

Sicily

A journey to
the heart of
the island

*Discovering the
colours, flavours
and rites of the
biggest island in the
Mediterranean sea*



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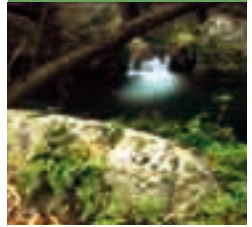
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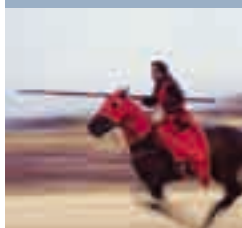
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Knowing Sicily





All you need to know for a holiday in Sicily

*Big photo, with details of artistic ceramics of Caltagirone (CT).
Above, the Cathedral of Cefalù (PA); below, the mouth of the Belice River Reserve, Castelvetro (TP).*



Typical shop

Language

Italian is the official spoken language of the whole region. The Sicilian dialect, with its different local inflexions, is very widespread. Languages coming from Greek- Albanian origin still survive, as well as dialects of French and Lombard influence, the modern Arab is widespread amid the immigrant people who especially live in the area of Mazara del Vallo.

Documents and Exchange

The identity card for the UE area people and the passport for others countries. The Euro is the current exchange.

The weather and what wearing

The climate is typically Mediterranean, characterized by long hot summers, dry and sultry in the interior area, more ventilated near the sea. Spring and autumn are the best season for tourism. Catania holds the European record for sunshine. There's snow and rigorous temperature on the Mount Etna as usual in winter, as well as on the top of the Nebrodi and Madonie. Spring can be rainy or sunny with very mild temperatures depending on the year. It's advisable wearing very light and comfortable clothes (shorts, sandals, t-shirt) in summer; but it's fine to wear jackets, wool pullovers and shoes



*Palazzo Filangeri Cutò,
Santa Margherita Belice (AG)*

suitable for cold temperatures if you visit the mountain areas in winter. Trousers and cotton pullovers are sufficient to face the pleasant evenings in the open air in autumn and spring.

Festivities

The festivities calendar is the same of the national one: New Year's Day (January 1st), Epiphany (January 6th), Easter and Easter Monday (March or April), Independence Day (April 25th), May Day (May 1st), Republic Day (June 2), August Bank Holiday (August 15th), All Saints' Day November (1st), Immaculate Conception (December 8th), Christmas Day and St. Stephen's Day (December 25th and 26th). Moreover, each small city celebrates its patron saint with a feast.

Trasportation

You can reach Sicily by plane, landing at the Falcone e Borsellino International Airport (Palermo), Fontanarossa (Catania), V. Florio (Trapani-Birgi). From Palermo, Catania and Trapani the flights leave to Lampedusa and Pantelleria islands.

The main touristic ports for cruises and ferries are in Palermo, Trapani, Messina, Catania, Siracusa, Porto Empedocle, Mazara del Vallo, Milazzo. The daily departures leave from Milazzo to the Aeolian Islands, from Palermo to Ustica island, from Trapani to the Aegads



Events - Jazz concerts

*Sunset on the salt pans,
Marsala (TP)*





View of Ortigia, Syracuse

Islands and Pantelleria, from Porto Empedocle to the Pelagie islands. Trenitalia links Sicily with the continent, there are railway stations in the main towns and in the principal places, but the Circumetnea links Catania with the small cities all around the Etna. The suburban bus services are efficient.

Roads

The motorway connects Palermo with Catania (A 19) Palermo with Messina (A 20) Messina with Catania (A 18) and Palermo with Mazara del Vallo and Trapani (A 29). The remaining roadway is efficient. It's divided into: express way, provincial and state road, the best for better enjoying the view.

Events - Pop concerts



Emergency numbers

Medical Emergencies 118, Carabinieri 112, Police 113, Fire Department 115, Road Assistance 116, Corps of Forest 1515.

Geography

The largest region in the Italian territory extending over 25.708 square kilometres, Sicily is the most heavily populated island in the Mediterranean sea and it lies only 140 km from the African coast. It lies at a distance of only three kilometres across the sea, the Strait of Messina, from Calabria. The group of the minor islands lies in the Sicilian territory in administrative terms: Ustica, the Aeolian and Lipari archipelago, the Aegadian islands, the Pelagie islands and Pantelleria. A line of mountain chains, the so-called Sicilian Appennines, lies parallel to the Tyrrhenian Sea up until that one of Calabria, and it is divided into three sections: the Peloritani, the



Borremans' frescoes inside the cathedral of Caltanissetta



The castle of Gresti, Aidone - Valguarnera (EN)

Nebrodi or Caronie and the Madonie. Here is the Mount Carbonara, (m 1979) the highest elevation after Etna. A further line of low mountain chains, whose summit is practically not higher than a thousand metres, crosses the island diagonally, splits into the Mounts Erei and Mounts Iblei. These are considerably arid zones, characterized by sulphur, salts of potassium and rock salt mines. Mount Etna is the largest active volcano in Europe, with an elevation of 3330 m and it rises isolated above the Jonic coast amid the Alcantara and Simeto rivers. The big volcano erupting, with its snow-covered top during the larger part of the year, attract the vulcanologists and the experts from all over the world every year. Unmistakable setting of big part of the island landscape, it is surrounded by hundreds of secondary cones and covered by old and new lava outflows which create an unforgettable geological sight alternating between the Mediterranean vegetation and prickly pears.

History

Due to its strategic position, Sicily has been inhabited since Palaeolithic and Mesolithic times as the traces found in the northern coast caves show. The earliest inhabitants were, as Thucydides said, the Sicanians, who came from Iberia (VIII-VII c. B.C.). The Elymi, perhaps Trojan exiles coming from Libia, settled in the neighbourhood of Erice and Segesta. The Siculians came from the Italian mainland and occupied the eastern area of the island. When the first Greek settlers arrived in 735 B.C., the Phoenician, who had settled in Western Sicily from Mozia to Capo Lilibeo, had to retreat. In 265 B.C. Romans took Messina, allying with the local mercenary soldiers. At the end of the Second Punic War (212 B.C.), the island was taken by the Romans who divided it into provinces and was regarded as land to be exploited to supply Rome with grain. At the end of the Gothic-Byzantine conflict in 552 A.C., Sicily became part of the Eastern Roman Empire and till the 9th century was a peripheral province. The Arab invasion and conquest of 827 endowed Sicily with its ancient splendour. The conquest started from Mazara del Vallo and finished in 902 with the fall of Taormina, while the Greek and Latin elements still prevailed in the east (the Noto and Demone Valleys). Palermo, conquered in 831, became the new flourishing capital of the semi-independent emirate of the Kalibi family. The Norman conquest of the island started in 1061, when Roger I of Hauteville was crowned King of Puglia, Calabria and Sicily. After Henry VI, Constance of Hauteville's husband, the young Frederick II succeeded to the throne. He was crowned by the Pope in 1212. Swabian rights to the throne were thus confirmed.

Saracen bridge, Adrano (CT)



S. Agostino oratory, Corleone (PA)





Biviere lake, Cesarò (ME)

In 1266 Manfred, the Frederick's heir, was defeated by Charles of Anjou so Sicily fell into a deep economic crisis again and the power of the barons was growing beyond measure (the Chiaramonte and Ventimiglia family laid down their law in the Western Sicily until 1500). In 1415 the island became a Spanish viceroyalty and was relegated to a very marginal position in the Mediterranean area. In spite of discontent and disturbances in the main towns, the Spanish domination remained as strong as ever until the Treaty of Utrecht (1713) that marked the close of Spanish rule and the consequent passing of Sicily to the House of Savoy. Pressed by the French, Ferdinand IV of Bourbon King of Naples, took refuge in Sicily, united the two States in a single Kingdom of the two Sicilies and abolished the feudal privileges in 1812. In 1848 the revolutionary movements started across the whole island and Sicilians, together with the temporary government of Ruggero Settimo, declared the Bourbons deposed. Giuseppe Garibaldi landed at Marsala on 11 May 1860. He defeated the Bourbon's troop at Calatafimi but social tensions found an explosive outlet again in the Sicilian Fasci movement, repressed in 1894 by Francesco Crispi, then leader of the Italian government. Due to a heavy crisis of the agricultural economy, the phenomenon of the massive migrations to the new World, America, took place in Sicily. In 1948 the statute of the autonomous region was promulgated by the Italian government together with the institution of the autonomous parliament of the newborn Sicilian Region. The parliament had to face with the dramatic economic and social situations the day after the First World War. Today the island is a region with various potentials but not completely showed, from the economic point of view, as for example in the transport and Hi-tech sector. But there are some very well known, such as: tourism, monuments and agroalimentary sectors.

San Pietro, Modica (RG)



A paradise made of sea and sun





Among beaches, cliffs, marine reserves and sea villages

*Larger photo, seafaring village in Palermo province
Above to the left, the tuna- fishing station of Scopello(TP); above to the right, the coast of Brolo (ME)*



The shore of Ispica (RG)

Among shores, cliffs and beaches

Endless, flat- sandy beaches, but also pebbly, little and steep, soft rocks dyed yellow and grey ochre and sometimes even black lava. With its coasts 1500 km long, including the smaller islands, Sicily can really offer a variety of different solutions for a pleasant vacation at sea. All the big centres provide well-equipped beaches, very appealing like the palermitan Mondello Beach, well-known for its sporting events, its white sand, its palms as well as for its Art Nouveau architecture. And the Playa of Catania, loved by poets, the coast of San Leone out of Agrigento, as well as Fontane Bianche in Syracuse and so on.

In summer time, the most attended beaches are the ones of the smaller islands, thanks to their fine sand, the clearness of the sea, surrounded by a spectacular nature. Noteworthy are also the beaches along the Tyrrhenian coast, between Capo D'Orlando and Patti (Messina), the Caribbean San Vito lo Capo (Trapani) and

*Red cove, Favignana,
Aegadean Island (TP)*



the near little inlets of Castelluzzo and Riserva dello Zingaro, both provinces of Trapani. Below Taormina (Messina) is Isola Bella with the near and very long beaches of Letojanni and FiumeFreddo. When visiting Cefalù, the Norman village, in province of Palermo, you can be astonished at the sight of the blue sea, the long sandy and pebbly beach, laying below the Rocca, while outside the village are the public beaches of Settefrati, Mazzaferro and S. Ambrogio. In the south, right in front of Africa is where Sicily keeps the most intact view, great spaces marked by the passage of African dunes. Kilometres of dunes shaped by the wind, where only an unusual and spontaneous vegetation can flourish, which is interrupted by bays, islets, headlands, castles, towers, tunny-fishing nets, as well as fishing harbours. Here the sun sets slowly, it's when the sea gets the colour of the wine, and gives everyone an exciting view that can last for over an hour. It's the light that tells you that you are in the southernmost part of Europe. It's the arid Sicily so loved by Andrea Camilleri the one we're describing, in the heart of the province of Ragusa, rich in carobs, almond trees and olives interrupted by the geometry of the white stone with the African sea as a background.

