

Sicily and her Isles Private Tour

Blue Dot Travel

Go somewhere different





SICILY AND HER ISLES

Sicily is billed as perhaps the world's first true cosmopolitan, multi-racial society. Asians, Africans and Europeans have all ruled this island at various stages. Forget your impression left by The Godfather... Sicily is a friendly, vibrant, bustling island fringed with golden orchards, lush forests and the unforgettable soaring Mount Etna. If you love food, history and quaint villages, you cannot help but fall in love with Sicily – the Mediterranean's largest island.

Between Sicily and Tunisia lies the tiny volcanic island of Pantelleria. While Italian, the Arabic influence in architecture and culture is undeniable. Its pre-history of dwellings and artefacts takes you back 35,000 years, and bronze-age defensive ramparts are still found here. It played a strategic part in World War II due to its coveted trans-continental location in the Straits of Sicily. Much of the black-rock island is covered in vineyards, and those who love sweeter wines might develop a taste for the regional tippale Passita.

The Aeolian Islands lie in the Tyrrhenian Sea off the north coast of Sicily and near Italy's "foot". They comprise of a volcanic archipelago of 8 islands, with Mt Stromboli - on the island of Stromboli - being highly active over the years. At night time, a spectacular display of lava and fire is not uncommon. The largest of the islands is Lipari which, in the middle of summer, attracts many tourists from the mainland.



**Day 1
Transit**

Depart Sydney or Melbourne for your flight to Palermo via Rome. All flights to be confirmed. Additional time in Rome on the way over or on return is easily arranged. *Meals in flight.*



**Day 2
Palermo**

On arrival into Palermo, you'll be collected at the airport and transferred to your hotel in the city. Here, you will stay for 5 nights. The rest of the

day is for rest and recuperation after your long flight. If you'd like to fill in some of the time with sight-seeing, the "hop-on-hop-off" bus is a great way to see the city. Watch the vespers swerve in and out of the traffic! There's a welcome dinner is at a local restaurant. *D*

**Day 3
Palermo – Monreale – Palermo**

Today you will see the core sites of the capital and Monreale. After breakfast, our first stop is Monreale to see where the Arab-Norman art and architecture reached the pinnacle of its glory with the Duomo.

Launched in 1174 by William II, it represents scenes from the Old and New Testaments all in golden mosaics. You'll have time to stroll around the quaint township before heading back to Palermo to the cathedral and the magnificent Arab-Norman Palatine Chapel. You'll continue to the Piazza Pretoria and Via Maqueda, whose "four corners" converge Palermo at a quartet of baroque palaces left over from the heyday of Spanish rule dating from 1560. You'll also visit the Vucciria markets and other places of interest before heading back to your hotel in the afternoon.

B/D

**Day 4
Palermo – Cefalu – Palermo**

After breakfast, you'll head East from Palermo for a day trip to the gorgeous township of Cefalu, facing the Tyrrhenian Sea. Cefalu



is a charming coastal town home to a massive Norman Cathedral with outstanding mosaics. After a guided tour of the town, you'll have free time for lunch and then a little shopping before heading back to Palermo. Lunch is at your leisure at one of the many

gorgeous restaurants by the sea. (You must try the delicious cannoli, famous in the region). *B/D*

Day 5

Erice – Salt Pans – Marsala – Palermo

Today, tour parts of western Sicily – noting that the order of the destinations may change. In Marsala, you'll visit the cathedral, dedicated to St. Thomas of Canterbury, and the archeological museum with its jewel, a Punic ship (the sole example in the world of a "liburna", an agile warship roughly 35m in length). We'll visit a local oil factory and winery, where we'll have lunch and taste their local Sicilian wines. Later we travel between Trapani and Marsala on the Salt Way Road. Explore the historic saltpan works, where the ancient tradition of harvesting salt from the sea is still practiced. This afternoon, continue to Erice. The Elymians settled the medieval town of Erice, which was an important religious site associated with the goddess Venus. Wander through its ancient streets and visit some of the famous homemade pastry shops - world-famous for marzipan and other delicacies like almond and pistachio pastries. Later, return to Palermo. *B/L/D*

