



Sicily

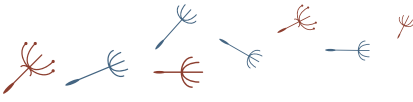
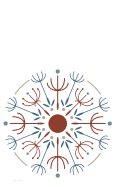


Ragusa Ibla

Heart & Soul of Sicily

Diverse history, stunning scenery and tempting food make Sicily one of the Mediterranean's most satisfying destinations. Here the best journeys unravel the island's storied past, spotlighting the Greek, Roman and Norman contributions to the architecture, landscapes and cuisine that greet visitors today.

This 9-night tour of Sicily's north and south focuses less on tourist hotspots than its below-radar treasures and traditional gastronomy. In-between visits to Agrigento's UNESCO-listed Valley of the Temples, baroque Ortigia and gritty Palermo, we discover hidden towns like Naro and Scicli, unwind at intimate hotels, and eat at charming trattorias, sample home-grown wines and chocolate, and devour fresh seafood and pasta at boutique local restaurants and agritourism estates.



Where is Sicily?



Why are we staying in 4 hotels for this tour?

Sitting in an important strategic spot for trading connecting the Western and Eastern Mediterranean, Sicily has always been an incredible melting pot of civilizations and nationalities over the centuries. The Greeks, The Romans, The Arabs, the French and the Spanish all left their mark across the island. By staying in different places, we can experience the rich cultural highlights of this remarkable island and its spectacular architecture, temples, cathedrals, art and cuisine. We travel out of season when the island is wonderfully uncrowded and comfortably warm with average temperatures of 20°C.

Our carefully handpicked hotels are selected for their unique locations, friendly service and proximity to iconic ancient attractions. These include the welcoming family-owned Al Madarig situated in the authentic Arabic fishing town of Castellammare del Golfo. Whilst the charming Colleverde Park in Agrigento sits just above the famous 'Valley of the Temples' – the Greek city of Agrigento – its lush tropical gardens are the perfect setting for a sundowner. The Principe d'Aragona is in the centre of the ancient baroque town of Modica with its magnificent cathedrals and buzzing shops, restaurants and cafes. Surrounded by Greek ruins, ancient alleyways and tiny seafood restaurants, the Baroque styled Hotel Livingstone in coastal city of Ortigia looks out across azure blue waters.



Castellammare del Golfo



Modica

Where are we staying?

Nights 1-3

Al Madarig

★★★

Castellammare del Golfo

Our first stay is the Al Madarig Hotel, which occupies a prime position in traditional Castellammare del Golfo. Flanking the Piazza Petrolo, the hotel is a long-standing part of the town, with friendly and helpful staff, a low-key atmosphere, and a commitment to local sustainability. The location is hard to equal: overlooking the turquoise bay, with numerous restaurants, cafes, and shops within strolling distance.

With a unique and authentic charm, the two-storey hotel overlooking the sea features a SPA, a modern wellness centre with a range of relaxing treatments available. Spacious and stylish standard guest rooms with a cheerful Mediterranean design offer modern comfort after a busy day sightseeing.



Nights 4-5

Colleverde Park

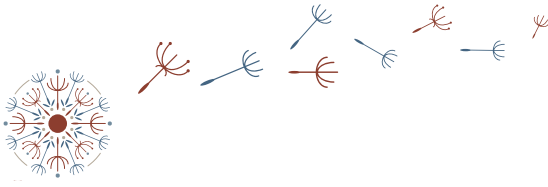
★★★★

Agrigento

Standing in gardens two kilometres from Agrigento centre, the modern Colleverde Park is a 15-minute walk from the Valley of the Temples and boasts panoramic views over its ruins and the sea from its grounds. Run by the Sinatra family, the hotel has a charmingly old-school air, with 19th century Sicilian furniture and ceramics dominating the lobby lounge and lending an elegant feel that matches the friendly service.

Sleekly designed guest rooms feature air-conditioning, mini-bar and satellite TV for a comfortable stay. The surrounding hotel gardens are full of trees and lush green shady areas - a peaceful space to relax with a drink or just enjoy the views.





Nights 6-8

Principe d'Aragona

★★★★

Modica

Our base in Modica is the Principe d'Aragona, a highly rated, privately owned hotel, which benefits from a convenient location and has its own outdoor swimming pool. This 4-star hotel stands on the pleasant Corso Umberto I, an easy 5 minute walk from Modica's old centre, so it is ideally placed for when you have free time to explore the shops and sights of the town.

