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## **SICILY GRAN TOUR**

*11 days filled with beautiful landscapes and ancient traditions*



### **D01: ARRIVAL TO CATANIA**

Catania is Sicily's second main city for its population and cultural richness. The population survived through the Greeks deportation, the Carthaginians and the stream of lava from Mount Etna. Nowadays *Piazza del Duomo*, *Via Etnea* and many of the historical buildings has heightened Catania's charme. Many structures are built from three-centuries old lava (the black buildings) which, combined with baroque architecture, treats the city a singular darken twisted beauty. Overnight in Catania.

### **D02: ETNA VOLCAN (SOFT TREKKING UP TO CRATER GUIDED ENVIRONMENTAL VISIT) - SIRACUSA**

Mount Etna is the major and highest vulcano in Europe. Only the cone of the crater rises to 11000 feet above sea level. Plato sailed to Sicily just to catch a glimpse of it in 387 BC. Etna is still an active vulcano and has erupted a dozen times in the past 30 years and more, most spectacularly in 1971, 1982, 2001, 2002 and 2005. Fumes from the top of the vulcano are always a constant companion of Catanese's days. A trip nearby of the crater depends on Mount Etna's temperament, but generally it's possible to walk and enjoy this most unique sublime force of nature. Overnight back in Catania.

### **D03: CATANIA - TAORMINA – SIRACUSA**

Taormina is a charming, lovely, medieval, cliff-hanging town. Extremely popular among tourists. The city panorama is as close to perfection as it could be: heaven on earth. Writers have extolled Taormina's beauty almost since its founding in the 6<sup>th</sup> century BC by Greeks. Goethe (*The Sorrows of young Werther*) and D.H. Lawrence (*Lady Chatterly Lover*) were among the most famous enthusiasts. *Castelmola* is worth a visit. Below the city is Taormina Mare, a nice relaxing little beach enjoyable during summer. The Greeks influence is notable also in the *Teatro Greco*, where they performed their dramas. Late afternoon southward driving to Syracuse, where we stay for overnight.

### **D04: SIRACUSA**

Syracuse is a jewel of Sicily. Astonishing and wonderful, the great ancient capital of Western civilization at the Greek times was founded in 734 BC. Soon it was the major city of Sicily to compete against Athens in beauty, splendor and power. Syracuse became the largest and wealthiest city-state in the Western world

known at the time (Magna Grecia). Siracusa continued to prosper until it was conquered, two centuries after, by the Romans. It still possesses the finest examples of baroque art and architecture, and dramatic Greek and Roman ruins. The *Duomo* is the main historical living beating heart of the city (christian church supported by greek columns). It's worthy wandering around the old city, through the finest cafés, bars and pizzerias. *Parco Archeologico*: In the mainland is a wild grid of venues from *Corso Gelone*, or *Viale Paolo Orsi* to the ancient quarter of Neapolis, where to enjoy the sprawling Parco Archeologico. The *Teatro Greco* (Greek Theater) is the chief monument in the Archaeological Park, one of Sicily's greatest classical sites and the most complete Greek theater surviving from antiquity. The *Anfiteatro Romano* (Roman Amphitheater) reveals a lot about the differences between the Greek and Roman personalities. The Classical Theatre festival is still held in June.

#### **D05: SIRACUSA – NOTO – SCICLI – MODICA - RAGUSA**

**Noto** sadly achieved fame in the Italian panorama because of an earthquake back in 1693. After the tragedy the town was rebuilt from the foundations. The baroque buildings were relocated in the main avenues of the town giving the place a suggestive beauty. The city is constructed like a chessboard. The main square where the baroque façade *Duomo* is located, alongside with beautiful palaces like *Palazzo Ducezio*, *Palazzo Vescovile* and *Palazzo Landolina*. The S. Domenico Church represents the highest peak of the baroque architecture. Scicli is a baroque town jewel. A surprising place out of the main touristic routes.

**Modica** is extremely picturesque and homeland of the poet *Salvatore Quasimodo*. Its fame derived from the exquisite making of gastronomical products. Modica is famous for its chocolate being modeled when cold without melting the sugar, base for numerous recipes i.e. the "*mpanatigghie*" made with meat and chocolate. Ragusa: Romans, Byzantine, Arabs and Norman were among its conquerers. The ancient *Ibla* (Ragusa old name) is a main example of medieval urban planification. The architecture is mostly an expressive and stylish baroque. Overnight in Ragusa

#### **D06: RAGUSA IBLA - RAGUSA CITY AND AREA (COMMISSARIO MONTALBANO FRONTSEA HOUSE)**

Ragusa area is mostly dry and rocky but here there's a gentle and peculiar countryside with grass knolls. This remote part of Sicily hums along to its own tune, clinging to local customs, cuisines and traditions. Ragusa is the reign of the baroque, of the ornaments and fantasy. An extremely variety of landscapes, sometimes oddly contradictory characterizes this part of Sicily's region. Overnight in Ragusa.

