

# SundayTravel

WITH: NEW ENGLAND DESTINATIONS

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Top: Johanna Lynch speaks with her husband, Jerry, on the other side of the room while working at the Maria Miles Visitor Center off I-95 in Salisbury last month. Middle: maps and stuffed lobsters at the Maria Miles Visitor Center. Bottom: The Lynches (in background) assist travelers at the center.

## Where to eat in Rome and Sicily

By Necee Regis  
GLOBE CORRESPONDENT

**A**h, Italia. It's always a joy to visit your iconic art masterpieces, historic sites, architectural wonders, and most of all — especially for someone in a food-obsessed family — your culinary pleasures. On a recent trip, I planned a visit to an old favorite destination, Rome, and added Sicily, an island that's been on my must-go list for ages. Every region of Italy boasts its culinary specialties, and we were lucky to be in Rome during peak artichoke season when every restaurant featured it in their flavorful and hearty dishes. And I was excited to experience the foods of Sicily, for creations that blend influences from its many previous and current inhabitants from Greece, Africa, Spain, and Arab countries. With only two nights in Rome and

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Hand-rolled macaroni with sausage and fennel at Glass, a restaurant serving typical Sicilian dishes.

NECEE REGIS



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### THE VIP LOUNGE 'MUSIC EXPERIENCE'

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## We ate our way through Lima

By Diane Bair and Pamela Wright  
GLOBE CORRESPONDENTS

**L**omo saltado, anticuchos, ceviche, butifarra, sandwich de chicharron, cuy al horno ... we're talking Peruvian cuisine, and there's no better place to taste it than Lima, considered one of the world's top culinary destinations. Peru's capital, set above the towering cliffs of the Costa Verde, is home to three restaurants on the prestigious World's 50 Best Restaurants 2025 list, Maido, Kjolle, and Mayta. It's also filled with colorful markets, street vendors, roadside grills, neighborhood eateries, and fine dining restaurants.

This once gritty city, now considered South America's culinary capital, has access to a variety of local products, coming from some 36 diverse ecosystems, including the Andean Mountains, the Amazon River and its tributaries, the Pacific Ocean, and the Secura Desert. That's part of what makes its culinary scene so rich. Another reason is the city's melting pot of cultures: through the years, large migrations of Chinese and Japanese, along with Spanish colonization, have added recipes and techniques to the indigenous Peruvian cuisine.

We met Blanca Silva, a local resident and food guide, at the San Isidro Market, a bright and clean

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PAMELA WRIGHT FOR THE BOSTON GLOBE

You'll need help eating this giant osso buco served at the famous Isolina restaurant in Lima.

## Lost wallets, keys, and kids. These are tales from the visitor center.

How tourism's front-line workers do more than give directions

BY JON MARCUS  
GLOBE CORRESPONDENT

**S**ALISBURY — Taped to the wall of the Maria Miles Visitor Center just off I-95, right over the New Hampshire border, is the answer to the only question Jerry and Johanna Lynch wish people would stop asking.

No, it says — they will not help you fish your phones out of the composting toilets.

Otherwise, the married couple will gladly tell you anything



— though Jerry, 79, sometimes has to fight to get a word in. "I love talking to people," explained Johanna, who is 77.

The spirited retired husband and wife are among the imperturbable workers who staff the state's many visitor centers, answering questions and requests from the ordinary to the bizarre.

Tourists coming to the landlocked Berkshires ask where to get an ocean view, and what day

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# Where to eat in Rome and Sicily

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six in Sicily, we asked family and friends for recommendations. And surprisingly, or not, several of our favorite meals were in places we stumbled upon. How did I assemble this list?, you might ask. Simple. They're all restaurants we'd return to in a heartbeat. I can't wait.

