



Best of Sicily

Pre-Conference Tour: 7 days/6 nights
October 18 - 24, 2018



Sicily is more than just an island. Discover Sicily and discover the world. Sicily is Italy's and Europe's most historically cosmopolitan region having been ruled by Asians, Africans and Europeans. There is no other place on earth like Sicily, the island is a unique place full of art, archeology, history, folklore and breathtaking scenery and of course great food. Sicily is almost an nation unto itself.

Sicily is the largest Mediterranean island and with its geographical position halfway between Europe and Africa, the result is a rather unique blend of cultures that promises to entice the discerning traveler. Food is noticeably different to the rest of Italy; spicier and with more emphasis on fruit, vegetables and fish. Greek temples and Roman amphitheatres reflect days gone by of numerous invasions which have helped to create the culturally rich island of Sicily.

Day 1 – October 18

Arrive Sicily (D)

Transfer on your own from Palermo airport to your chosen hotel.
Meet with your guide at 7:00 p.m.; dinner in hotel and overnight.

Day 2 – October 19

Full day Palermo (B, L, D)

Breakfast in your hotel, then meet your private driver and guide at **9:00 a.m.** in the lobby of your chosen hotel in Palermo and start the visit of the town.

Located on a wide bay beneath the shadow of Mount Pellegrino, Palermo is a jewel in the crown of Sicily. In the 9th century, Palermo was famed for the wealth of its court and its universities. Today, it is an

international famed city with modern day treasures and priceless ancient monuments of architecture and art.

Your first stop will be at the **Convent of Cappuccini**, built in 1621, it contains a vast subterranean cemetery known as the Catacombs. This unique cemetery holds the bodies of approximately 8,000 aristocrats from the 16th to 19th centuries. Men, women and children were mummified and then hung on the walls in their burial clothing. An incredible sight to behold, but not for the faint hearted. Then you will continue to the Royal Palace where you will visit the **Palatine Chapel**, on the first floor, **UNESCO WHS**. Dedicated to the Saints Peter and Paul is the finest and most harmonious example of Norman art. Built in 1132/1140, it represents a splendid combination of architecture and mosaics decoration.

Then enjoy a pleasant walking tour with a stop at the **Cathedral, UNESCO WHS**. It was built on the site of an Early Christian basilica that was converted to a mosque. Elements of Gothic, Baroque, and Norman architecture show the influences of the country's changing masters. During its history, it underwent major changes, manifested in the form of renovations and additions, such as the cupola constructed in 1785. The church is a massive rectangular structure with two towers at the two front corners built in the Norman-Arab style; the interior shows off the local craftsmen's talents for stone inlays and other ornamentation. You can find the tombs of Frederick II, Roger II, Norman king, Henry VI and his wife Constance de Hauteville (to be seen from exterior).

Afterwards continue your walk through Quattro Canti and Pretoria square, one of the most beautiful fountains in Palermo. Lunch at a local restaurant.

In the afternoon you will continue your sightseeing tour with a visit to **Martorana church, UNESCO WHS**, built in the 12th century by Normans and rich in mosaics and statues. Also, you will visit **Branciforte Palace**, fabulous 18th-century palace where you can see the Archaeological collection: a cultural heritage of great importance for the history of ancient Sicily and the cultural history of the twentieth century.

You can also admire the permanent exhibits of Giacomo Cuticchio's Sicilian Ancient puppets. Puppet opera is a particular type of puppet theatre, which emerged in southern Italy and, in particular, in Sicily in the early 1800s, is masterpieces of the Oral and **UNESCO WHS Intangible heritage of humanity**. Traditionally the Opera of the Puppets consisted of the performance of Medieval clashes between knights and the Moors: the puppets were taken as symbols of the desire for revenge and justice of a social class.

Afterwards drive back to your hotel in Palermo. Dinner in hotel and overnight.

The order which you will see the sights may change.

Day 3 – October 20

Monreale, Baglio di Pianetto winery & the Valley of the Temples (B, L, D)

Breakfast in your hotel, then meet your driver and guide at 08:30 a.m. in the lobby of your chosen hotel in Palermo and you will travel towards the **UNESCO WHS** of **Monreale**, that was just a country area in the Palermo hinterland inhabited by Saracens.



In 1172, William II ordered the building of an abbey. This complex consisted of the Royal Palace, the abbey and the Church, of which

only the latter is perfectly preserved. The Cathedral is the greatest of all the monuments of the wealth and artistic taste of the Norman Kings in northern Sicily. In 1182 the church, dedicated to the Assumption of the Virgin Mary, was elevated to the rank of a metropolitan Cathedral. It is a national monument of Italy and one of the most important artistic attractions of Sicily check-in at the hotel (Palermo).