The Natural Reserve of Vendicari (Syracuse) with its five brackish quagmires represents a very charming place at any season. The quagmires were once used as salt-works, whereas the big tuna-fishing station, which is surmounted by a Swabian sighting tower, was abandoned in the '40s. Through heathers, jumpers and tamarisks you can reach the Cala delle Mosche, which is almost like a strip of Africa, characterized by a fine sand, a clear and salt water, so rich in yellow tails, grey mullets and white breams, as only in the minor island can be.

Along the coast road from Portopalo towards Borgo Sampieri and Donnalucata (In the province of Ragusa), are still wild beaches extending for thousands of kilometres. The queen of all these beaches, best-loved by directors and photographers is the so-called "Balata o Scala dei Turchi" near Agrigento, characterized by a white-ochre chalky architecture excavated by the wind and waves. Beyond Capo di Siculiana (Agrigento) is the endless sandy oasis which is called Torre Salsa, a real sanctuary of protected nature.



View from Isola delle Femmine (PA)

*Sea flora (posidonia),
Ustica Island (PA)*





Seafaring village of Mondello (PA)

*House at Stromboli,
Aeolian island (ME)*



The fishing villages, the fishing tourism and the sea cooking

It's the sea culture and the fishing traditions that make Sicily a unique region. So it's not only about beaches: here a tourist can really enjoy the ancient flavours and the rites of the fishermen. The fishing harbours have recovered the best of their traditions together with an artistic and cultural heritage which draws lots of people. Mazzara del Vallo, Sciacca, Licata, Porticello, Marzamemi, Portopalo di Capo Passero, play a leading role in the fishing market, for the number of their trawlers and the amount of the haul not only in Sicily but also in the northern markets.

Other fascinating and charming fishing harbours, whose traditions are tied to the sea, are Cefalu', Giardini Naxos, Milazzo, Menfi, Marsala.

Around the great tuna-fishing station of Sicily, where some are active but others have turned into accommodation facilities, you can reveal the scent of the Mediterranean Civilization. An example of it is in Marzamemi, a province of Ragusa, with its tuna-fishing station and the little 13th century church next to it, overlooking to a square which is now used as a bar from where people can enjoy a spectacular view. Other tuna-fishing stations are the ones of Portopalo di Capo Passero (Syracuse), Favignana, (Egadi Islands), and Scopello (Trapani), as witnesses of a passed Sicilian economy. This is the Land of a ground and sea gastronomy, where all the tuna products come from and reach all the Italian tables. The Bottarga, tuna eggs dried in the traditional manner, when put on the pasta, is a delicious dish, better if served with dried small tomatoes, sauce or paste with a strongly tasty. In this fishing villages is easy to taste a traditional north African fish or meat couscous: Tunisian receipt, which consists of masterly worked semolina, a matchless soup with the fish of the day: grouper, scorpion fish, onion fish or crayfish but also vegetables such as aubergines, courgettes, peppers and potatoes. As a dessert you can have a granita with a wide range of flavours such as coffee, melon, mulberry, almond or fig, better if served with almond cookies. On the west coast, Mazzara del Vallo and Marsala, are unique spots to experience the sea and its resources. Attending the sale of haul at the fish market here, early in the morning, is a sort of feast. Along the sunny docks of the fishing

harbours, it's easy to meet fishermen on board of typical wooden boats, with modern equipment, giving tours to those people keen on fishing and revealing them their techniques. This is called fishing-tourism. From the dawn to the sunset you can spend a wonderful day on board of typical boats, and have a dish of spaghetti with the fish of the day as a conclusion of this unforgettable experience. The taste of sea will remain impressed: the pasta with the "anciova"

Tourism fishing



(tomato extract, anchovy paste, garlic, hot red pepper and toasted crumb) as well as fresh tuna with onion, capers, and tomato. The sea gastronomy has become a sanctuary for gourmet thanks to the mastery of talented chefs who mix the magic of an African sunset with ancient flavours and yet renewing the tradition. An example of it is Menfi, a little fishing village overlooking to the bay of Agrigento as well as some restaurants situated in the historical fishing villages near Palermo, Catania and Messina.



The coast of Milazzo (ME)



*Marine protected area Isole dei Ciclopi,
Acitrezza (CT)*

Minor Islands and marine protected areas: a paradise for diving and snorkelling

In March 2001 the Sicilian Region in accordance with the Minister of Environment has subscribed an ample set of rules about marine reserves. So far, 26 marine reserves have been established in Italy. Ustica, the little volcanic island 36 miles away from Palermo, a real paradise for skin-divers, was the first one. Today, in order to safeguard the biodiversity and the sea environment and a better use of the latter, new marine reserves have been founded such as: Capo Gallo, Isola delle Femmine in the province of Palermo,

*The Plemmirio, marine protected
area, Syracuse*



Aegades Islands (Favignana, Levanzo and Marettimo) in the province of Trapani, The Pelagie Islands (Lampedusa, Linosa and Lampione) in the province of Agrigento, the Ciclopi Island and Aci Trezza in the province of Catania and Plemminio near Syracuse. The Latter has been recently established and it's known for its educational activities with a particular care to schoolchildren and disabled. The institution of a new marine reserve at the Aeolian Islands is under consideration .The protection politics of the sea and its resources is intended to safeguard the natural heritage as well as to guarantee a bearable social-economical development in areas where the balance between the natural resources and the anthropical activities such as the fishing and the tourism is hard to keep. In the Last fifteen years, Sicilian islands and marine reserves have seen the start of new activities and a new use of the sea with sports like diving, where courses with a qualified trainer are provided, the snorkelling with fin and mask both for experts and beginners on board of boats. You will be amazed by the extent of prairies of *Posidonia Oceanica*, which is still intact in many parts of the Aegades and Pelagie where hundreds of fishes can still find a shelter. In the beauty of the underwater environment of the volcanic islands from the incredible colours and the lighted gorges, undisturbed fishes such as big grouper, basses, white breams or the rare red and black gorgonia reproducing themselves. Recently the Sea Superintendence, established by The Sicilian Region, has traced out the new archaeological underwater itineraries in order to exploit the Greek-roman remains laying on most of the minor islands' sea beds and make the sea accessible to divers at the same time. When diving, you can experience and see things of a past Age like the roman amphorae in Levanzo or the site of the Aegades Battle, or search amphorae and wrecks on the sea beds of Pantelleria.



Marine protected area Pelagie islands, Lampedusa (AG)

Marine protected area of Capo Gallo, Palermo



Marina Charters, tourist harbours and aquatic sports

For some years, Sicily has been trying to fill the gap in terms of tourist landings.

Although supported by a great position, in the middle of tourist routes of the Mediterranean Sea, Sicily was risking to be left out of the itineraries of the international nautical tourism.

*Right, the natural caves,
Pantelleria Island (TP)*



Diving in the smaller islands

For this reason, with a specific law in the matter of marinas, the region has located 42 landings, one every 30 miles. Today, you can rent comfortable sailing or motor boats with or without skipper, en route to the minor islands.

Besides, at any season with a simple booking, you can sail around the islands, relying on well equipped ports. The Sicilian Sea, thanks to its mild climate, the temperature of its water, its gulfs and windy shores represents an inexhaustible sporting gym.

Everywhere in Sicily, in the sporting club with access to the sea, you can play boat racing or go canoeing. Mondello Beach in Palermo with its annual windsurf world festival is a meeting place of all



the windsurf champions. After the American Cup, hosted in the wonderful scenario between Trapani's harbour and the Aegades Islands , the west coast has been nominated as Queen of the Wind. Moreover, thanks to the strong wind and high waves in some parts of the coast, hundreds of keen sportsmen come here to play surf and the new kite surf especially in the beach of the Stagnone near Marsala and in some beaches near Syracuse.

Nautical charter

Touristic harbour of Catania



Treasure island





The monumental and archaeological patrimony of Sicily
from the earliest settlements up to 1900.

*Larger photo, the archaeological area of Selinunte (TP)
Above, to the left, the basilica S.Maria, Randazzo (CT); above, to the right, historic area of Taormina (ME).*



Necropolis of Caltabellotta (AG)

The early settlements

According to scholars, the explanation of the historic and cultural events whose Sicily was the protagonist for centuries, is in its privileged geographic position. In fact, it was the connection between Europe and Africa. Its extent, its central position in the sea, the climate, the fertile ground and the big variety of its territory, permitted man to live in what we call Sicily today, almost 300.000 years ago. The experts assert that perhaps a terrestrial link with the North Africa existed in those times. The beginning of life in the island and even the early ritual connected with hunting are showed in the rock paintings of the Genoese cave in Levanzo (Aegadean island), where you can find graffiti dating back to 9.000 B.C. Further important traces of the prehistoric art are at the foot of the Mount Pellegrino, in the Addaura cave in Palermo, where man is represented in profile and with a headgear through well-defined features.

The art of navigation and fishing in open sea started before the stable life in the villages, as the graffiti and finds discovered in the Uzzo



cave in Castellamare del Golfo (Trapani) show. A very good witness of the Sicilian Neolithic period (6.000 B.C.) is Stentinello (Syracuse). Ceramics and stones coming from here, show that the means of subsistence for the stable man had already become the farming; but the obsidian business was quite important as well. The main centres of this trade were the Aeolian Islands and also Pantelleria, where the archaeologists go on discovering very ancient circular houses of extraordinary historic interest, the "sesi". The Bronze Period (2.100 B.C.), characterized by metallurgy and by the so called "room graves", leaves its big trace in the Castelluccio civilization, Noto (Syracuse), and in Thapsos, between Augusta and Syracuse, where a settlement with urban trade feature was discovered. Today finds and traces, that enlighten us about the relationships between the Elymi, Sicanian, Siculian and Phoenician prehistoric civilizations, are still discovered during the difficult archaeological campaign. The most famous sites are Morgantina, the King Morges' town, few kilometres from Enna, Mendolito near Catania, the Ispica quarry (Ragusa), the necropolis of Caltabellotta (Agrigento) and the big necropolis of Pantalica in the Anapo Valley (Syracuse). All these



The cave of the Genoese, Levanzo, Aegadean Islands (TP)



Necropolis of Pantalica (SR)



Mosaics at Mozia, Marsala (TP)

*The Greek theatre of Palazzolo
Acreide (SR)*



are impressive open air museums where history had written its course.

The present-day Sant'Angelo Muxaro (Agrigento) has been identified as the ancient Camico, Sicanians town. It astonishes us for the richness of the funeral supplies discovered. Segesta (Trapani) was founded by the Elymi on the Mount Barbaro. Together with Erice and Entella, it became the most important trade centre of that population who had mixed with the Sicanians of the Western Sicily in a very short time. Well known for the beauty of the place, overlooked by the Doric temple built in the valley and dating back to 5th c. B.C., Segesta keeps a big archaeological area of ancient and medieval finds on the slope of the mount. Between them the Greek theatre stands out, but the sanctuary of Mango has recently been discovered in the extra urban area. It's surrounded by powerful walls where it could be numerous sacred buildings inside, perhaps connected to the Ericin Venus' worship. The archaeological areas of mount Jato and Contessa Entellina (both in province of Palermo), not less important for the experts, has recently been opened to visitors. They are traces of the relationship of the Elymi with the Punic and Greek culture. Mozia (Trapani), Palermo and Solunto can be the witness of the Phoenicians need of having safe ports after the Mycenaean collapse so securing the commercial hegemony in the Mediterranean Sea. The area of the Stagnone of Marsala (Trapani), with the small island of Mozia where there's the Whitaker's rich house museum, was the favourite basis for the flourishing trades of the Phoenician ships in the Mediterranean Sea.