## ROME

### Ditirambo

Recommended by a foodie family member (who might be annoyed I'm sharing her favorite special spot), Ditirambo is a classic Roman trattoria. Tucked in a warren of streets near the Campo de' Fiori, the intimate space is the opposite of swanky, with a dark beamed ceiling, pale yellow walls, art by local artists, simple cloths on wood tables, and super-friendly staff. When the one table of loud Americans left, we were the only ones not speaking Italian, creating an atmosphere of hanging out with the locals. But don't let the simplicity of the place fool you. The food is the star here, with fresh seasonal ingredients driving the menu's weekly specials and fixed choices. "I piatti di mezzo" (middle dishes), a cross between an appetizer and a first course, include vegetarian choices such as eggplant meatballs, and zucchini millefeuille with smoked buffalo mozzarella. All breads and pastas are homemade, including filled pastas — ravioli, tortelloni, and such — and the Roman classic cacio e pepe, basically Pecorino Romano cheese and black pepper that is made slightly differently by every chef in town. Other seasonal specialties include rigatoni alla carbonara made with pork cheeks, farro pappardelle with rabbit ragù, sea bream with capers, tomatoes, and olives, and suckling roasted pig. Our choice, fettuccini with fresh and fried artichokes and bacon, was sublime. We paired it with a local white Lazio wine, chosen from an extensive list. Open for lunch and dinner.

Pza della Cancelleria, 74, 00186 Roma. +39-06-687-1626, www.ditiramboristorante.it

### Sora Margherita

We had hoped to try a certain restaurant in the Jewish Quarter, but alas, it was closed for lunch that day. While wandering the neighborhood, an unexpected downpour led us running to the door of Sora Margherita, a tiny restaurant where we had one of the best meals of our trip. The place was packed with

diners, but the friendly hostess managed to squeeze two soggy patrons into the one-room space and produced a handwritten menu of pastas, salads, and traditional Roman dishes: grilled marinated lamb, rustic chicken stew, steak with grilled vegetables, and fried salt cod. We ordered carciofi alla giudia, a deep-fried artichoke dish originating in Rome's Jewish community; polpete al sugo, three massive meatballs in a rich red sauce; and fettuccine cacio e pepe. When the Italian diners at our elbows were served what we had just ordered, we knew we had selected wisely. The smashed artichoke was like a golden sunflower, with leaves as crispy as potato chips that then melted in the mouth. Astonishing. The pasta was just peppery and cheesy enough, though our new friends suggested that next time we try it with added ricotta. The meatballs, flavorful and filling, were the perfect accompaniment to a glass of wine. As the lunch crowd departed, we could view the walls covered with handwritten thank-you notes from happy patrons. We were too full to order dessert, but our neighbors insisted we try a bite of their ricotta and sour cherry tart, a classic Jewish Quarter sweet. Open for lunch and dinner, with outside dining when weather permits.

Piazza delle Cinque Scole, 30, 00186, Roma. +39-06-687-4216, www.soramargherita.com

## SICILY

### Glass

Clinging to a hilltop in central Sicily, the small town of Piazza Armerina is a terrific place for lunch when visiting the nearby Villa Romana del Casale, a not-to-be-missed fourth-century UNESCO World Heritage site known for its more than 37,000 square feet of well-preserved Roman mosaics. Before visiting the villa, we were hiking the maze of Piazza Armerina's medieval streets on an unsuccessful hunt for pizza when someone directed us to Glass. Stepping from the bright, hot sunshine into the cool stone building, we sat beneath the arched ceiling — hungry, tired — and learned that pizza is only served at dinner. When traveling, it's easier to pivot than to force a plan that isn't working. So, we stayed, and were thrilled that we did. It was tough to choose among the many offerings of typical Sicilian foods: Antipasti with Mortadella, speck, caponata, fresh ricotta, eggplant rolls and more; beef tartar with red wine reduction; fusilli with eggplant and almonds;



PHOTOS BY NECCEE REGIS FOR THE BOSTON GLOBE

The restaurant Glass serves typical Sicilian dishes and pizza in the hilltop town of Piazza Armerina.

hand-rolled pasta twists with cream of pistachios from Bronte (a town near Mount Etna famous for its small sweet pistachios only harvested every two years); fusilli with asparagus and speck; grilled Angus beef with arugula and parmesan; rolled veal stuffed with ham and pistachios; and hand-rolled macaroni with sausage and fennel. We chose the latter two dishes, and left sated and satisfied. Maybe someday we'll return for pizza. Open for lunch and dinner.

Largo Capodarso, 5, 94015 Piazza Armerina. +39-093-557-7680.