Day 6

Mazara Del Valle – Selinunte – Palermo

Mazara del Vallo is home of the Dancing Satyr. This large bronze statue, which probably dates to the 3rd century BC, was discovered 500 metre under water in the Strait of Sicily in 1998 and now resides in the Museo del Satiro in Sant'Egidio Church. Piazza della Repubblica is at the heart of the city with Baroque buildings such as the Bishop's Palace and the cathedral and a statue of San Vito. The town was founded by the Phoenicians and, like many other towns in Sicily, has a history featuring Greek, Roman, Arab and Norman conquests. It was an important port in antiquity and is still a major fishing town. The harbour has the largest fishing vessel fleet in Italy. You'll drive near the city of Castelvetro, to Selinunte, one of the most ancient archeological sites in Sicily. This ancient Greek colony, founded in 650 B.C., is divided into four zones: the acropolis with its public and religious buildings, the ancient city with the ruins of various homes, the eastern temples, which give some idea of the wealth and importance of this Greek settlement in the 6th century B.C. and the Sanctuary of Malophoros, dedicated to Demeter, the goddess of fertility and harvest. At the Acropolis you will visit Temples A and C. The first temple to be spotted as the track climbs uphill is the ruin of Temple A. Within the wall with the doorway into the "naòs" (a small chapel) are two spiral staircases, the most ancient examples known to date. Temple C, which was re-erected in 1925, is the earliest surviving temple at Selinus and was probably dedicated to Apollo or Heracles. Temple G is the second largest Greek temple in Sicily, after the Temple of Olympian Zeus at Agrigento. *B/D*

Day 7

Palermo – Agrigento

Today is a later start. Depart Palermo after breakfast for your next destination – Agrigento. You'll drive through the interior of Sicily to reach the UNESCO inscribed Agrigento with a comfort stop along the way. The drive will take 2.5 – 3 hours. On arrival check in to the hotel where you will stay two nights. *B/D*



Day 8

Valley of Temples, Agrigento

Today after breakfast, visit the fascinating, ancient Greek sites - the complete Doric Temples. Built by the Elymians – one of the three indigenous peoples of Sicily – the ruins date back to around 420 BC. The tour will take you a few hours with a fair bit of walking on what is mostly flat ground. If you love your history, this is a fabulous day tour. *B/D*

Day 9

Agrigento – Piazza Armerina

This morning you'll drive to see the wonderful site of Piazza Armerina, situated in the centre of Sicily – about 2 hour's drive. The visit takes in the Roman Villa del Casale, built sometime between the end of the 3rd and beginning of the 4th century A.D. It comprises more than 40 rooms and houses some of the finest Roman mosaics in existence, the most famous of which being the so-called Bikini Girls. The world of the old Romans comes alive; you can see how they lived, hunted and loved!. Return to the hotel for dinner and overnight. *B/D*

Day 10

Piazza Armerina – Caltagirone – Ragusa

In the morning, a walk through the baroque city centre of the town of Caltagirone. This city is famous in Sicily for ceramic production dating back to the prehistoric ages. Next, enjoy the view of the renowned stair of Santa Maria del Monte, the landmark of Caltagirone, each step is paved with majolica tiles in different colours and shapes. During the visit, you will also have the opportunity to have some time for shopping in the many ceramic shops. Then you'll be driven to Modica, situated in the Iblean Mountains and along with Ragusa, part of the UNESCO Heritage Sites in Sicily. Check in to your hotel. *B/D*

Day 11

Modica - Ragusa

After breakfast, explore both of these cities in depth. The main economy of the area revolves around dairy cheese and agricultural products like olives, carobs, legumes, and grains. The famous chocolate of Modica, is absolutely unique and produced from an ancient, original Aztec recipe (and of course you get to taste the chocolate!). Continue onto Ragusa walk

through the historical town of Ragusa Ibla, highlighting the wide array of Baroque architecture including several stunning palaces and churches. Back to the hotel for dinner and overnight. *B/D*