The Greek domination

The Greek domination started in 8th c. B.C., when the island was already in touch with the Mycenaean and Phoenician world, as the finds of Lipari and Syracuse museums testify. In nothing less than two centuries, the Greek expansion produced the foundation of Naxos (734 B.C.), Syracuse, Messina, Lentini, Catania, Megara Iblea, Milazzo, Gela, Acre (Palazzolo Acreide), Imera, Selinunte, Camarina and Agrigento (580 B.C.), while Taormina dates back to 4th c. B.C. But the Carthaginian domination remained closed in the North-West Sicily.

Probably, the Greek artists arrived at the same moment of the settlers. Together with the production in Greek style in Sicily



Archaeological area of Morgantina (EN)

there was a ceramic production in the “mixed” oriental style, with rhombus shape and broken lines, alternating human figures and birds made with polychrome technique with the tones of red, white and black. The temple, the greatest expression of the genius of the architects during the ancient Greek period, has its maximum models in Agrigento, Selinunte and Segesta (in province of Trapani). But perhaps the theatres could better embody the sense and vitality of the classical world. Today it is still alive in the theatrical performances that are recited with a programme at the international level each summer. The most famous Greek theatre is that one of Syracuse dates back to 5th c. B.C. and then was made again in the 3rd c. B.C. by Hieron II, nor less enchanting are the



The Greek theatre of Tindari (ME)



The Greek theatre of Eraclea Minoa (AG)

theatres of Segesta, Taormina, Eraclea Minoa, Tindari, Morgantina and Palazzolo Acreide.

A travel in the universe of the Hellenic culture of Sicily, could start from Selinunte, the Doric stronghold of the island. The greater number of the archaic plastic production comes from here, mostly conserved in the archaeological museum of Palermo. The archaeological park, with an area of 270 hectares, competes with that one of Agrigento, and they together represent ones of the most important archaeological and touristic site in the Mediterranean. The acropolis of Selinunte, a hill overlooking the sea, has preserved the ruins of the ancient town enveloped by the silence and the mystery of the centuries till today. It has an unrepeatable fascination: the columns of the C temple are clearly visible, its façade was equipped with a double colonnade and a tympanum decorated with an enigmatic Gorgon's head (conserved at the archaeological museum of Palermo). But on the eastern hill, stand the temple F, temple E, rebuilt around the first half of the 20th century, and the huge temple G, one of the biggest ancient Greek temple. It was unfinished at the moment of the destruction of the city (happened in 409 due to the Carthaginians), as the working of the columns sections show. They still exist in the near-by Cusa quarry. Finally, interesting and evocative are especially the rests of an extra urban sanctuary, very

The Greek theatre of Syracuse





*Hercules temple,
Valley of the temples of Agrigento*

close to the acropolis, dedicated to Malophoros, identifiable as Demeter.

According to scholars, Syracuse was founded in 733 B.C., a year later Naxos. The early centre of the city, that soon flourished after the expulsion of the Sicilians, was formed by the Ortigia island, where the archaic rests of the temple of Apollo stand. Then, this was transformed in Byzantine church and in mosque during the Arab period. Syracuse founded the colonies of Eoro and Kamarina,



towards south east. The tyrant Hielon, started the erection of the main public buildings, such as the powerful walls and the Eurialo Castle to have the control of the city from the sea, under the push of the frequent conflicts against the Carthaginians. Hyeron II built the altar and the theatre. On the left side of the altar the big quarries, the Latomie, stand with their evocative name of Paradise, but in reality this was a place of suffering and imprisonment. Not to lose a visit

*Archaeological area of monte Jato,
S. Giuseppe Jato - San Cipirello (PA)*

of the archaeological museum Paolo Orsi, with its three sections, a real and true travel through the art and Hellenic culture.

Agrigento, Akragas was the ancient name, was founded by settlers coming from Gela about 150 years after Syracuse. It extends over a fortified area of 450 hectares, from the ancient acropolis, the

Archaeological area of Solunto (PA)



Rupe Atenea (the present-day Agrigento) and the valley, up to the hills of the temples, that is a privileged destination for an evocative archaeological and naturalistic visit. Among the various sacred buildings we can distinguish: the temple of Juno, in Doric style, dates back to the 5th c. B.C., then destroyed by a fire and rebuilt by Romans; the temple of the Concordia, dates back to 440 B.C., transformed, under the Byzantine times, in church with three naves and become a temple again in 1748; the temple of Olympian Jupiter, huge as well and surrounded by walls. Inside the walls there were semi columns and telamons, colossal human figure built of stone blocks over 7 m. tall. They seemed to support the weight of the trabeation. It is possible to see them in the archaeological museum, containing precious rests of prehistoric and ancient period as well. The Hellenistic Roman District is also interesting, because of its road system, strictly right-angled, and its houses whose floors are richly decorated with mosaics.

Himera, few kilometres from Termini Imerese, along the coast of Palermo, rose on the terrace between two rivers. According to scholars, a coalition between Agrigento and Syracuse people defeated a Carthaginian fleet in the sea in front of the city in 480 B.C. This victory gave the Greeks the hegemony in almost the whole Sicily and was celebrated with the construction of the temple of Victory, whose rests are clearly visible near the archaeological area including the ancient district and the antiquarium.

Finally, noteworthy are two cities. Even if they are not of Greek origin, they show how the hellenisation was deep and wide-spread between not Greek populations of Sicily, such as Segesta. Solunto, near Bagheria, situated on the Mount Catalfano, in a strategical position overlooking the sea, was founded by the Punic but then conquered by Romans in the first half of the 3rd c. B.C. it has a typical Hellenistic-roman urban layout and city system.

Situated on a hill in the middle of Sicily, in province of Enna, Morgantina was the city of the Morgeti. Under the influence of Syracuse, it acquired a Hellenistic appearance in the second half of the 4th c. B.C. It can be well noticed in the rests of the senate of the town, in the coins, in the terracotta conduits, in the slaughter house, in the district, in the shops and above all in the small but spectacular theatre. It has been recently restored and is connected with the Agorà and the sanctuary by staircase. The residential districts are clearly visible in the highest sides of the city. The Ganimede's

The Greek temple of Segesta (TP)





*The Roman Villa of Casale,
Piazza Armerina (EN)*

house, decorated with mosaics, and a house with ancient Greek inscriptions can be distinguished on the east side.

The Roman civilization

Between 264 and 241 B.C., the First Punic War took place in Sicily, strategic place for the future trade in the Mediterranean Sea. Years of conflicts and wars of the enemies fleets brought to the final engagement in front of the Aegaden Island where Rome won the Carthaginian fleet. The Punics were forced to leave the island, while Sicily had a new economic and administrative system. A praetor nominated by the roman senate was placed and it was given a big impulse to agriculture.

Without any doubts, the most important traces of the roman art in Sicily are in the Roman villa of Casale in Piazza Armerina (Enna). It's one of the most magnificent country villa in late-roman age still in existence. With a very special intervention, the Sicilian Region is going to start an impressive restoration of it in the following months. The villa is known for the beautiful mosaics adorning almost each room. The complex is articulated in various buildings, such as the thermal baths, the calidarium, the octagonal frigidarium, the tepidarium and just past the real entrance there are rooms of different size and type.

*The mosaics of the Roman Villa of
Patti (ME)*





It's not difficult to be astonished by the beautiful mosaics: medallion mosaics with figures of animals surrounded by laurel crown, the chariot race in the Circus Maximus depicted in the palestra, then the room of the rape of Sabine, the ambulatory of the large hunting scene, the allegorical scenes of Hercules and the battle against the Titans, the image of the East and Eros and Pan wrestling. Probably the mosaics were made by north Africa workers and date back to the beginning of the 4th c. B.C. Further examples of the Roman presence are in Centuripe, few kilometres from Enna. The valley between the Salso and Simeto rivers should have been a strategic place for the fertile ground and the control of the goods passing from West to East. Here there are vestiges of Roman houses with paintings date back to the Augustan age, while a precious bust of Adrian's successor, Antonino Pio, is conserved in the small museum of the little town in province of Enna. The Roman villa of Tellaro, dates back to the 4th c. A.C., stands close by Noto Marina (Syracuse), on the bank of the Tellaro River. It has wonderful mosaics depicting hunting scenes. Another Roman villa is in Patti (Messina) and it also has multicoloured mosaics.

Find of the Centuripe museum (EN)





Delia's Trinity, Castelvetro (TP)

The Arab-Norman period

After landing at Mazzara in 827, the Arabs completed the conquest of Sicily, just in a century, with the fall of Taormina and Rometta (Messina). As most of western Sicily, Palermo still keeps a big Islamic mark in the urban structure and the road system of the ancient neighbourhood (among them the Kalsa district) but also in the dialects, in customs and in daily habits. The verses and the witness of the Muslim poets and travellers, reach us from the Arabian Palermo, place of amusement and joy. They tell of a city garden that had the privilege to be called Al Madina, as the city of the prophet Mohammed. In 972, a traveller from Bagdad, Ibn



Norman palace, Palermo

Hawkal, was already speaking about gardens and parks of delights, along the bank of the Oreto River and about vineyards going up to the present-day Monreale, immersed in the dell of the oranges. The fortified town, so called Al Kasr, the present-day Cassaro, was surrounded by doors with names referring to gardens and plants, as the papyrus used to make cordages and paper, and to spring fresh

water. The fabulous castle of the Favara, or “Maredolce”, whose owner was the kalbita emir Gia’far, was a symbolical example of the Arab Palermo. It has been described as a paradise with “flowing rivers”, among the palm trees, citrus fruits, flowers, small lakes and springs. Not less fabulous should have been the others suburban castles for the travellers: the Zisa, from the Arab “aziz” that is splendid, and the Cuba. Even if both castles were built by Norman kings, William I and II, they have the characteristics of the Islamic art, both in the architectonic structure and in the pattern of the big gardens, crossed by watercourses, according to the Islamic scheme of the Allah’s paradise. An oriental mirage which

Left, the Cuba, Palermo



put Palermo in comparison with Cordoba, the city of one hundred mosques. Normans, led by Hauteville family, started to conquer the island in 1061 until the fall of Palermo in 1072. They proclaimed Palermo as their capital and didn’t forget to pay homage to the culture of the defeated. They erected their buildings and placed them in a layout with parks and game preserves. They made use

Above, the Zisa castle, Palermo



The cathedral of Cefalù (PA)

of Arab workers, keeping alive the influence of the Islamic culture, both in the representation of the volumetrical, squared and clear elements, and in the decorative components. Besides the above mentioned Zisa and Cuba castles, the influence is evident in big cathedrals as Monreale, Cefalù, Mazara del Vallo, and in churches of the kingdom capital, as the Palatine Chapel inside the Norman palace, the Magione, Santa Maria dell’Ammiraglio (so-called the Martorana, put under the care of the the clergy of Greek Byzantine rite), San Cataldo, San Giovanni degli Eremiti and San Giovanni dei Lebbrosi. The name of Arab-Norman style has been invented for all these monuments. The magnificence of Palermo is well expressed by the witness of the Arab geographer Idrisi, dates back to 1154: “Palermo, built like Cordoba, with wide streets, dazzles your sight by its aspect, a river of perpetual water crosses it, the royal buildings

S. Giovanni degli Eremiti, Palermo





surround its neck as jewels...”.