### Portocostanza

I'd be lax if I didn't mention the prevalence of locally-caught seafood in Sicily. Sardines, anchovies, shrimp, squid, shellfish, and finfish, including swordfish, are served in pasta, grilled, fried, and raw. For a special celebratory meal, a friend in Palermo directed us to Portocostanza, a stylish restaurant overlooking the port. The creative menu focuses on Sicilian flavors, with a farm-to-table approach that includes organic vegetables and herbs acquired from local farmers and its own 5-acre garden. Watching boats lazily glide past our table-side floor-to-ceiling glass windows, we bypassed the tasting menu and shared several dishes for our lunchtime meal: red shrimp crudo with Sicilian avocado on sauteed spinach with a grapefruit reduction; spaghetti with mixed seafood in light tomato cream



Red shrimp crudo with Sicilian avocado on sauteed spinach with a grapefruit reduction, served at Portocostanza.

with capers and mint-flavored breadcrumbs; and snapper fillet with confit cherry tomato cream and Salina caper powder. All were terrific, along with house-made breads, and we'd happily return to taste the many other tempting options, such as risotto with fish broth and shrimp; crispy octopus on smoked eggplant; and mixed salad with tuna tartar, mango cream, and almond flakes. They also have a pizza menu and serve happy hour snacks on an outside upper deck. Reservations are strongly suggested for both lunch and dinner.

Marina Yachting, Via Filippo Patti, 30, 90133 Palermo. +39-091-619-9199, www.portocostanza.com/en/home-eng

### Bollicine

Palermo is known for its street food,

especially arancina, cheese or meat-filled deep-fried rice balls, and for its gelaterias serving a wide selection of fruity, nutty and chocolate/coffee flavors. We sampled many of these wonderful things, but nothing — really nothing — could outshine the pizza at Bollicine. Located around the corner from the historic Teatro Santa Cecilia, where we attended a top-notch jazz performance, the restaurant's outdoor seating was packed and festive on a Saturday night, with service friendly and quick. The menu offered a variety of antipasti, pastas, burgers, and salads, but the draw for us was the 20-plus pizzas. It was difficult to choose among offerings that included sausage, champignon mushrooms, anchovies, Mortadella, smoked scamorza, Gorgonzola, speck, red pumpkin cream, spicy salami, pistachio pesto, ricotta, sundried tomatoes, eggplant, rapini, and more. Our friends are tired of hearing us swoon over our choice — the Salento — with its fire-singed, pillowy crust topped with salty prosciutto, sweet yellow cherry tomatoes, creamy Buffalo mozzarella, and earthy, nutty artichokes. When I return to Palermo, this will be my first meal.

Piazza Rivoluzione, 13, 90133 Palermo. +39-327-002-6314, www.instagram.com/bollicine\_restaurant

Neccee Regis can be reached at [necceeregis@gmail.com](mailto:necceeregis@gmail.com).

# Tourism's front-line workers do more than give directions

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and time in the fall the leaves turn color. Visitors to Salem want to know where the witches live now; on Cape Cod, the secret roads where there isn't any traffic, where to find the two guys from the cranberry commercials, and whether the whales on the whale watch tours do tricks.

On Nantucket, parents with children ask discreetly how to avoid the public beaches where, since 2022, anyone has legally been allowed to sunbathe topless, while visitors to Provincetown ask considerably less shyly for directions to the beaches where they can wear even less than that.

Everyone needs help pronouncing Massachusetts's singular place names. Many double back for help finding phones, wallets, and, occasionally, children. They've left a backpack full of sex toys in a visitor center parking lot and a set of false teeth in a restroom. And, yes, enough people have lost their phones in those Salisbury toilets — and, in one case, the keys to a tractor-trailer truck — to have required the sign about it.

Mostly visitors betray an astonishing lack of planning, these front-line tourism workers say.

A retired longtime Cape Cod bank manager, Glenn Van Wickle likes to systematically research his destinations when he goes on vacation himself. But in his job as a guide at the Route 6 Welcome Center, he's discovered that "a lot of people don't do that. Sometimes it gets a little frustrating."

Many, for example, "don't seem to have a concept of Cape Cod," said Van Wickle, who is 77. "They're pulling in around 10:30 or 11, and they're just here for the day. They don't understand the size of it. So I bring them over to the big map on the wall and explain they've got another hour to go to get to Provincetown."

