

SICILY CULTURAL TOUR

12 Days/11 Nights

19 - 30 May 2027

Tour Highlights...

Palermo Markets | Monreale Cathedral | Cefalu Charm | Madonie Mountains | Mt Etna Roman Mosaics | Valley of Temples | Noto Baroque | Ortigia Evenings



Summary

Discover a place where volcanic landscapes, ancient ruins, bustling markets and long, lingering lunches are woven into everyday life.

From Palermo's vibrant streets and the medieval charm of Cefalù to the wild landscapes of Mount Etna and the honey-coloured Baroque towns of southeastern Sicily, this journey reveals the many layers of this captivating Mediterranean island.

Staying in mountain towns, rural retreats and the historic heart of Ortigia, discover the soul of Sicily through regional cuisine, ancient ruins, dramatic landscapes and time-honoured traditions. Food is a highlight throughout the journey, with a hands-on Sicilian cooking class, a family-run winery, leisurely countryside lunches and plenty of opportunities to savour the flavours that make Sicilian cuisine one of Italy's most celebrated regional traditions.

Along the way, hike through the Madonie Mountains and the volcanic landscapes of Etna, explore the remarkable Villa Romana del Casale and Valley of the Temples, and discover Caltagirone's centuries-old ceramic tradition. Wander through the elegant streets of Noto, soak up the relaxed atmosphere of Marzamemi and finish in beautiful Ortigia, where Greek, Roman and Baroque history come together.

It is a journey through Sicily at its most authentic - rich in flavour, history, landscapes and unforgettable experiences.

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Day 1 Benvenuti in Italia! Welcome to Sicily (D)

Our Sicilian adventure begins the moment we land in Palermo. You will be met on arrival at the airport and whisked into the city to your centrally located hotel, where you can settle in and catch your breath. This evening, we come together for a Welcome Dinner of traditional Sicilian flavours and local hospitality - a delicious introduction to the island we'll be exploring over the days ahead.

O/N 2 nts Hotel Politeama (or similar)

Day 2 Relaxing in Palermo (B)

Strap on your walking shoes, it's time to discover Palermo with a local guide – colourful, chaotic, wonderfully atmospheric and bursting with history. Wander through the lively streets, where Arab-Norman architecture, grand Baroque buildings, bustling markets and centuries of history reveal the many cultures that have shaped the city over the centuries. Learn about the history and everyday realities of the influence of the Mafia, as well as the civic movement against Mafioso power as you explore the city. This afternoon, it's your time to ease into Sicilian life with a leisurely coffee, a little people-watching and perhaps your first cannolo - purely in the interests of cultural research, of course.

Day 3 Palermo, Monreale & Castelbuono (B)

Leaving the capital behind we head into the hills to Monreale, perched above Palermo and the beautiful Conca d'Oro. Visit its magnificent Norman Cathedral, famed for its extraordinary golden mosaics and beautiful cloister, before taking in the panoramic views across the valley towards Palermo. From here we continue into the Madonie Mountains to Castelbuono, a charming medieval town of cobbled streets, mountain scenery and plenty of Sicilian character. Free from the crowds, local life in Castelbuono takes centre stage. Once we have checked into our accommodation the afternoon day is free - there are medieval alleys, sleepy piazzas, a 14th century castle and a contemporary art gallery to discover.

O/N 2 nts Castelbuono, Hotel Paradiso delle Madonie (or similar)

Day 4 Madonie Mountains & Cefalu (B)

Today, swap cobbled streets for mountain trails as we discover one of Sicily's most beautiful and unspoilt natural areas in nearby Madonie National Park. Accompanied by a hiking guide, we will hike through peaceful woodlands and spectacular mountain landscapes, discovering the rich flora, fauna and traditions of the region. After the hike, and a quick refresh, we'll head into the picturesque coastal town of Cefalù, where the mountains meet the Mediterranean, for an afternoon exploring the town. Discover the town's fascinating history and admire its magnificent Norman Cathedral, a UNESCO World Heritage Site, before exploring the atmospheric historic centre, with the sparkling Mediterranean on one side and dramatic La Rocca towering above on the other. From mountain trails to Mediterranean shores, it's been quite the day - fortunately there is time for an aperitivo before heading back to Castelbuono for the evening.