The syncretism of Muslim and Christian artistic elements, contribution of the Norman domination, reaches very high stylistic levels in the cathedral of Monreale and in the adjoining cloister, well known for the little columns, covered and inlaid with mosaics and for its precious fountain standing in the middle. Built by William II, between 1172 and 1176, the cathedral is massive and surmounted by two bell towers in its external part. It dazzles by the artistic richness of the interior, almost covered by a very precious mosaic decoration. A clear inspiration from the Byzantine tradition. Of particular interest are the mosaics of the apse, dominated by

Repubblica square and the cathedral of Mazzara del Vallo (TP)



The cathedral of Monreale (PA)



The octagonal tower, Enna

The Ursino castle, Catania

the powerful figure of Christ Pantocrator and those of the upper walls of the naves, depicting biblical scenes and stories from the Gospel. A further wonderful example of Norman architecture is the cathedral of Cefalù, built under Roger II, during the conquest of the city, already a Roman and Arab stronghold. The monument stands between the rock and the sea, in a very spectacular position, and keeps inside the splendid cycle of the gilt background mosaics of the apse, made roughly in 1148, probably by Byzantine workers.

Frederick II and the Swabians

The son of Henry VI of Swabia, emperor of the roman sacred empire and of Constance of Hauteville, the last heir of the Norman kings of Sicily, Frederick II of Hohenstaufen combined the imperial and Sicilian throne. He was left an orphan so that he was put under the care of the Pope Innocence III as guarantee of the Swabian rights. He was crowned king of Sicily in 1198, when he was just 4. Frederick II, “stupor mundi”, fond of art and literature, promoted elegant hobbies and cultural activities, created a ruling class directed towards the anthropocentrism, which is the absolute man control on nature and the animal world. So the historic sources, besides depicting the Swabian emperor while he was training the predators and hunting, hand on the image of a nobility moving around the numerous castles



of the kingdom. These were real houses opened to amusements and mundanities, where the king and his court dedicated themselves to leisure, practicing art, science and poetry (the literary production of the so called Sicilian poetry school is the best proof).

As clear evidence of Frederick's power, castles and fortresses are still spread over most of Sicily. They were strategic ramparts for the control of the territory and the declaration of power, architectonic



treasure recently restored and available to visitors today. In fact, it's not wrong speaking about a real medieval circuit of the castles, that touches each province. Those of clearly Frederick's mark are numerous and all of them in excellent conditions. As for example the Ursino castle, in the heart of Catania, whose building was the direct Frederick's will, to complete the conquest and the control of eastern Sicily. Today it's the centre of the town museum and the art gallery. The octagonal tower and the castle of Lombardia in Enna, date back to Frederick's age, even if their building was attributed to

The Maniace castle, Syracuse



The Lombardia castle, Enna

Frederick II of Aragon by mistake. Ascribed to the same designer of the octagonal tower of Enna, the Colombaia stands on a rock placed at the entrance of the port of Trapani. It also has an octagonal shape, was used as tank for gathering the water rain. The tradition says that the warnings of the sixteenth-century defensive system created by the Florentine architect, Camillo Camilliani against the raids coming from north Africa, were launched from this tower.

Castle Maniace in Syracuse is massive. It was erected under Frederick's will on the extreme point of the Ortigia island, with defensive functions, and it descends sheer into the sea. Considered fortress up to a few years ago, it has been opened again for summer performances and meetings. The castle of Milazzo (Messina) was included by Frederick II between the Castra Exempta in 1239. Each one of them had to nominate a lord of the castle.

Situated in a splendid position on the ridge of a hill, it looks towards the port of Milazzo on one side, and a nice beach on the other. Very interesting the walling, with black stone coming from the near Aeolian island. The castle of Giuliana (Palermo) also dates back to Frederick's age, built around 1240 on the highest side of the town; after being the property of king Frederick of Aragon's, passed through the hands of the most important families of the following ages: the Ventimiglia, marquis of Geraci, the Peralta, the Luna, the Cardona, the Gioeni and finally the Colonna of Paliano in 1812.

But perhaps, the most fascinating place of medieval Sicily, where the middle age atmosphere still survives intact, is Erice (Trapani).

The castle of Giuliana (PA)





Placed on the mount Giuliano, it faces the sea and is often enveloped by the fog. The village, of very ancient Elyme origin, is the place of a mythical sanctuary dedicated to Venus. It was populated again during the Norman age and flourished again between 12th and 14th c. The urban system and the most important monuments date back this period, such as: the mother church, the most ancient churches and the castle, so-called castle of Venus in honour of the ancient gods of the Elymi.

The Medieval village of Erice (TP)



The castle of Milazzo (ME)



*The wooden ceiling of the
S. Nicolò cathedral, (EN)*

Palazzo Steri, Palermo



Medieval Sicily

After the death of Frederick II, Sicily was distressed by heavy conflicts between the big barons and the towns. During the 14th c., the life in the island was characterized by the weakness of the royal power and the hegemony of the very powerful baronial families. In the western Sicily. Of particular interest, among them were the Chiaramonte and Ventimiglia who built a lot of magnificent palaces all over the Belice, Nebrodi, Madonie and Agrigento areas (the feudal lords were driven by the Prammatica of king Martin, a law dates back to 15th c. that gave the authorization to dispossessed the ground for building palaces that had to grow the beauty of the towns). After getting a prominent position in 14th c., the Chiaramonte family extended their own interests in the eastern Sicily. Lord of Modica, Scicli, Chiaramonte Gulfi, but also of Alcamo and Caccamo, they established their own court in Palermo, by Palazzo Steri, in piazza Marina. Today this is one of the most



The Chiaramonte style castle of Mussomeli (CL)

beautiful medieval monuments in the city. In the past it became the headquarters of the Holy Inquisition and today is the site of the new University Administration. The building was begun in 1307. It strikes for its austere impact and the beauty of the double-light mullioned windows. It has 3 floors opening on a big atrium. In Chiaramonte style and origin are also many churches of Agrigento, Taormina, Modica and various castles, such as that one of Caccamo (Palermo), one of the biggest in the island, fortified by Manfredi I Chiaramonte, and of Mussomeli (Caltanissetta), solitary erected on a rock, whose



The castle of the counts of Modica, Alcamo (TP)



Palazzo Nicolaci, Noto (SR)

rooms, the subterraneans and the inner chapel have been recently opened to visitors again; finally the castle of Alcamo, built by the counts of Modica in 14th c., is the site of an interesting exposition area. Finally, among the witnesses of the 15th c., it seems fine to distinguish the beautiful wooden ceiling of the cathedral of S. Nicolò

*Annunziata church,
Palazzo Acreide (SR)*





in Nicosia (Enna). Today it is available just virtually in the civic centre of the palace Nicosia.

Palazzo Biscari, Catania

The explosion of the Baroque

An explosion of marble decorations, of ornaments and statues both in the civil and in the ecclesiastical architecture, in the town hall and in the villas of the nobles, a new chromatic sensibility in the art: this is the Baroque style, flourished all over Sicily. Especially in the eastern side, the houses, destroyed by an earthquake in 1693, were built and organized again according to a new urban point of view. They have got a so particular character than a big area of Sicily (Noto valley) is inserted in the Unesco World Heritage List as human heritage today. The area includes: Catania, Caltagirone and Militello Val di Catania in province of Catania, Palazzolo Acreide and Noto in province of Syracuse and Ragusa Ibla, Modica and Scicli in province of Ragusa.

The Baroque architecture is concentrated in via Crociferi at Catania. The Giovan Battista Vaccarini's work prevailed in the city of Etna. He took care of the decoration of the cathedral square, including the praetor palace and the fountain of the elephant inspired by Bernini, while Caltagirone includes very rare examples of 17th c. architecture, as the staircase of Santa Maria del Monte. At the base of the staircase, the baroque façade of the churches of San Giuseppe and San Giacomo strike us.



View of Ragusa Ibla (RG)



Palazzo Beneventano, Scicli (RG)

Ragusa hides a perfectly preserved baroque architectonic structure in the heart of the ancient district of Ibla, dominated by the cathedral of San Giorgio, with an elegant façade divided into three parts. Don't forget a quiet walk among the little streets of the centre of the town, winding among the beautiful façades of buildings and churches, to realize the triumph of the precious decorations along the cornices and below the balcony. The same pleasure that give the lanes and the squares of Modica, Scicli and Noto, above all at the sunset or with the lights of the evening, when the colour of the stone becomes warmer and the grotesque figures of animals or transfigured man, are exalted in their immobility. In Modica, Salvatore Quasimodo's native city, the church of San Giorgio looks like challenging the sky with its powerful staircase of 250 steps. The little city of Noto is going to open the big cathedral, destroyed by the recent earthquake, to visitors. Its centre area is quite a salon, with the theatre and the sumptuous palaces, and between them that one of Villadorata stands out with its rich floral decorations supporting the balconies.