It's a universal observation — that tourists seem increasingly geographically challenged. Some who stop at the Salisbury rest area tell the Lynchs that they have an hour until their plane leaves from Logan International Airport and want to know what they can stop and see before it does. "Maybe the tail



BEN PENNINGTON FOR THE BOSTON GLOBE

Jerry and Johanna Lynch at the Maria Miles Visitor Center, where they help travelers.

end of the plane," Jerry Lynch quipped, noting that the airport is an hour away on a good day.

"What happened to travel books? Are they not selling them anymore?" asked his wife, who was a real estate agent before retiring; her husband was a broker at Fidelity. "What amazes me is how many people get on the road and have no plan."

A surprising number — in the age of GPS — still stop to ask for directions and maps. "Depending on the generation, lots of them don't use" this high-tech wayfinder, Van Wickle said. Or they're understandably confused by road signs that say, for instance, "Route 28 North" and "Route 28 South" when that main Cape Cod route goes mostly east and west. One older couple traveling from Portland, Maine, to New York City ended up at Van Wickle's mid-Cape visitor center by following those road

signs "south."

Tourists also ask if there are secret routes that locals use to avoid the region's perpetual traffic, especially to and from its most popular destinations at peak days and times. That one's easy, visitor center staffers statewide say: There aren't. "The best advice I can give is don't leave on Sunday," Van Wickle said. The hoax that dates from 1994, that there's a tunnel underneath the Cape Cod Canal — perpetuated by fake car window stickers still for sale in some souvenir shops — inevitably leads to questions about how and where to find it. "We still get the tunnel question," said Van Wickle.

Some visitors to Martha's Vineyard and Nantucket not only fail to make plans, they don't make reservations for hard-to-get space on car ferries and at hotels and inns. "We get that call and our first mode is to try to help," said Pe-

ter Burke, president and CEO of the Nantucket Chamber of Commerce, which runs a visitor center there.

"There are a lot of visitors who maybe it's their first time to an island," Burke said. If the boats stop running, typically because of weather, "there is a disbelief that they're stuck here. At some point, there's that realization that Mother Nature has the final say. It becomes part of the Nantucket adventure."

Some questions are about where to find celebrities, particularly in high-end destinations like the islands. But good luck with those, in locked-down New England. "There's kind of an anonymity," Burke said. During events such as the annual film festival, he said, "We get the question of who's on island. And we don't really know. And if we do know, we respect their privacy."

Even people with an inkling of their

history ask odd questions about the Massachusetts places that they visit. Knowing that the Pilgrims' first stop was in Provincetown, some tourists ask to see the rock, said Bob Murray, an 82-year-old retired professor of microbiology and one of the volunteer "travel ambassadors" who staff the tourist office there. It's in Plymouth, where they settled, he politely corrects them.

Tourism officials carefully try to offer up the facts without judgment, said Ashley Judge, executive director of Destination Salem. "Our job is to help visitors connect the story they came for with the real history and experiences waiting for them here," she said.

Given the nature of his far-flung town, Provincetown's Murray also often fields quiet questions from the variety of people who come to be themselves in ways they can't at home.

"We do have people who say they've been gay but haven't been out," he said. He sends them to the daily afternoon tea dance. "That's a nice, nonthreatening way for people who are gay and questioning to go and hang out," Murray said.

Altogether different groups of tourists want to see drag shows and, like an air traffic controller, Murray dispatches them to one of several drag brunches. "It's nonthreatening. You can be comfortable seeing that for the first time."

Visitor center guides prefer to sidestep requests for restaurant, hotel, and other recommendations. One reason, they say, is that "if somebody doesn't like it, they'll blame us," Johanna Lynch said. Another is that the centers aren't run by the state, but by regional tourism councils, whose member businesses pay dues. That means not playing favorites.

Sometimes even the experts get stumped. Nantucket's Burke tries to avoid this by regularly adding to his knowledge of the island's history. He just learned that department store magnate R.H. Macy was a native, for example.

Even if they can't immediately answer, however, tourism advocates "love the questions," Burke said.

"It means people are interested in this place we live," he said, "and are coming here to visit."