The church's plan is a mixture of Eastern Orthodox and Roman Catholic arrangement. The Basilican nave is wide with narrow aisles. The large extent (6,500 square metres) and glittering splendour of the glass mosaics covering the interior which make this church so splendid.

Next, you will continue through the internal road up to the **Baglio di Pianetto winery**, located close to the village of Santa Cristina Gela, in the area of DOC Monreale. Its vineyards are located at an altitude of about 650 meters above sea level.

The area is constantly ventilated and subjected to high temperature changes between day and night. In this mountain location winters are harsh and rainy. The Ficiligno soil, which is clay-siliceous rock with friable substrates, has gradients ranging between 10% and 20%.

The estate is 88 hectares located at an altitude of 650 meters above sea level, 61 now producing, 5 to be re-planted, 3 with olive trees. The vines are Insolia, Catarratto, Viognier, Merlot, Petit Verdot and Cabernet Sauvignon. You will be guided by an expert who will explain the terroir, the vines, the wines and will respond to your queries. After the visit of the winery and the barrels room you will enjoy a delicious rustic lunch.

In the afternoon, you will continue up to the **Agrigento** and you will explore the famed **Valley of the Temples, (declared UNESCO WHS)** built by the Greeks and conquered by the Romans. Founded as a Greek colony in the 6th century BC, Agrigento was one of the greatest cities in the Mediterranean world. The poet Pindar described it as 'man's finest town'.



Your tour includes four of the most important monuments: the Temple of Hercules, the oldest temple, probably dating from the end of the 6th century BC, where nine of the original 38 columns have been re-erected; the beautifully sited Temple of Concordia, the most complete of the temples and the one that was converted into a Christian church in the 6th century AD; the Temple of Hera, which lies half in ruins and the Temple of Zeus – the largest Doric temple ever known – which was never completed. It, too, lies in ruins, having suffered from earthquake damage and the removal of stone to build the port of Porto Empedocle.

Check in at your hotel in Agrigento, dinner and overnight.

Day 4 – October 21

The Roman Villa, Modica (B, L, D)

Following breakfast in the hotel, please meet your private driver and guide at **9:00 a.m.** in the lobby of your chosen hotel in Agrigento and you will be driven along the mountainous interior of the island to the **Unesco WHS of Villa del Casale** located in **Piazza Armerina**, where you marvel at its exquisite floor mosaics, buried underground until the late 19th century, and learn about the recently completed restoration works to preserve them.

Set in the green environment of the area, this monument represents the most important surviving documentation of Roman civilization in Sicily. This patrician villa comprises more than 40 rooms, almost all them artistically paved with mosaic floors that reproducing the Roman life. It was perhaps built approximately between the end of the 3rd century and mid-4th century A.C. and its former owner was an army officer close to the Imperial Court.

Once the visit is completed, we will lunch close to the Roman Villa and then will continue to Modica. Check in at your hotel in Modica, dinner in hotel and overnight.

Day 5 – October 22 Modica, Ibla and Scicli (B, L, D)

After breakfast in the hotel, visit the stunning town of Modica, listed as a **UNESCO WHS** for its vernacular architecture and Baroque churches. The city is divided into "Modica Alta" (Upper Modica) and "Modica Bassa" (Lower Modica) and has maintained some of the most beautiful architecture in Sicily, in the Sicilian Baroque style.

You can admire the large Baroque Cathedral dedicated to San Giorgio, town's patron, the San Pietro church, and the classic Sicilian Baroque bell tower. The town is not only famous for its beautiful baroque architecture, but also for the chocolate: you will reach a local chocolate factory where it will be explained how this particular chocolate is made: Modica is custodian of a 400 year tradition of Sicilian chocolate-making. Today Modica still specialises in making granulous chocolate, often flavoured with chilli pepper, cinnamon or vanilla, that is based on Aztec methods and recipes. Enjoy an optional tasting of chocolate, then board your minibus and drive to another famed **UNESCO WHS**: Ragusa Ibla.

Visit this unique town, entirely rebuilt in Baroque style after the devastating earthquake of 1693. Leaving the bus and proceeding on foot you can admire some of harmonious Baroque architectures as Zocco and Bertini buildings, passing by narrow lanes, arches and climbs where you can visit other beautiful Baroque buildings, the famous San Giorgio church, San Giuseppe and the Ibleo Gardens. Lunch in a local restaurant. After lunch board again your minibus and drive to the **UNESCO WHS**: Scicli. The city lies in a wide valley, surrounded by rocky hills. You can admire the beautiful churches and noble palaces such as St. Ignatius's church in Piazza Italia, the main square, the beautiful St. Bartholomew's church set in the scenic gorge with the same name, Beneventano Palace, Spadaro Palace and so on. At the end of the visit drive back to Modica. Dinner in hotel and overnight.