The Mannerism style is already strong in Palermo at the end of 16th c. It is placed above the Renaissance schemes and was a prelude of the Baroque, as it's evident in Porta Nuova and in Porta Felice. The Baroque flourishes in the church of S. Domenico, in Santa Teresa alla Kalsa and in that one of Santissimo Salvatore, but above all in the octagonal structure of the Quattro Canti, at the corner between Cassaro and the Spanish via Maqueda, where the richness of the decoration, whose architect was Mariano Smiriglio, clearly exceeds the 16th c. scheme. Each corner is decorated with statues representing the four seasons, the four Spanish kings and the four saint patrons of the four city districts. In the close Piazza

*Pretoria square,
Palermo*



Pretoria, the façade of Palazzo delle Aquile, the city hall, is a hymn to the splendour and the opulence. A big fountain stands in front of it; it's a marble structure with a mythological theme, with statues, balustrades and steps, built at first for a villa in Florence and then transferred to Palermo in 1575. It was still in Palermo where the Giacomo Serpotta's art flourished, at the end of 17th c. He has been discovered again just recently. His masterpieces could be seen in the oratories and in the churches of the centre area thank to the thematic itineraries organized by the Town Council: the oratory of S. Lorenzo, that one of S. Cita and S. Domenico or Rosario. In the first, the incredible beauty and plasticity of the stuccoes depicts exuberant allegories and scenes of S. Lorenzo. Above the altar, made by Serpotta as well, there's the famous Jesus's Nativity, the last Caravaggio's work, made in 1609. In the heart of the ancient Palermo, there are still baroque temples: Casa Professa, with the wonderful adjacent library, where you can go in from the big 18th c. atrium and the near church of S. Giuseppe dei Teatini, built between the 17th and the 18th c. with a massive dome and the tower bell in baroque style. In the interior, there are various plastic and pictorial masterpieces between the stuccoes and the inlaid marbles, as a Pietro Novelli's painting and a crucifix by Fra' Umile da Petralia. Really noteworthy is the history of the Oratorio dei Cavalieri Bianchi allo Spasimo, built in 1542 by the noble Compagnia dei Bianchi; this was formed by ecclesiastics and gentlemen who had the task to



The Serpotta's stuccoes at S. Cita, Palermo

The oratorio dei Bianchi, Palermo





The Mura delle Cattedre, Palermo

“help the condemned dying”. During the days before the execution, they took care of them leading to the admission and repentance, then they accompanied them to the gallows in a procession where the brothers wore white tunics and cowls. In the salon dedicated to the brother meetings there are the Gaspare Fumagalli’s rich decorations.

Bourbon’s age

After the king of Spain death, Charles II, in 1700, a period of quick alternation among the dominations in Sicily begins with the Bourbons. Starting from 1734, they let revive a south kingdom,

Villa Palagonia, Bagheria (PA)





The royal hunting lodge of king Ferdinand, bosco di Ficuzza (PA)

autonomous in front of Spain, lasted until the unification of Italy. From the architectonic and urban point of view, these are the years when the nobles begin to have the “itch of holidays”, granted by the building of wonderful villas, between them the famous Villa Palagonia in Bagheria. The Bourbon kings transferred the capital to Naples, however Sicily remained a privileged refuge, as the works built by them and survived up testify today. Of particular interest is the exotic construction of the Palazzina Cinese in Palermo. A Venanzio Marvuglia architect's work, ordered by Ferdinand and built inside his game reserve, the Parco della Favorita, at the foot of Mount Pellegrino. Besides the settlement of the Favorita as “English garden”, is also attributed to Marvuglia a very important construction, such as two pavilions of the Botanical garden, one of the richest in Europe, and the royal hunting lodge inside the present-day Reserve of the wood of Ficuzza, in province of Palermo. Ficuzza Reserve was built under the king Ferdinand's will, at the beginning of the 20th c., as a game reserve, for the richness of the fauna, and



The Palazzina Cinese, Palermo



The Villino Florio, Palermo

as amusement place for the court. The simplicity of the structure, almost neoclassical, and the Bourbon luxury of the palace, perfectly combine with the wonderful nature of the Busambra rock and its near woods. The Mura delle Cattive of Palermo, date back to 19th c., so called because the widow, the Captivae, prisoner of their pain and mourning, walked along these walls, safe from prying eyes.

The Florio's splendour

To the flourishing of the Art Nouveau in Palermo, short period but "very happy", it corresponds a very high economic recovery of the city. The period is also indissolubly connected with the story of Florio family, whose founder, Vincenzo, was born in Calabria, but after arriving in Sicily being in king's train, gained the favours of the nobility of Palermo, also thanks to the marriage with Lady Franca, refined lady-in-waiting. He begins the tuna-fishing activity in Favignana, creating a small industry for the tinning of the tuna-fish. His interpreneurial interests went from the mining sector to the foundry one, from the ceramics to the silk production. When, in the first half of 19th c., some English families started the production of the Marsala wine in the western Sicily, Florio gathered his money and founded the first shipping company together with the Ingham family, so that he attracted the attention of the Sicilian and European nobles. Well-known are the success of his "Targa Florio", the first motor race on the road, and a legend among the lovers of the car race. It is still played today. After Vincenzo's death, in 1868,

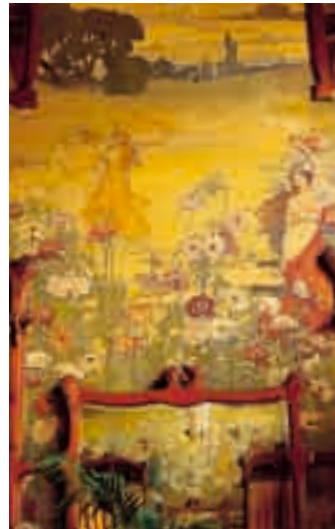
The Florio tuna-fishing station of Favignana, Aegadean Island (TP)





his son Ignazio managed to double the whole estate, the ships of the Florio's fleet were 50 by then and they had a daily connection with Naples and monthly with New York. That's why we speak about an economic empire of the Florio's age today. Their history showed that Sicily was a country of big and new opportunities. Then Palermo became the capital of the Art Nouveau, whose wonderful examples are the various gardens, theatres and private villas in the whole island. Among the artists of that age, the name of the architect G. Battista Filippo Basile stands out. His works reflect an expressive independence on international level. A Palermitan itinerary of 20th c., goes around his main works: as the Massimo Theatre, the European lyric temple, then finished by his son Ernesto, combines the Hellenic classical style with the elegance of the new style. The project of the English garden in via Libertà, also belongs to Basile, such as the Villa of Caltagirone (Catania) with strong oriental influence. But perhaps, the architect's most refined jewel is the Villino Favalaro in Palermo. It perfectly depicts the ambition of the upper class, in expansion by then. Ernesto Basile received the father's inheritance including Palermo in the artistic flow of the European modernism without ignoring the big lesson of classical age. He built the Villa Igia, the Villino Florio, the kiosks of the city. The historic Grand Hotel Villa Igia, deserves a visit for sure. It is magnificent for its wonderful position in front of the sea, in the sea village of Acquisanta, it is the site of the Marina of Villa Igia. Favourite destination of the European aristocracy at the beginning of the 21st c., the hotel preserved real jewels of the Art Nouveau, as the Basile salon, with its elegant frescoes of floral theme and the furniture of the time. The itinerary that leads up to the beach of

The Charleston, Mondello (PA)



A room of Villa Igia, Palermo



Left, archaeological museum of Aidone (EN)

Right, the puppets museum of Palermo



Archaeological museum of Agrigento

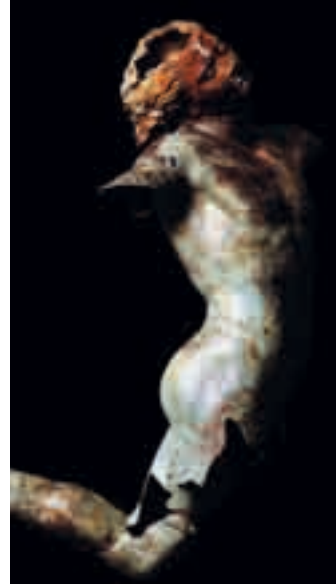


Palermo, Mondello, is not less impressive. Insalubrious marshland till the 19th c., became an elite destination after the opening of the first bathing establishment (as the Charleston).

The museums

Impossible to see all of them. The Sicilian museums are many and have an extraordinary magic, for their location. Not to lose the archaeological museums, as above mentioned, where you should dedicate a long and careful visit. In Palermo the Museo Salinas all'Olivella, in Syracuse the Museo Paolo Orsi, the Archaeological Museum in the ancient city of Agrigento, in Caltanissetta the Archaeological Museum inside the Norman abbey of Santo Spirito. Not less important are the archaeological museums of Lipari, inside the castle, the Museo di Gela (Caltanissetta), that one of Marsala (Trapani) at the Baglio Anselmi, the Museo di Aidone (Enna), the Museo of the Satyr in Mazara del Vallo (Trapani), and the little and big antiquarium opening in a panoramic position in the excavation areas: Solunto, Camarina, Imera, Eraclea Minoa, just to cite some of them. After visiting and fully enjoying the beauty of the ancient world, the art of Middle Age onwards called our attention with its pictorial and sculptural works, not just from Sicilian school, together with ceramics and sacred art. Among the most important museums in Palermo we remember: the Galleria Regionale of Palazzo Abatellis and the new museum dedicated to the modern painting in the convent of S. Anna; in Messina the Museo Regionale with its rooms dedicated to Caravaggio; in Catania the Museo Comunale of Castello

Ursino; in Enna the Museo Alessi; in Syracuse the Galleria Regionale of Palazzo Bellomo; in Trapani the Museo del Corallo inside Palazzo Pepoli; in Caltagirone (Catania) the Museo Regionale della Ceramica and that one of Presepe; in Cefalù (Palermo) the house museum of the baron Mandralisca with the famous Ritratto d'ignoto by Antonello da Messina; in Castelbuono (Palermo) the Museo Civico inside Ventimiglia's medieval castle. Of huge cultural importance, the ethno anthropological museum and the public and private collections testify the life and the culture of the past: in Palermo the Museo Etnografico Giuseppe Pitré, close by the Palazzina Cinese; a real case in its genre is the Museo Internazionale delle Marionette in Palermo and the Museo del Carretto Siciliano of Terrasini (Palermo), in the wonderful place of palazzo d'Aumale. Further little but important museums are: the house museum of Antonino Uccello at Palazzolo Acreide (Siracusa), the Museo Etno-antropologico of Belice valley in Gibellina (Trapani), that one of the arts and popular traditions in Modica (Ragusa) and finally the Museo Etnografico del Corleonese a Corleone (Palermo).



The Dancing Satyr, S. Egidio museum, Mazzara del Vallo (TP)



The Pepoli museum of Trapani

Green oasi





Discovering parks and reserves to live Sicily according to nature, sport and wellness

*Larger photo, Valle dell'Anapo reserve(SR).
Above, to the left, Etna erupting (CT); above, to the right, the Grotta Carburangeli (PA).*

Regional parks

Regional parks are an efficient reality today, both for the protection of the very delicate ecosystems, and for the tourist, sporting and didactic development of the mountain areas. The Sicilian ones are 4, according to the founding order: Parco dell'Etna (Catania), delle Madonie (Palermo), Nebrodi (Catania, Enna e Messina) and, the last born, the Parco Fluviale dell'Alcantara (Messina e Catania). The latter is for sure a natural system of beauty almost primitive, where the passage is modelled by the meeting between water and fire, with the river eating into and meeting the burning lava, creating big stone architecture: gorges, mellowed walls, jump of water, squared and smoothed block of stones. If the Alcantara is characterized by the fluvial vegetation (with the oriental plane tree and white willow, endemic species that mix with the citrus trees and prickly pear along the banks, few metres from the water), the Etna Park, with its orography marked by the lava eruptions, is a real botanic garden. The big active volcano- with its 3.300 mt- it's the highest volcano in Europe- has its north slope covered by a thick sheet of snow, during the most of winter time, and the big forests of birch or beech show a rare Nordic landscape, few distance from the sea.