Just steps from the majestic Basilica of San Giorgio and the Cathedral of San Pietro, Principe d'Aragona is the perfect base for those wanting to soak up Modica's Sicilian Baroque art scene. Bright and modern guest rooms feature air-conditioning, Wi-Fi, a safe and mini bar for a comfortable stay.



Night 9

Grand Hotel

★★★★★

Ortigia

This plush 5-star hotel is a fabulous place to relax after a day's sightseeing in the old city of Ortigia. Occupying an impressive 19th-century building overlooking the harbour, it's as far from a shiny chain hotel as one can find - with plenty of period charm, flowery Liberty-style architecture and charming service from its attentive staff.



Night 9

Hotel Livingston

★★★★★

Ortigia

Breathtaking 360-degree views of the Ionian Sea surround this much sought after hotel. The completely renovated historic building offers magnificent vistas from the panoramic restaurant and terraces for memorable moments over dinner or aperitifs. With ornate and rich interior design, air-conditioned elegant guest rooms are furnished to the highest standards with comfortable beds, satellite TV and Italian marble bathrooms.



What are we doing each day?

Day 1 Fly to Palermo

On arrival we meet our tour manager ready for our transfer to our hotel, the charming Al Madarig in the picturesque north-coast fishing town of Castellammare del Golfo. We enjoy a coffee stop en route and after arrival at the Madarig, relax over a welcome drink. Later, we make the short stroll to a local trattoria for a light evening meal - our first opportunity to relish the island's distinctive cuisine.

Meals included: Dinner

Day 2 Erice & Segesta

Today is devoted to two of Sicily's lesser-known gems: Erice and Segesta. First, we travel to Erice, a walled town crowned by the Castello di Venere (Castle of Venus). We uncover its ancient Greek origins as we trace the medieval lanes past noble palaces and churches, and admire majestic views towards Trapani and the Egadi Islands. After time for an independent lunch, we journey to Segesta to see its magnificent Greek temple - an unfinished Doric jewel perched on a hilltop - and its Greek amphitheatre, dating from the 2nd century BC. There is time to mull over our fantastic discoveries during dinner at the stylish La Cambusa trattoria in Castellammare tonight, which specialises in mouth-watering pastas and seafood.

Meals included: Breakfast, Dinner

Day 3 Monreale & Palermo

A full day of sightseeing awaits, with guided tours of Monreale and Palermo. In Monreale, we focus on the splendid Norman Cathedral, an architectural wonder awash with 12th-century gold-leaf mosaics. In Palermo, a guided tour through the bustling streets takes us to a typically lively street market and the Palatine Chapel, famous for its marble paintings and glittering mosaics. We cap today with a wine-tasting, traditional meal, and fascinating talk on Sicily's tuna fishing industry at the wonderful Baglio Fontana, a 19th century agritourism farm framed by lemon orchards.

Meals included: Breakfast, Dinner

Day 4 Selinunte & Agrigento

We set off for Selinunte, one of the Mediterranean's greatest archaeological parks, whose sun-baked remnants date from the 7th to the 4th century BCE, and include Greek temples, an agora and residential dwellings. After exploring here, we sit down to a long and leisurely lunch at the fabulous Da Vittorio ristorante, which is famous for its freshly caught seafood and featured on both Rick Stein's Great Mediterranean Escapes and BBC2's Sicily Unpacked TV series. Having earlier checked out of our Castellammare hotel, a scenic afternoon drive now takes us to the hilltop south-western town of Agrigento, our base for the next two nights.

Meals included: Breakfast, Lunch

Day 5 Agrigento Valley of the Temples, Olive Farm & Naro

This morning brings a walking tour of Agrigento's stunning Valley of the Temples, a globally important archaeological site awarded UNESCO World Heritage status. Marvel at the well-preserved Greek temples as a local guide charts their history. We then stop at the family-run Mandranova olive oil farm for a delicious olive oil tasting and home-grown lunch before continuing to Naro, a charming town with a

medieval fortress and panoramic views. Dinner this evening will be in a local trattoria.

Meals included: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Day 6 Villa de Casale & Modica

After saying 'arrivederci' to Agrigento, we make our way to the Villa del Casale, a UNESCO-listed Roman villa, which houses 40 stunning floor mosaics, each depicting scenes from imperial Roman life. From here, we travel to our hotel in Modica, one of Sicily's eight Val di Noto towns rebuilt in Baroque style after a 1693 earthquake, and known for its chocolate-making. After an early-evening welcome drink at our hotel, we head for supper at Osteria dei Sapor Perduti, a restaurant just 5 minutes walk away from our hotel, and whose name means 'forgotten flavours', so expect a real Sicilian treat for our taste buds!