#### **D07: RAGUSA - PIAZZA ARMERINA - AGRIGENTO**

Piazza Armerina possesses the simple provincial glamour. The yellow stone architecture, together with bulbous balconies (Sicily's trademark) creates quite an effect. The *Imperial roman villa* is an unmissable highlight thought to have been the hunting lodge of the emperor Maximianus Heraclius. The mosaics were probably made by North African artisans, they are similar to those in the Tunis *Bardo* Museum. The peristyle leads to the main *villa*, where in the *Salone del Circo* many mosaics illustrating Roman circus sports can be seen. Even a touch of eroticism is present, revealing bacchanalian festivities that Maximianus conjured up. In case of early arrival in Agrigento afternoon it is possible to go straight to visit the Valley of the Temples at sunset. Overnight in Agrigento.

#### **D08: AGRIGENTO - MAZARA DEL VALLO – SELINUNTE - MARSALA**

Agrigento differs from the rest of the region because of its colours, much livelier and more brilliant with favorable weather conditions, with the deep blue of the sea mixing with light blue of the sky. The atmosphere is even more suggestive thanks to the presence of the Valley of the Temples (*Valle dei Templi*) where the most impressive ancient Greek architecture still remains vivid and lively. The city was built in the VII century BC by the Greeks. It was the battlefield of the war against the Carthaginians, who conquered it in 406 BC. Ruled by the Romans in 210 BC and conquered also by the Arabs. (On the way, the village of Naro could be a possible visit). **Mazara del Vallo** was one of the first Phoenician colonies, it grew wealthy during the Arab domination. Fishing and agriculture are the main inhabitants' occupation and Mazara is well known for its great harbor (if you want an experience, try to go to the fish market). *Selinunte*, whose name means *celery*, is an unexpected example of how opulent the ancient society was, having reached immense growth and richness during the VII century BC. Overnight in Palermo.

**Marsala**'s name derives from the arab "Marsa Allah", but its history is much more ancient. Built in 397 B.C. became the most influent Punic center of Sicily. Its fortifications were the most important feature of the city since they were considered impregnable. The name of the city is also normally relating to the liquor, *Marsala*, which is a very sweet white wine usually used for cakes, widely produced in town. Visit of a distillery. On in Marsala.

#### **D09: SEGESTA – ERICE - PALERMO**

Driving northward to visit *Segesta*, another perfect greek religious monument. *Erice* is a nice hamlet from where to observe a detailed panorama of the northwestern part of Sicily. Early arrival for the local market *Ballarò*. Overnight in Palermo.

#### **D10: PALERMO SIGHTSEEING**

*Palazzo dei Normanni*. Also called *Palazzo Reale* (Royal Palace), today is the headquarters of the Sicilian Regional Parliament. Built by the Arabs in the IX century on the existing structures of an old Phoenician fortress. During the Normans it was exploited as a splendid royal residence.

*Cappella Palatina*. Considered as one of the most spectacular Norman existing monument, it was built by Ruggiero II in 1130. Fusion of architecture and splendid painting it is well preserved by inhabitants.

*S.Giovanni degli Eremiti*. This church was called for and built by Ruggiero II in 1136. It was an old gregorian monastery nonetheless architecturally Islamical. *Cattedrale*. The church, complex in structure and history, keeps the most astonishing mosaics. Built in 1184 by the archbishop Gualtiero Offamilio, who chose this particular place because originally it was an ancient basilica, rebuilt by the arabs as a mosque. Home of the tombs of *Federico II*, *Enrico VII*, *Costanza d'Aragona*. Overnight in Palermo.

#### **D11: MONREALE CATHEDRAL**

Palermo is the most sumptuous city of Sicily, chosen by the Norman to be their ancient main city. The history wanders from the Norman's architecture to the Islamic. The Normans conquered Sicily when the Arabs power was fading away. Artistically Palermo is a fusion of harmonious roman, byzantine and islamical styles. *Monreale cathedral* is the most intense example of architectural beauty of our journey. From here, after the visit, we give you our farewell. Transfer to the airport.

#### **The individual participation fee includes:**

- All the transfers by private bus + driver
- Hotels 3-4 stars or typical Sicilian Mansions (Double Occupancy B&B)
- Half Board (dinner in typical restaurants or hotel)
- Sicilian English-speaking professional guide, other languages on request
- Medical/baggage insurance

#### **It does not include:**

- Entrance charges for museums, churches or other places.
- Single Room supplement 40€ per night.
- Tips, beverages, or any extras
- Supplement Full Board 140€
- International/domestic flights (can be provided – ask for quotation)

*All dietary requirements will be catered (although Sicilian food is remarkable part of the richness of the tour).*

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