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Our ref: MB

15th October 2026

Dear Parent/Carer,

Geography Trip to Sicily 17th July – 20th July 2027

The Geography department have run many successful trips to Iceland since 2006. However, over the years Iceland has become very expensive and the department wanted to offer a cheaper alternative this summer. Our intention is to make Iceland a biannual trip, with the next trip planned for the summer of 2028. Therefore, this year we are going to offer a trip to Sicily instead, which is £450 cheaper than Iceland.

44 places will be on offer for the trip. If we don't get to 44, the next target is 40 to make the trip viable, but the cost would be higher. However, previous Iceland trips have tended to be over-subscribed. **All** students **in current Years 10 (25 places), 11 and 12 (19 places)** will be eligible to attend the trip. Places will be transferred to other year groups if they do not fill their allocation. If the trip is over-subscribed, places will be allocated by means of a draw; *students studying GCSE or A level Geography will be given preference*.

Itinerary (provisional, although the dates are fixed):

- **Saturday 17th July:** Fly to Catania airport from Gatwick (06:30-10:40) and visit the Alcantara Gorge in the afternoon. This is a gorge cut through a lava flow from Mount Etna.
Evening meal at the Hotel Milazzo – this is just 500 metres from the harbour and 800 metres from the beach. The rooms are air conditioned and en-suite.

- **Sunday 18th July:** Full day boat trip from Milazzo. We will sail to the island of Panarea and spend time exploring the island on foot. The island is volcanic and has hot springs and attractive beaches.

From there, we will then sail on to Stromboli (the volcano in the background of the photo on the right). Stromboli is an active volcano and erupts every 20-30 minutes. We will spend time on the island in the village. We would have a meal on the island (not included in the tour price). As the light fades, we will return to the boat and sail round to the Sciara del Fuoco and see lava erupt from the summit.

We will then sail back to Milazzo late in the evening and return to our hotel.

- **Sunday 19th July:** We will check out of the hotel in Milazzo and travel to Mount Etna for the whole day. Mount Etna is the largest active volcano in Europe and erupts frequently.

We will travel to Rifugio Sapienza (a ski resort in winter, given the height of Mount Etna) and ascend the mountain in the cable car. At the top of the cable car, we will be met by a 4x4 vehicle to take us further up the mountain towards the summit. If the weather is clear, the views from there are incredible and we will be able to explore the many craters and see previous lava flows.

In the evening, we will check in to our second hotel – San Pietro hotel in Letojanni/Taormina. This hotel is right next to the beach. We will have the rest of the evening there.

- **Monday 20th July:** We will spend the morning exploring Taormina, which is a stunning town perched high on the cliffs - I spent my honeymoon there in 2010. We will visit the town and the Greco-Roman amphitheatre.

In the afternoon, we will visit the coastal town of Giardini Naxos before transferring to Catania for our flight home (20:25-22:40).

If there is inclement weather, the itinerary could change. I try to pack in as much as we can in the time that we have there, so the days are extremely busy. Students will need to be reasonably fit and be able to cope with the physical exertion and the long days. It will be very warm at that time of year too.

If we get 44 students, the cost will be £1360

However, there are some additional costs that need to be factored in (travel insurance is included in the price):

- Evening meal on day two on the island of Stromboli
- Food at airports
- Tourist taxes - nearer the time, we will calculate this and inform parents. I don't think students will be charged this as they will be under 18, but I just wanted to make you aware if this changes.
- Money for drinks/ snacks during our stay.
- £15 extra charge if your child is 16 or over (airport departure tax)

Reply slips (not the deposit payment) **should be handed in to the Finance Office by 4:00pm Thursday 22nd October**. If the trip is over-subscribed by this date, places will be allocated by means of a draw. Parents will then be informed whether their child has been successful in gaining a place on the trip and a reserve list will be generated. Once informed by the school, **deposits of £625 are payable by Tuesday 27th October 2026 to secure the place on the trip** The travel company have stipulated that the deposit needs to be £625 to pay for the flights - this is frustrating, but there is nothing we can do about it. The school can't pay invoices without the income secured, so it has to be this figure. However, the remaining payment plan has been spread out to make up for the large initial deposit. Apart from the £110 per person in December that we have to pay the company, we have built in three months off until the regular payments resume.

All remaining payments (4) will be payable by:

- Second payment – 1st December 2026 - £110 (at that point we transfer this figure to the travel company)
- Third payment – 1st March 2027 - £210
- Fourth payment – 1st April 2027- £210
- Fifth and final payment – 3rd May 2027 - £205 (£220 if your child will be 16 or over)

As this trip is non-curricular, the school normally is unable to offer financial assistance and therefore the full cost of the activity must be borne by yourselves. Payments and accompanying paperwork must be handed in on or before the deadline date outlined above and late payments will jeopardise your child's place on the trip/activity. Should your child withdraw from the activity, please be aware that deposits are non-refundable. Any further payments can only be refunded if the place can be filled by another student on a waiting list, or if the withdrawal is for an insurable reason.

If there are any significant changes to the costs of the trip, these may have to be passed on to the student. Be assured that we will try to keep such costs to a minimum. The flights have 'live pricing', so once we are in a position to pay the deposit to the company on 30th October the final price will become clear. I will inform you if the price changes significantly.

Please complete and return the consent form to the Finance Office. If you have any queries, please do not hesitate to contact me at m.bamford@oaklandscatholicschool.org .

Yours faithfully,

Mark Bamford – Assistant Head of School/ Sicily trip leader (and took the previous school trip to Sicily in 2011)

PLEASE RETURN TO THE FINANCE OFFICE BY 4:00PM 22nd OCTOBER 2026

Geography Trip to Sicily 17 – 20 July 2027 – CONSENT FORM/REPLY SLIP

Student Name: …….. Tutor Group: ……..

I would like to submit an application for my child to participate in the visit to Sicily.

He/she is in good health and I consent to him/her taking part in the programme detailed in your letter. Should my child secure a place on this trip, I will ensure deposits and payments are made according to the payment schedule as outlined in the trip letter.

My child studies GCSE or A level Geography ☐

(N.B. students not studying Geography can go, but spaces will be given to Geographers first. Therefore, please still submit this slip even if your child does not study Geography)

Parent/Carer Name: ……..

Signature: ……

Email address: ……

Contact Number: ……..