Day 5 Etna Countryside and Sicilian Cooking (B,D)

This morning, we leave the mountains behind and head towards Mount Etna, Sicily's ever-present volcanic giant. Our destination is Santa Venerina, a charming town nestled on Etna's eastern slopes, where vineyards, citrus groves and dramatic volcanic landscapes set the scene. On arrival, check into your accommodation and take some time to settle in and enjoy your surroundings before getting ready for the afternoon's culinary adventure. The Etna countryside is the location for a hands-on Sicilian cooking class, where the kitchen becomes our classroom and fresh, seasonal ingredients take centre stage. Learn the secrets behind some of eastern Sicily's much-loved dishes, guided by local cooks who know that food is best made with generous handfuls of this and a liberal splash of that. Enjoy the feast you've created, accompanied by good company, great flavours, and the satisfaction of a job deliciously well done.

O/N 2 nts Santa Venerina, Agriturismo Tenuta San Michele

Day 6 Mt Etna and Winery (B,L)

Volcanic landscapes, ancient lava flows and a glass of Etna wine - today brings together three of Sicily's great pleasures: adventure, scenery and (more) very good food. We head to the northern side of Mount Etna, a wilder and less touristy part of the volcano, characterised by forests, ancient lava flows and dramatic volcanic landscapes. We will take an easy hike through this fascinating environment, exploring some of the area's extinct craters and discovering the forces that have shaped Europe's highest active volcano. Then it's time to trade volcanic dust for a table at a small family-run winery nestled in the volcanic countryside. We'll settle in for a leisurely lunch and wine tasting, and discover why Sicily's volcanic soils are producing some seriously interesting wines.

Day 7 Piazza Armerina & Villa Romana Del Casale (B,D)

From volcanoes to Roman mosaics, the journey continues into the heart of Sicily. We depart the Mount Etna region and travel inland through the rolling landscapes of the Sicilian countryside to Piazza Armerina, our home for the next three nights. The highlight of the day is the magnificent Villa Romana del Casale, one of Sicily's most important archaeological treasures and a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Explore the remains of this impressive Roman villa, renowned for its exceptionally well-preserved and elaborate mosaic floors. These remarkable artworks offer a fascinating glimpse into the daily life, culture and extraordinary luxury of the late Roman Empire – proof that the Romans knew a thing or two about decorating a floor! Arriving in Piazza Armerina in the afternoon, the remainder of the day is at leisure. Take time to explore this charming hilltop town, our home for the next 3 nights, wander its medieval streets and contemplate the region's colourful history – preferably with an aperitivo in hand!

O/N 3 nts Piazza Armarina, Hotel Gangi (or similar)



Day 8 Caltagirone & Sicilian Ceramics (B)

Colour, creativity and centuries of craftsmanship take centre stage as you head to Caltagirone, a beautiful Baroque town renowned throughout Sicily for its long tradition of ceramic artistry. Meet your local guide for a walking tour of the historic centre, discovering elegant streets, churches and colourful ceramic decorations. See the famous Scala di Santa Maria del Monte, an impressive staircase of 142 steps, each decorated with hand-painted ceramic tiles representing different periods and styles of Sicilian pottery. It's quite possibly the most colourful way to get your steps in! The experience continues with a hands-on ceramic class at a local workshop. Under the guidance of skilled artisans, learn about the techniques and traditions behind Caltagirone's celebrated ceramics and have the opportunity to create or decorate your own piece - a rather lovely souvenir with a story attached.