*Left, the Alcantara regional park
(ME- CT)*

Right, the Etna regional park (CT)





The Nebrodi Park stretches along the Tyrrhenian coast, embracing the very green Sicily, land of huge areas, with wide woods and forests where very ancient tradition still survive. They are connected with the agricultural works, weaving, breeding and the use of cultures passed on shepherds, coalmen, horses breeder, craftsman of the ceramics. The Madonie reflect a real natural microcosm, where all the vegetal species of the Mediterranean sea are represented, with examples extinct elsewhere, botanic relicts of the last glaciations

*The Nebrodi regional park
(ME- CT-EN)*

The Madonie regional park (PA)





The Malabotta wood reserve (ME)

as l'Abies nebrodensis, in an environment of extraordinary beauty, with rare wild orchids. Among the protected rarities, also appear 90 species of butterflies, some of them endemic. In the area of the park there are a lot of medieval villages, offering to visitors an historical artistic treasure of inestimable value.

Reserves and protected areas

The green pearls of Sicily are 77, natural reserves where the Mediterranean landscape, hilly, marsh or mountain, has been violated by man and his activities for a little part. Real oasis of beauty available for visitors 365 days a year, thanks to the management system put under the care of Public Authority-

*The Zingaro reserve,
S. Vito Lo Capo
Castellammare del Golfo (TP)*



as the Azienda Foreste Demaniali that manages the Malabotta wood (Messina), Provinces or town administration as the town administration of Ragusa that manages the reserve of the Irmínio river- or environmentalism association- as Legambiente, Italia Nostra and WWF, that manages the reserve of the Capo Rama in Terrasini (Palermo).

The first founded had begun the

history of the Sicilian environmentalism. So that we speak about the Zingaro, with its line made by wild coast and rare Mediterranean vegetation of dwarf palm plant, the ancient tuna-fishing station and tall rocks.

Today, Sicilian reserves are real natural laboratories where the protection of the flora, fauna, archaeological and entropic landscape combines with didactic activities and experimentation. As for example the Isola dei Conigli at Lampedusa in the archipelago of the Pelagie (Agrigento), where each summer they organize protection areas for the Caretta Caretta turtles which are back again for depositing the eggs. Besides protecting the archaeological areas and the typical houses (dammusi), the pantesco donkey is back to Pantelleria (Trapani) since some years. It was practically extinct but “assembled again” thanks to the work of the researchers; while in Vendicari, near Noto (Syracuse), the exotic birds go on with spending the winter. They stop undisturbed in this habitat among spring water, lake vegetation and sea while they are moving towards the routes of Africa. Unique for its landscape impact and for the size of the necropolis (more than 5.000 tombs), is the reserve of Pantalica in the Anapo valley (Siracusa). The river dugged its bed in the limestone of the Iblei tableland during the centuries and opened deep canyon in the middle of a wild fluvial vegetation. Going on, wonderful are the reserve of the Stagnone at Marsala (Trapani) and the reserve of Trapani and Paceco where salt pans, windmills and nature matched themselves in a subsequence of colours and sceneries, above all at sunset, when you are flabbergasted.



The Irmínio river reserve, Ragusa

Capo Rama reserve, Terrasini (PA)





Free climbing

Trekking

Outdoor sports

The protected areas are an inexhaustible training for trekking. In Sicily, it's an extraordinary experience going up until the active volcanoes standing in front of the sea, as the Stromboli (Isole Eolie) whose ascent starts just after the sunset (obligatory going with an authorized local guide) or the Etna, with paths of different kind and difficulty. Not less practised are the free-climbing, the rafting along the falls and rivers of the Alcantara, walking on horseback in the woods, speleology in the caves, the flight with hang gliding between sea and hills. For the lovers of speleology, there are massive rocky lump of calcareous origin as Monte Quacella (Palermo) few kilometres from Petralia Soprana, or Monte Cane, Monte Genuardo, Monte Pellegrino and Rocca Busambra, real paradises for the rock-climbers. Further excursions in caves are possible in Grotta Carburangeli at Carini or the Serre of Ciminna (both in the province of Palermo), whose formation dates back to around 6 millions years ago, when the Mediterranean sea was a sort of big salt lake. Here there are a lot of caves developed longitudinally, entering inside the bosom of the earth for around 80 mt. In some of them, there are signs and graffitos, very ancient traces of man, attractions for speleologist and naturalists. Around the Rocca Busambra, the luxuriant Ficuzza Wood growths, rich in ilex, chestnut trees, ashes. In this zone, numerous are the paths for the middle difficulty excursions, and for walking in mountain bike in paths adequately signed. But golf is



*Golf*

practised in natural areas of rare beauty: in Castiglione di Sicilia in the Etna Park and at Collesano at the gates of Madonie Park. Among the various paths, for the lovers of trekking on foot or on horseback, it's to prefer those ones that go up to the top, where the sight roves over the whole Sicily. For the expert excursionists, it's advisable the path that, over the Polizzi town, leads to Vallone Madonna degli Angeli. The way signed and in very good conditions, winds along a forest street at first, then penetrates into beech woods. Of considerable landscape fascination and botanic interest- in the side of Castelbuono, dominated by chestnut trees and age-old oaks of extraordinary size- is the path that leads from Piano Sempria to the wood of big hollies of Piano Pomo, in a fairy-tale atmosphere.

You can walk in the Nebrodi, among the didactic paths of the Tassita of Caronia along the areas of coal production, the "fussuni", or below the wonderful rocks of Castro, at Alcara Li Fusi, waiting to see for the flight of the permanent griffons that live among these rocks.

*Horse holidays*



Oenological and gastronomical tourism, the cheese tradition



Country tourism and baths

The wide countries of the inner side of the island, mostly of ancient agricultural vocation, still product wheat, oil, citrus and more and more quality wine appreciated all over the world. The activity of working the products of the ground, from bread to cheese, sausages, vegetable, tinned products, is intense. Around a country environment of strong suggestion, with dazzling colours of yellow and green, the demand of oenological and gastronomical itinerary growths, while the farm holidays is an affirmed reality yet. Farms, villas and hotels where, up to the end of the past century, life was regulated by the rhythms of the seed-time and the harvest, now offer hospitality in rooms provided with every comfort, where pasting holidays according to the full relax. Here smells and flavours of the table are those ones of the past, and the visitor who live in the farm discover the country life again, taking part to the harvest

Farm holidays

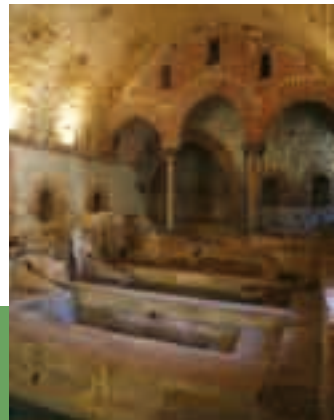




of the products of orchard and garden, to the wine and oil working, to the bread baked in the wood stove, to the ritual preparation of ricotta cheese and cheese. But Sicily could even offer relaxing break to the lovers of baths and the wellness. This was a very well known fact for the Arabs, that left an incredible bath establishment ante litteram at Cefalà Diana (Palermo). During more recent times, bath establishments have been opened in Sciacca (Agrigento) and Acireale (Catania); Geraci Siculo (Palermo), known for oligomineral power of the water; Montevago (Agrigento) and Calatafimi/Segesta (Trapani) very popular for the natural swimming-pool of hot sulphurous water; and finally the baths of Ali Terme and Terme Vigliatore (both in the province of Messina), Termini Imerese and Sclafani Bagni (Palermo), Castellammare del Golfo (Trapani), Lipari and Vulcano (Isole Eolie).

Typical farm

The ancient thermal baths of Cefalà Diana (PA)



The memory of the Island





The non-material heritage registers as an instrument for protecting the ethno-anthropological traditions.

*Larger photo, the Palio dei Normanni, Piazza Armerina (EN).
Above, to the left, "Canaloni" of Burgio (AG); above, to the right, the holy week at Enna*



The slaughter of tunny-fish in Favignana, Aegadean Islands (TP)

The non-material heritage register

The cultural heritage of a community includes not only the artistic treasure but also the ethno-anthropological patrimony conveying its own unrepeatability. Since 1977 the Sicilian Region has protected them in the same way as the first ones. Talking about traditions and expressive forms handed on by oral way, the Unesco has defined them as “non-material heritage”, planning an action to protect the whole worldwide heritage where the Puppet Theatre is already included. According to the 2003 Convention and its new guidelines, in July 2005 the Sicilian Region issued a decree establishing the non-material heritage register.

The weaving with the traditional embroidery frame at Sperlinga (EN)



The existing human treasures book

Still today tuna fishermen sing the “cialoma”. The whole Sicily outline is marked by the tuna processing stations, which were a very lucky page of the Sicilian entrepreneurial class at least in the 50's, and which are more and more recovered for tourist aims today. Properly said, the Tonnara is the set of the fishing nets let down into sea, but at same time it identifies also the set of buildings which were used to process tuna fish, to keep equipments and to give hospitality to the tonnaroti (tuna workers). The “rais” is the charismatic head of the tonnara and a complex figure in who conveyed wisdom, ability and sacredness; he is the real emblem of this particular Sicilian culture form. Today, between May and June, it is still possible to hear and see the cruel show of the mattanza (tuna killing) getting to Favignana Island, Aegadean Islands.

Among the human treasures, it is worth suggesting a group of “cantori” (popular singers), “carrettieri”. Traditionally, their activities were connected to the carretto (cart) which was considered an excellent means of transport and the base of their economy. Their singing culture was characterised by difficulties of their journeys imposing the spread of slums, rest stops, shelters for horses, mules and carters. In these meeting places, the carters challenged to song competitions concerning love subjects as well as civil complaints or religious pleas and tried out their own abilities making personal melodic lines which were characterized by more articulated intonations and richer undertones than a normal tonal system used to be.



The ceramics of Islamic tradition at Burgio (AG)

The poets of the carters, Bagheria (PA)





The Sperlinga castle (EN)

Nowadays, it is still possible listening their sonorous stunts during St. Giuseppe feast that takes place in Bagheria (Palermo) and during St. Anna feast in Borgo Vecchio, one of the district of Palermo. Still today, a technique of ceramic manufacturing characterized by its simplicity and its deep mixture with the Islamic production is attested in Burgio (Agrigento). The production in Burgio, where the Masi family represents the noblest expression of it, assures a very strict bond with the expressive forms of the oldest tradition, which is not so easy to find out.

Sperlinga (Enna), a village of medieval origins, offers a peculiar charm thanks to its famous castle which is excavated into rocks but also for the tradition preservation of mats and carpets weaving, which are manufactured with looms moved by hand.

The expressions book

On the Holy Week occasion, songs rich in Byzantine echoes can be heard in the Greek-Albanian communities which still exist in

The living crib of Custonaci (TP)



the arbreshe villages in Palermo Province: as Piana degli Albanesi, Contessa Entellina, St. Cristina Gela, Palazzo Adriano and Mezzojuso. These places keep liturgical forms linked to this tradition whose origin is due to the Diaspora of the Albanian people that followed the Ottoman conquer of Costantinopoli. This kind of singing repertoire of psalms and declamations based on sacred texts is characterized by a modal musical system that clearly recalls the Byzantine music models.

