of Reggio Calabria we jump a ferry to Sicily. Soon after we arrive Colin leads an exploration to the home of the old mafia wars and location for the filming of The Godfather movie - Savoca. Then it's up the cliff to Taormina, where we meet our co-host, Sicilian wine expert Elisa, who stays till the end of the tour. She offers insight into one of Europe's most stunning towns, this hamlet has its own Film Festival and boasts Sofia Loren and George Clooney as regulars. In fact Federico Fellini coined the name "paparazzi" whilst staying in this town. Our grande Villa Angela looks out across the sea and angry Mt Etna. The views are divine, on a good day you can see Africa! Home of marzipan, cute food stores and fashion boutiques dot the laneways. Brush off your sports coat and dress to kill as we dine on the roof of Ristorante Baronessa, alongside Italy's wealthiest. Champagne and porcini are the order of our night. And for a taste of another sort we visit the oldest market of Sicily – Catania, and watch the spivs and pick pockets work the crowd. (wallets and bags stay locked in the hotel) Later it's on to Siracusa to dine at the famous Porta Marina restaurant. An afternoon stroll in Siracusa and visit the Greek Theatre has us home by 6.00pm. The following day is a real highlight, spent at il Cantante winery, at the base of Mt Etna, owned by Mick Hucknall of Simply Red. Elisa guides tour through this old world organic winery, before a magnificent degustation lunch prepared by the Nonnas of the workers.



Day Eleven – Fourteen.

Colin and Elisa point our bus to wild western Sicily, Inspector Montalbano country, through the rugged interior: sun bleached, beautiful and baron. We stay at the grande 200 year old Hotel des Palmes, just behind the Opera House (which we visit). Our first night we dine at the beautiful Vespri restaurant, chic food at its best. The next day we drive to the most known Mafia town in the world: Corleone, to see what all the fuss was about, chat with the old boys and watch the crowd watching us. In the afternoon we walk the streets of Palermo, a city that many feared for generations, now the tired darling of Italy. We eat where the locals eat and immerse ourselves in the wonderful culture. Plenty of time for the men to take a cut-throat razor shave with the locals and women to take coffee and biscotti in the chic café precinct. On our last day together we visit Trapani, a 1,000 year old fishing village with impressive buildings and blue hulled fishing boats bobbing in the shallows. The region is known for almonds and Marsala wine. We drive to Erice, a dot town on top of a hill that will take your breath away, staying for a lunch after a walk around the town. Returning to Palermo we prepare for our finale dinner in the elegant Zafferano ristorante. Guests may choose their own wines, based on what they have learned. Be prepared for a late night!

Day Fourteen, to the airport at Palermo and sad farewells*la dolce vita!*



The above is a mere sampling only, there are many extras, gifts and quizzes included on the tour. A maximum of 14 guests. Each day includes a full breakfast as well as a gourmet degustation experience for either lunch or dinner in the finest eating houses in southern Italy. Each hotel is luxurious, we have secured the best suites and rooms in the house. Each wine is hand selected and premium (most have won awards) and each location exclusive. Colin remains with the tour – 24/7 and will tutor guests on southern Italian wines, the culture of the regions and a touch of history and mafia. We visit places of interest: a palazzo, a museum, a winery, etc. (We do not offer airfares or any other surface travel.)



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Contact Colin direct on: cm@scuttlebuttmedia.net
or 0413 862 222

www.villagusto.com.au

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