Day 6 – October 23 Syracuse & Taormina (B, L, D)

Breakfast in your hotel, then meet your private driver and guide at **9:00 a.m.** in the lobby of your hotel and drive through the internal road up to **Syracuse**.



This magnificent town, one of the most important archaeological sites in Sicily, was founded by Greeks in 734 BC. Its growth was rapid. Syracuse soon became one of the most important towns in Sicily. The city has been declared **UNESCO WHS** for the archaeological park and the islet of Ortigia.

Start the visit of this area called "Neapolis" and, the highlights of which are: the Roman amphitheatre, constructed in the second century A.D. during Roman Imperial age was partly carved out from the rock. In the

centre of the area is a rectangular space which was used for the scenic machinery; the Greek theatre, whose cavea is one of the largest ever built by the ancient Greeks: carved out of solid rock and excellently preserved, it has 67 rows, divided into nine sections with eight aisles.

The edifice, still used today, was modified by the Romans, who adapted it to their different kind of spectacles, including also circus games; the rope makers' grotto, the Dionisyus' ear, artificial grotto resembling an earlobe, used as a prison during the war against Athens.

Then take a pleasant walking tour of this charming islet on which the original city was founded. Stroll through Pancali Square, the ruins of the Apollo's temple, Corso Matteotti, the main and most elegant shopping area, Archimede Square with the fountain of Artemis, Cathedral square and Arethusa fountain, overlooking the bay, on a large terrace. Afterwards lunch at a Local restaurant. In the afternoon you will continue to your hotel in Taormina. Dinner in hotel and overnight.



Day 7 – October 24

Taormina, Mount Etna & Montalbano Elicona (B, L)

Breakfast in your hotel. After meeting at your hotel with your guide at **9:00 a.m.** you will start the visit of **Taormina**, well known all over the world and considered one of the most beautiful spots in Sicily.



The tour will be an enjoyable walk discovering this beautiful Medieval town. Your guide will illustrate the highlights of this walking tour which features stops at Cathedral square admiring the façade, at IX April square and Badia square; the view of the Palazzo Corvaja from the exterior and the visit of the Greco-Roman theatre, where you will be able to admire the remains of the ancient theatre with the view of Mount Etna as a backdrop. The visit completed, you will join your minibus and you will be driven to **Etna, UNESCO WHS.**

You will reach an altitude of 1900 meters and visit the Silvestri spent craters. After a Sicilian lunch in a local restaurant continue inland and through the mountains to Montalbano Elicona.

***** End of Itinerary *****

Cost based on minimum 10 paying participants:

Sharing double room	€ 1.599,00 per person, vat included
Single supplement	€ 240,00 vat included

English is the Official Language for this tour.

Tour Package includes:

- All Transportation as per program by private deluxe transportaton. 8 hours per day, fuel, tolls and parking;
- Full day English speaking guide/courier from day 2 to day 7. Local guide at the Valley (2 hours);
- 6 Nights accommodation in 4*star hotels, based on sharing twin/double rooms with private facilities;
- Dinners in hotel, 3 course menu – drinks not included;
- Lunches at local restaurants, 3 course menu with drinks included (1/2 bottle mineral water, ¼ bottle local wine and coffee);
- Wines' tasting and lunch at Baglio Pianetto winery;
- Meals for driver and courier. Tips not included.
- Admission fees to: Cappuccini catacombs, Palatine Chapel, Martorana church, Branciforte Palace, Monreale Cathedral, the Valley of the Temples, the Roman Villa, Syracuse Archaeological area and Cathedral, the Greco-Roman Theatre;
- All city and local taxes, service charges and VAT

Costs for Optional tastings:

Day 5: Modica

Visit chocolate factory and tasting € 8,00 p.p. – vat included

Day 7: Savoca

Lemon granita with cookie at Bar Vitelli € 5,50 p.p. – vat included

Not included in Tour Package price:

- Extras
- Personal expenses
- Gratuities
- Trip Insurance

Payment and Cancellation Policy:

Reservation and Full Payment Due by: 31st May 2018

20% fee for cancellation upon payment

30% fee for cancellation within 01st to 30th September 2018

50% fee for cancellation within 01st to 15th October 2018

75% fee for cancellation within 16th to 20th October 2018

100% fee after 21st October 2018