Day 9 Valley of the Temples & Agrigento (B,L)

Today brings one of Sicily's great archaeological treasures into focus with a visit to the magnificent Valley of the Temples, one of Sicily's most remarkable archaeological sites and a UNESCO World Heritage Site. We will explore this extraordinary landscape, where beautifully preserved ancient Greek temples stand among olive and almond trees with sweeping views across the countryside. With our specialist guide, we will discover the story of ancient Akragas, along with the history, mythology and traditions woven into this remarkable site. Following the visit, escape into the Agrigento countryside for a leisurely lunch in a peaceful rural setting. Enjoy traditional Sicilian flavours prepared with fresh, local ingredients and experience the warm hospitality of the region – because all that ancient history is hungry work! Return to Piazza Armerina for a quiet evening back in your village home.

Day 10 Baroque Architecture and Seaside Villages (B,L)

Baroque beauty, seaside charm and a little Sicilian dolce vita await as you leave Piazza Armerina and head towards Sicily's beautiful southeastern coast. Your first stop is Noto, one of Sicily's finest examples of Baroque architecture and, yes, another UNESCO World Heritage Site. Wander through its elegant historic centre, following the main street past magnificent churches, palaces and the honey-coloured cathedral. There's a reason Noto is considered one of Sicily's architectural stars – and it certainly knows how to show off. Continue to the picturesque fishing village of Marzamemi, for a leisurely seaside lunch. From here we continue to the tiny island of Ortigia, the historic heart of Syracuse. After settling in, you might like to wander through the colourful streets, past ancient ruins and along lively waterfronts, with sea views around every corner.

O/N 2 nts Ortigia, Hotel Livingston (or similar)

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Day 11 Beautiful Ortigia (B,D)

Surrounded by the sparkling waters of the Ionian Sea, Ortigia is the historic heart of Syracuse and a small island steeped in more than 2,500 years of history. Connected to mainland Sicily by bridges, this compact maze of ancient streets, elegant piazzas and honey-coloured buildings brings Greek, Roman, medieval and Baroque influences together in one wonderfully atmospheric setting. Enjoy time exploring Ortigia at your own pace. Later in the day, meet your local guide for an evening walking tour. Discover Ortigia's fascinating layers of history as you stroll through atmospheric streets and elegant squares, taking in some of the island's most beautiful landmarks as the evening begins. Conclude your Sicilian journey with a farewell dinner at a traditional local trattoria. Enjoy authentic Sicilian dishes and a warm, convivial atmosphere – the perfect setting to share memories and raise a glass to a wonderful Sicilian adventure.

Day 12 Farewell to Sicily (B)

Sadly, all good things - including leisurely lunches, ancient ruins and more UNESCO sites than you can shake a stick at – must come to an end. Tour concludes after breakfast.

Not ready to go home yet? Extend your Mediterranean escape with three nights in Malta, soaking up more history, sunshine and island life (see below). Or, if you're ready to swap Sicily's sunshine for something a little more active, join us in France for a cycling adventure through the Loire Valley - exploring grand châteaux, beautiful countryside and charming French villages by e-bike (see separate itinerary for details)

Malta Extension

PRICE INCLUDES

- Train from Syracuse to Pozzallo
- Ferry from Pozzallo, Sicily to Valetta, Malta
- Arrival transfer
- 3 nights in a 4 star hotel in Valetta
- Street Food Walking Tour
- Departure transfer

COST PER PERSON

- Twin or double share: \$1,285/person
- Single: \$2,185/person

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The Details

PRICE INCLUDES

- Small-Group Escorted Tour- Min 6 -Max 14
- ICON host, professional guides and drivers
- 11 nights 3 & 4* hotels and agritourismos
- Meals as per itinerary 11B, 3L, 4D
- Group airport transfers
- Entrance fees and sightseeing as per itinerary

PRICE EXCLUDES:

- Flights from Australia
- Travel Insurance (compulsory)
- Meals not mentioned
- Tipping for guides and drivers
- Optional tours not included in the itinerary
- All expenses of a personal nature

LET US HELP YOU WITH:

- Booking flights
- Travel insurance
- Pre or post tour travel

COST PER PERSON

- Twin or double share: \$8,280/person
- Single supp: \$1,950/person (own room)
- Solo Twin share: availability subject to room mate match

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