Every year during the Christmas feasts, a living crib takes place in Custonaci (Trapani) that, year after year, has improved its performance getting more such a museum. The faithful reconstruction among the Mangiapane and Scurati caves, where the scenes of the story of Divine Child are set, has encouraged a research process regarding the area that, as a museum, plays a role in protecting the existing arts and traditions patrimony. Indeed, craftsmen coming from Custonaci and its closer areas take part in the living crib playing the same role they usually have in their real life (smith, shepherd, and carpenter).

Among the interesting news particular mention must be made of parks linked to literature characters which represent an alternative way to enjoy travelling and literature, achieving a perfect coexistence



Liturgical music and songs of the arbreshe community (PA)



The Aci Trezza village (CT)

between travel and culture. These are such places where you can recover atmospheres offered by the pages of the most great Sicilians writers. These literature parks are dedicated to Salvatore Quasimodo (Modica), Luigi Pirandello (Agrigento), Giovanni Verga (Aci Trezza), Stefano D'Arrigo (Messina) and Elio Vittorini (Siracusa). You can have a full immersion into Verga's world taking a trip in the Etna area. There you find the house where Verga lived, nowadays a museum, which is located near Piazza Duomo, in the very central via St. Anna no. 8. It is the house where the well known author of "I Malavoglia" and "Mastro Don Gesualdo" was born and grew up and where all his personal things and heirlooms are kept, while his original manuscripts and his thousands of papers and letters written by hand are kept in the Regional University Library of Catania. Lastly, different routes branch from this area following the well known novels places. An example of it is Aci Trezza, where la Casa del Nespolo, the narrows, the square, the fountain, the church, the Ciclopi's coast and the sea port can be visited.

The stone gardens of the Iblei (RG)





The "dammusi" of Pantelleria (TP)

The places book

The landscape is characterized by certain man activities. Indeed, the anthropic process is affected by the local culture that is consequently influenced by the territory and its resources. At last, thanks to the contact between man and environment, the traditional activities of a community take place. We are referring to the well known technique of "pietra a secco" suggested by useful needs as the easy availability of the material. It is based on the use of stone as the only constructive element without any aggregate or binding materials. In this way, houses, stables, wells and especially containing walls can be built. Properly the latter appears as an element of continuity between nature ad culture conferring to the agriculture landscape the correct aspect so hoped by environment impact legislation. The Ragusan countryside and the whole Iblea area are still rich in well preserved fence walls. There still exists a culture of stone as sum of natural resource and man knowledge. The same richness in construction

The mining society of the centre south Sicily, the mining park of Floristella Grottacalda (EN)





*The productive knowledge
of the wine*

examples but with more houses built with walls in “pietra secca” (dry stone) are in the volcanic island of Pantelleria where the typical “dammusì” are present. they used to be agriculture tools warehouses and later enlarged to become rural stone houses with a typical cubic shape surmounted by a hump. Signs of a global culture of stone, in a wider meaning, are in those areas that once were the heart of intense commercial and factory trades related to the extraction of sulphur. In every sense, sulphur mines played an epic role in the history of the Island. You can enjoy astonishing landscapes getting to Enna, Caltanissetta and Agrigento, the heart of the old sulphur production but a first approach to it, it’s also possible visiting the places of Lercara mine in Province of Palermo. In recent years, the Sicilian Region has established a mines recovery project in which the usable mineral park of Floristella Grottafalda (Enna) is already included, whose full extent is about 400 hectares.

*The productive knowledge of the
corn and the bread in
Enna province*





The productive knowledge of the cheese in the Madonie, Nebrodi and Peloritani

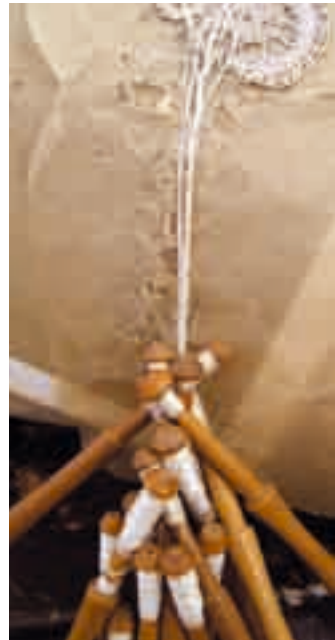
The productive knowledge book

Among the productive knowledge, in a very important position are those ones of the food nature and the wine as well (in whole Sicily), or those ones of bread and wheat, strictly connected to the Enna Province.

The cheese cycle is probably the most attested in the Island thanks to the great number of its high quality cheese as well as for its history. Among the parallelepiped shape cheese, we point out the “caciocavallo palermitano” (whose name is due to the extended shape that it forms when it is put on a stick during its processing), while among the ovoidal cheeses there is the “provola”, from Nebrodi, that is a typical caciocavallo whose weight changes according to the production areas and whose flavour goes from sweet to spicy, and the “provola” from Madonie characterized by an ochre rind, whose taste is sweet and delicate. The “vastedda” from Belice with spun pastry originally manufactured by the reworking of rotten “pecorini” which have to be eaten fresh.

Among the craft knowledge, embroideries and laces are noteworthy. They are still today attested in more places but in a particular way in the west area as Isnello and in the east area as Chiaramonte Gulfi (Ragusa). The embroidery art in Sicily goes back to the Muslim age, but it is thanks to the Normans that the Royal Palace factories of Palermo became the highest expression of excellent manufacture

Traditional embroidery





The holy week in province of Caltanissetta

The traditional ceramics of the artistic crib of Caltagirone



specialized into gold, pearl and corals thread. From 15th century, the use of precious materials was abolished by the laws concerning luxury so that the white embroidery on white canvas and with white thread has been handed on. Nowadays the attested techniques are the “filet” and “sfilato”.

As regards the ceramist art, Caltagirone boasts the primacy assigned by the archaeological research testifying that art of this area goes back to 4th c. B. C. Arabs introduced the “invetriatura” technique learnt in the area between Mesopotamia and the Nile River but it is thanks to the Normans that handcraft was more developed turning into an art giving to the “calatini”, a renown in the whole Mediterranean area.

The celebrations book

The feast represents such a microcosm from where you can infer all aspects characterizing a community and its own culture as well as people identity that cyclical reaffirm itself. Above the numerous feasts of the Island’s festive universe rises that one in honour to S. Giuseppe. Once ceremonies and characteristic rites took place for the carpenter Saint in the whole Sicily and nowadays powerful testimonies survive in province of Trapani. As an example, the feast is still deeply felt in Salemi where on March 19th architectures and decorations made with bread conveying fantasy and bakers handicraft skills can be admired. Among the all patron saints celebrating in whole Sicily without saving money and energies, Saint Rosalia plays a prominence role in Palermo and two recurrences are dedicated to her. The first one is the “festino” whose spectacular performances take place during the night between July 14th and 15th, the second one is the “acchianata” on September 4th providing the thousands of devotes pilgrimage to the holy Pellegrino mountain where the Saint’s bones were recovered. Anyone who has the opportunity to go to Sicily in the Easter period would have just a wide possibility to choose. It’s really impossible to list all the places where celebrations catch the attention and curiosity. Among all religious events there are the processions in St. Cataldo in Caltanissetta characterized by a great number of biers (urns, tabernacles), everyone representing a fraternal order or a craftsmen field. During the carnival period the fun is assured thanks to the allegoric carts parades which now represent, to a certain extent,



The Carnival of Acireale (CT)

the main characteristic of these celebrations becoming more and more spectacular in a way that is not really typical of the Island. The only exception is that one of Acireale (Catania) that is one of the oldest carnivals in Italy. From 12th to 14th of August the unique “Cavalcata” takes place representing the climax of “La Quintana del Saracino” well known as “Palio dei Normanni”, that is a horse race recalling the Norman conquer and the driven out of the Saracens. Every year a prize is delivered to the winning quarter among the four contending ones. The prize is a papal standard that recalls its recovery when the village was freed from the 1348 plague and referring to 1161, the year when Piazza Armerina citizens hid the standard in order to subtract it to the vindictive anger of William called the Bad.

S. Rosalia's feast, Palermo



An island opened all the year





Religious celebrations, theatre, music, folk and sport events of a region which is waiting for you all the year.

*Larger photo, poster of the Targa Florio
Above, "feast of the devils" at Prizzi (PA); below, the "two seas theatre" at Tindari (ME)*



*The procession of the mysteries,
holy week at Trapani*

Religious celebrations

Sicily is so rich in events which are impossible to count them all. Less or more popular, but always charming, evocative, religious solemnities, cultural previews liven up Sicily throughout all the year. In springtime Sicily turns into a procession theatre, revealing the real meaning of East, as a moment of truth for the Pagan and Christian religion.

Among these celebrations we must remind the Misteri of Trapani which is certainly the most popular, but also the one of Marsala (Trapani) as well as the one of San Cataldo (Caltanissetta).

The latter takes place on Ash Wednesday with the mystery of the Christ's process and continues till the Maundy Thursday with the procession in which the Virgin Mary finds her son dead. On Good Friday the Virgin Mary meets her senseless Son with the accompaniment of drum and laments and afterwards the Scinnenza takes place (when Jesus' body lays in the coffin).

The Resurrection Sunday represents the triumph of Life over the Death and it's here characterized by the presence of ten giants made of papier mache' (I Sanpauluna) personifying the apostles who escort Our Lady after she met her Son.

The Maundy Thursday in Caltanissetta is full of atmosphere. The Vare, which is a cluster of papier mache' statues showing the Passion of Christ, date from the end of 19th century and were

S. Agata's feast, Catania





The Lord of the bands, Good Friday at Pietraperzia (EN)

made by a well-known family of artisans to order of corporations (planners, miners, market gardeners).

Not to miss is the one Easter show in the near Pietraperzia (Enna) called Lu “Signuri di li Fasci” where in the narrow streets a crowd holds an impressive pole up, wrapped in kilometres of white cloth.

Besides these Easter celebrations in Sicily there are other festivities, like the celebration of St. Agata, the patron of Catania, taking place every year, in the baroque city, at the beginning of February and it ends with the procession of Candlemas. And yet St Lucia Celebration at Syracuse on December 13th, the day in which she had her eyes torn out. In her honour, a silver statue over 2 meters high, is supported along the procession from the Cathedral of Ortigia to the basilica “Santa Lucia al Sepolcro”.

San Calogero (Agrigento) is celebrated the first week of July not only at Agrigento but also in all the little provinces. Noteworthy is also the tammurinata (Drum concert) of San Calo’. For this occasion the believers fast and during the celebration loaves of bread are lunched from the balconies.

Other celebrations take place in the mountain area of Nebrodi, such as the one Of St Giuseppe (Capizzi, ME) and the one dedicated to the Patron St Giacomo in July.

