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## **CORE OF SICILY FLY&DRIVE**

*8 days to discover a gem of history and nature*



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

Car Pickup at Catania airport. 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 (OPTIONAL: 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 in Siracusa

### **D03: 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. Siracusa 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.

#### **D04: SIRACUSA - NOTO (SCICLI) - 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. 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.

#### **D05: 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.

#### **D06: AGRIGENTO - SELINUNTE - PALERMO**

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. *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.

#### **D07: 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 monuments, it was built by Ruggiero II in 1130. It's a fusion of architecture and splendid painting and it is well preserved by its 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 Islamic.

*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.

#### **D08: MONREALE CATHEDRAL (UNESCO SITE)**

Palermo is the most sumptuous city of Sicily, chosen by the Normans to be their ancient main city. The history wanders from the Normans' 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 Islamic styles. **Monreale Cathedral** is the most intense example of architectural beauty of our journey. From here, after the guided visit (optional), transfer to the airport of Catania (3hrs drive) for car dropoff.

**The individual participation fee includes:**

- Large car for the whole trip duration (airport/airport)
- Hotels 3-4 stars or typical Palazzi (Double Occupancy B&B)
- Medical/baggage insurance

**It does not include:**

- International/domestic flights (we can take care of them on your behalf)
- Entrance charges for museums, churches or other places.
- Guided tours
- Single Room supplement 40€ per night.
- Meals, beverages, tips or any extras
- Fuel and car tolls

**Our available activities for an unforgettable experience (on request):**

- Guided tours for every tour destination by local professional and experienced guides (in English, other languages if requested)
- Cooking classes by local selected chefs hosted in amazing venues.
- Guided tour to Mount Etna's craters (environmental official guides)
- Local products tasting at selected producers'
- Traditional sicilian cuisine meals made with fresh local products at selected restaurants
- Bicycle tours (individual or guided)

***...and many other suggestions***

**Note:** *This itinerary is available for the whole year round.*

*Once you will confirm the trip, davincitravels will provide for your chosen day-by-day itinerary with the hotel list and seasonal events and festivals that are worth a visit.*

**Vouchers:** *You will be sent via email the prepaid vouchers for the hotels/palazzi and the medical/baggage insurance, the car rental vouchers and the flight tickets (optional)*

**Car rental:** *the car will be prepaid by davincitravels, but it will be on the driver's name, and a valid credit card in the driver's name is mandatory at the withdraw desk.*

*Davincitravels will pay for a basic car insurance cover. If you wish to have a full cover, either we upgrade it on your booking with a price increase or you can ask for it at the car rental desk.*

*Bear in mind that the car will be under your responsibility, we suggest making a short video of the car condition at the pick-up and drop-off to avoid any unnecessary controversy.*

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