Day 12

Ragusa - Noto - Siracusa/Ortigia

After breakfast, the group will make it's way to Siracusa via Noto which, for lovers of architecture, must be a highlight. Both the city and church in the main square are UNESCO listed and when you first see them, you will understand why. A smallish township of about 20,000 people, Noto makes for great strolling and people watching. On arrival into Siracusa you'll check in to your hotel where the stay is two nights. *B/D*



Day 13

Siracusa

Today you will be treated to a tour of the stunning city of Siracusa. Your guide will take you for a stroll through the streets of Ortigia Island, the

heart of the city centre. Then, visit the Archaeological Park, highlights of which include the Greek Theatre, the Roman Amphitheatre and the Paradise Quarry. There'll also be time to wander around at your leisure which is just as well because there's lots to see – and buy. *B/D*

Day 14

Siracusa – Taormina

We're just a few hours drive from the very popular hillside township of Taormina. On the left you can spot Mount Aetna as you head north. Taormina is a very popular tourist spot and in summer it can get crazy (it is much better to visit in the shoulder season, if you can). You'll take a guided tour of the core sites including the ancient Roman theatre which they use for concerts today. Importantly, you'll have the chance to wander through the town's cobbled stoned streets to window shop, shop, eat or people watch. It's a great town to do all of the above. Check into your hotel for two nights. *B/D*

Day 15

Taormina – Etna – Taormina

Get ready for a bumpy, but highly enjoyable Etna jeep ride. You'll be picked up at the hotel by off-road vehicles and transferred to Etna Volcano. Enjoy a FWD Jeep experience through Etna area: Mount Fontana (view of Bove Valley), the Thieves Cave (grotta dei ladroni), extinct craters of Sartorius Mounts, lava flow from 2002 eruption. We stop for a lunch at San Marco, a local farmhouse to taste typical Sicilian dishes. During afternoon we will take an off-road drive along the Linguaglossa Castiglione and Alcantara Gorges. Short visit to Canyon entrance. Return to the hotel for dinner. *B/L/D*

Day 16

Taormina – Lipari, Aeolian Isles

Departure from Taormina to Milazzo to take the ferry from Milazzo to Lipari. On the arrival in Lipari a the transfer will bring the luggage's in the hotel.



Accommodation in the

hotel. There's free time to enjoy the island. *B/D*

Day 17

Volcano boat trip, Aeolian Islands

The island of Vulcano, characterised by its black beaches of volcanic sand, still preserves the charm of untamed nature, which can be enjoyed by taking a hike to the craters (400m). Another option for today is to take a bath in the sulphurous hot springs, which Vulcano is famous for. *B/D*

Day 18

Lipari and Panarea

Before docking in S.Pietro's port you will sail along Baia Calajunco and the small Zimmari's beach. You will have time to visit the village, have a swim or enjoy only the small island. In about 45 minutes walk (or by optional taxi) it is possible to reach the small prehistoric village of Capo Milazzese, dated to 1400 BC and well worth the visit. *B/D*

Day 19

Salina Boat tour

Today you will be docking in Rinella's port (Salina) where you'll have the opportunity to visit the small village. Depart from Rinella for the complete



external tour of the island of Salina with particular attention to the Baia di Pollara, where the film "Il Postino" was shot by Massimo Troisi. You will finally reach the village of Santa Marina Salina; with a second stop to visit the picturesque town and to do some light shopping and people watching. *B/D*

Day 20

Lipari to Palermo for return flight

After breakfast, its off to meet the ferry from Lipari to Milazzo where the private transfer will bring you to Palermo. Today is a free day in Palermo. Use the day to explore further on foot, shop, or see some of the local sites. *B*

Days 21

Depart for home