Meals included: Breakfast, Dinner

Day 7 Modica

We join a local guide for a walking tour of Modica; admiring its Baroque buildings as we roam its tiny lanes and staircases, before we visit the Antica Dolceria Bonajuto, the town's oldest chocolaterie, where we sample some of its classic, rich chocolate. Afterwards, we have free time for a snack lunch. We then continue to Scicli, another Val di Noto jewel and filming location for the popular Inspector Montalbano TV series. Discover its Baroque streets before returning to Modica for dinner at a local osteria.

Meals included: Breakfast, Dinner

Day 8 Ibla di Ragusa & Modica

The UNESCO-protected Baroque gem of Ibla di Ragusa boasts elegant palaces and churches, and is dominated by the magnificent Cathedral of San Giorgio. After experiencing the town, we return to Modica, where the afternoon is left free for you to sample its sights and shops as you wish or just to relax at your hotel. Dinner tonight is at the prestigious Relais Torre Marabino, an agritourism estate based in a Norman fortress, which produces its own organic fare and wines.

Meals included: Breakfast, Dinner

Day 9 Modica & Ortigia

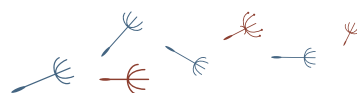
We depart Modica for Ortigia, the island-based old quarter of Syracuse, which is connected to the main city by three bridges. A guided walk reveals its quaint alleys and Baroque piazzas, before a delicious lunch at the Taberna Sveva restaurant which showcases its old-school local cuisine. After lunch, we check in to our Ortigia hotel, leaving the afternoon and evening free for you to enjoy this wonderful town and its eateries.

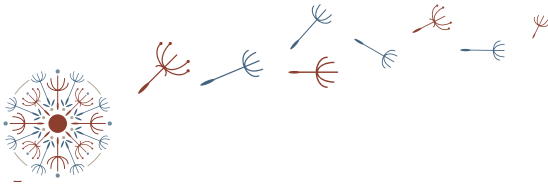
Meals included: Breakfast, Lunch

Day 10 Departure

We transfer to the airport to return to the UK.

Meals included: Breakfast





Our handpicked highlights

If it isn't included, it isn't worth it

- Visit stunning UNESCO-listed ancient sites such as Agrigento's Valley of the Temples and the del Casale, all free from the summer crowds and queues
- Pair your sightseeing with generous helpings of gastronomy - eating at local trattorias and enjoying home-grown wines and produce throughout
- Stay in small hotels and 'real' towns like Castellammare and Modica, where locals go about their lives year-round
- Enjoy authentic experiences that money can't buy, including dining at a private 'Baglio' farm and learning the art of Sicilian chocolate-making at a chocolaterie
- Avoid tourist magnets like Taormina and Cefalu, and discover off-radar towns like Naro and Ragusa Ibla



Some of our unique artisan experiences

Against a backdrop of rich heritage from ancient civilisations and UNESCO listed sites like Agrigento's Valley of the Temples and the Villa Del Casale, Sicily has been named as a European Region of Gastronomy. You can enjoy some mouth-watering moments for yourself on our authentic Heart & Soul of Sicily small group tour.



Mandranova olive farm & lunch

Enjoy mouth-watering authentic Sicilian dishes and an olive tasting at the family owned Mandranova, an organic olive oil farm in a delightful setting. Centuries-old olive trees and almond trees surround the beautiful farmhouse. Using only home-grown produce, Silvia and Giuseppe are proud of their zero-carbon footprint restaurant as Silvia creates dishes 'like Nonna used to make' paired with the very best of local wines.



Baglio Fontana

We step back in time to Baglio Fontana, an authentic and charming Moorish Sicilian farmhouse dating back centuries and beautifully renovated by the Di Vita family. In this unique setting with a warm welcome from the owners, we sample a selection of their own wines and a delicious dinner using locally sourced and seasonal fresh produce. Giving us a real insight into the rich agricultural and fishing industries of the area is a series of family-owned historical artefacts on display.



Torre Marabino farewell dinner

We offer a memorable final dinner at the prestigious Torre Marabino, a secluded oasis in beautiful southeast Sicily. A converted Norman watchtower surrounded by its own organic farm and winery producing olive oil, wines and fresh vegetables. With a warm Sicilian welcome, Francesco and his team will make you feel at home as they serve refreshing aperitifs and mouth-watering canapés before enjoying chef-inspired Sicilian fish dishes or home-made pasta in a beautiful setting.