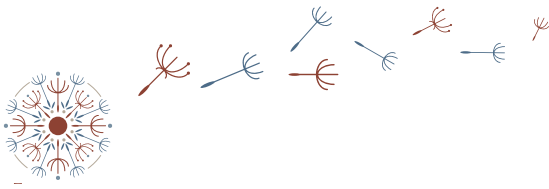


## Heart & Soul of Sicily

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.





# Handpicked Highlights

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

- Delve into Sicily on a 9-night 'shoulder-season' tour when the island is wonderfully uncrowded and comfortably warm, with average March temperatures of 20°C
- Visit stunning UNESCO-listed ancient sites such as Agrigento's Valley of the Temples and the Vila 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

## The order of visits & attractions may change

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.

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.



Ortigia



Segesta

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.

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.

# Your Day to Day Itinerary

## Day 1 Arrive in Sicily

We fly to Palermo/Catania airport and 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.

**Meals included: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner**

## Day 6 Vila de Casale & Modica

After saying 'arrivederci' to Agrigento, we make our way to the Vila 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 Sapori 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, Lunch**

## 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**