The “Veronica”, holy week at Marsala (TP)





Classical performances at the Greek theatre of Segesta (TP)

Theatre and Music Events

These unrivalled events, open the culture season at the beginning of May and are already part of the cultural Sicilian tradition. An example are the classic performances of Syracuse, organized by the *Dramma Antico* Institute in the charming Greek temple, followed by a series of events like the International Young Classic Theatre Festival in Palazzolo Acreide.

And yet the performances of the *Teatro dei due Mari*, the ones in the theatres of Taormina, Tindari (Messina), Segesta (Trapani), and the new circuit of *Teatri di Pietra* which, enliven these minor archaeological sites (Palazzolo Acreide, Morgantina and so on) during the summer time.

From May to September the Festival *Orestyadi* of Gibellina (Trapani) comprises poetry, theatre, folk music with a particular attention to the new cultural and artistic expressions in the Mediterranean. The *TaoArte* festival takes place every summer at the Greek temple of Taormina and lasts till the end of October.

It is such a great event in a such beautiful spot where you can really spend a wonderful time. The *Womad* Festival by Peter Gabriel is all about folk music and it's a great opportunity for the young artist to be known. Not to be missed is *Morgana* Festival (Palermo), a real representation of Sicilian Pupi.

Theatre season of the musical July of Trapani





The season of the "Vincenzo Bellini" theatre of Catania

Opera, orchestral and contemporary music are celebrated inside the great Sicilian theatres.

Palermo can boast the theatre Massimo as well as the Politeama, the seat of the Symphony Orchestra, Catania the Bellini while Messina has the Vittorio Emanuele theatre.

Over the last years new theatrical reviews have been established. An example is the Luglio Musicale in Trapani as well as the Etna Fest starting from Catania.

It reaches all the little towns nearby, and gives the best of international artists with a specific Cinema section. In November in the beautiful Arab- Norman cathedral of Monreale takes place the so called Settimana di Musica Sacra (Holy Music Week).



Classical performances at the Greek theatre of Syracuse



The "Infiorata" of via Nicolaci at Noto (SR)

Between Culture and Folklore

The Carnival in Sicily is characterized by such a great tradition of talented artisans as witnessed by the floats. The most famous are the Carnival of Acireale (Catania), Sciacca (Agrigento) and Termini Imerese (Palermo) that thanks to the beauty of their floats and the participation of people, have got nothing less than the popular carnivals of Viareggio and Putignano. The Almond Blossom Festival in Agrigento starts every year in February, and it's a great feast comprising parades, music and dances that made it an international folk event.

The Danza del Taratà in Casteltermini (Agrigento) is probably less known but it's a great event too, with Arab influences in terms of rhythms, costumes and sceneries. In the heart of the Madonie like Geraci Siculo (Palermo) or Giostra di Ventimiglia, in August we can attend the medieval commemorations in which period costumes are



The cous cous fest, S. Vito Lo Capo (TP)

worn, whereas in Caltagirone on July 24th the splendid stairs of the baroque church of Santa Maria del Monte are illuminated and create such a great atmosphere. On the same day you can also experience and the so-called Infiorata (Flower carpet) along its narrow street matching the one of Noto. Luigi Pirandello is revealed in its native town of Agrigento with a specific review of Studi Pirallendiani, while the world of cinema rendezvous in Taormina but also in Lipari for the ceremony of the award Efesto D'oro in June. And in conclusion, as a symbol of the integration in the Mediterranean, we can attend the San Vito lo Capo (Trapani) Cous Cous Festival where chefs coming from all over the Mediterranean compete to chose the best cous cous of the year.



The illuminated staircase at Caltagirone (CT)



*The International horse-show,
Aces Cup*

Sport events

Among the sport events that have the Sicilian sea as background, such as some of the further places of special landscape beauty, go down in history. It's the case of the Targa Florio, the most ancient motor race on the road ever remembered, played on the Madonie rocks, at the beginning of the century, today is also celebrated in Historic Rally version in the whole Sicily.

Other events dedicated to motor sports, testify a real rooted passion: the climbing of Erice (Trapani), the race in motor race track of Pergusa (Enna) and the historic cup Città di Cefalù, still dedicated to Vincenzo Florio.

Car racing circuit of Pergusa (EN)



The Targa Florio race



From motors to the sea, the tropical setting of Palermo beach hosts the World Festival on the Beach, now since years, played in the first half of May. It is coupled with beach volley, sailing and with the night jazz concerts.

Each summer, in the small Ustica (Palermo) turns back punctual the Settimana delle Attività Subacquee for lovers of the sea, caves and depth. The Concorso Ippico Internazionale Coppa degli Assi is played in the Parco della Favorita of Palermo, in September.

Very important date for riders and lady riders coming from all the world. Palermo, thanks to its climate, is also the place of Maratona promoted by the town council. Hundreds of athletes file along the street of the centre area, the first Sunday of November.

*The Windsurf World Festival
on the beach*



Master in hosting





Among cellars, restaurants, shops and receptive structures

*Larger photo, pasta with sardines.
Above, to the left, lemon confectioneries; above, to the right, the fried food in the palermitan manner.*

The routes of wine

If 3 is the perfect number, 3 are also the vertices that close the Sicilian island, but 7 is the number of Creation, of the wonders... and of the wine routes in Sicily. So 7 are the extraordinary itineraries that, toast after toast, lead to the discovering of a country blessed by sun. Its fertile ground generated, together with many classical myths, an extraordinary agriculture that takes substance in one of its most appreciated product in the world: the wine.

Starting with the province of Palermo, following the way of the Monreale DOC, that is 16.000 hectares of vineyards where the Catarratto is sure the king. The DOC produced by these hills are the Contea di Sclafani, the Contessa Entellina and the Monreale, whose name sure remember the nice little Norman town with its very famous Cathedral. The Alcamo doc route stretches looking at west, including the DOC of Erice and that of Marsala (Terre d'Occidente and Val di Mazara). This is the province (that one of Trapani) with more vineyards in Italy. It's really an area where tasting something step by step, from the splendid medieval Erice, to the saltpans reserve up to the Dancing Satyr in Mazara del Vallo. So many wines are produced here to remember all of them in this small space. Following the curve that leads to the bank of the Canale di Sicilia, here it is the Strada del Vino Terre Sicane, in the province of Agrigento, where the oenological culture could be esteemed as draft for the economy of that area, with the valley of the temples as background. The DOC are also those ones of Santa Margherita di Belice, Sambuca di Sicilia, Menfi and Contessa Entellina.

Going inside the heart of the island, you can get the Strada del Vino dei Castelli Nisseni, where the famous Nero d'Avola vine is situated together with the archaeological area of Morgantina, Piazza Armerina



Red wines

Traditional wine companies





and Sperlinga with its beautiful castle. The DOC is that one of Riesi. As famous as the Nero nisseno, the Cerasuolo di Vittoria signs the Strada del Vino del Val di Noto, with the baroque capitals of Noto and Modica, just to say a couple. Syracuse is a real enchantment, above all if you “taste” it together with the homonymous Moscato. To close the scene of the south east Sicilian vertex, the Etna rises, whose wine route leads at the slopes of the volcano. It’s a special climate, a fertile ground made by fire and lava for the unique vines as the Carricante, white and endemic. We are inside the Etna Park: besides the wine, it’s the beauty of a corner of nature really uncontaminated. From the hard volcanic ground to the sweet slope of the Aeolian island. To finish the oenological tour with the wine routes of Messina province, from the city of the strait up to the seven sisters of the Mediterranean sea. The DOC of Faro or the new one of Mamertino go with the unmistakable taste of Malvasia up to the open sea. This is as warm and full of passion as Sicily.

White wine

Vineyards





The anelletti al forno

Gastronomy

“They eat as they would die tomorrow, but they built as they will never die”. Diogene said speaking about Megara inhabitants, but is a way of saying that, in the far 5th c. B.C., was taken by the Greeks. They arrived at Syracuse to know the ancient inhabitants of Sicily. This has been the native island of: Epicarpo from Syracuse, who was the first in writing about the art of cooking in 485 B.C.; Ladbaco, who created the first hotel school in 380 B.C.; Terpsione, who made a careful study, of what it would be called the food

Hors d'oeuvre and sauces





science in the same years; Arcestrato, who organized lunch for the Greek VIPs in 320 B.C., and the Procopio de' Coltelli who, in the 17th c., exported to France the unique Sicilian tradition of the sorbetto, of Arab origin, begun famous with the name of ice-cream. In conclusion, speaking about gastronomy in Sicily means speaking of the same Sicilian DNA, that has still today, a very high faith in the so-called "mangiata" (a lunch that lasts the whole afternoon together with the whole family united). So, we can try to enter into one of these sumptuous lunch, trying to show some of the typical place.

Pasta in the "Norma" manner

Just to whet the appetite, as hors d'oeuvre, the thistle and artichoke put into the butter and fried, the sausages (the Chiamonte Gulfi salami or that one of Sant'Angelo di Brolo what we advice), the olives "accirate", that is immersed into the extra-virgin olive oil together with typical pot-herbs, and the caponata, a receipt containing egg-plants. No to miss are the "panelle", slices of chickpea flour fried, incredibly delicious with a spray of lemon. Then the cheeses, from the caciocavallo to the maiorchino, from the ericino to the piacentino and the fiore sicano... Go on with pasta. First among them is the "pasta al forno", that is a timbale of anelletti stuffed with everything the cook's fantasy says: tomato sauce, mince, egg plants, cheese becoming ropy, salami... For the more delicate palates there is also the pasta with sardines, delicious. In summer, you cannot miss the



Tuna- fish with capers

“pasta con tenerumi”, that is the bud of the long zucchini plants. As easy as the “pasta alla trapanese”, that is with the raw tomato and garlic, or as the pasta alla norma with the tomato sauce and fried egg plants. Go on with the second plate, that is fish cooked in different ways (generally roasted or cooked above the fire) as the sword fish, tuna fish, bass, and so on...without forgetting the “sarde a beccafico”, stuffed sardines rolls, with bread-crumbs, pine seeds, raisins; or speaking about meat, the delicious sausages, fried or grilled, mutton, traditional dish during the Easter Monday together with the kid meat. About the use of the pork meat is possible



Stuffed swordfish rolls



to write an encyclopaedia. As vegetables, there's the classical salad: tomato, fennel, onion, lettuce... and more you have more you put. Obviously, together with all this, there's the bread, that one backed in the wood stove, with an unmistakable smell. After fruit, the confectionery. There's the "cassata", but actually there are also further masterpieces such as the "buccellati" with figs marmalade, the "frutta martorana" with sugar and almond wheat, the "cuddreddi", pastries with honey or ricotta cheese or candied fruit, the almond biscuits or the "reginelle", biscuits covered by sesame. Above all, the "cannoli", present in the whole island.

Frutta Martorana confectioneries

The "Cassata", the cannoli and almond confectioneries





Pane e panelle pedlar

Road food and the ancient markets

Today the road food, that is the typical barrows of Palermo where it's possible eating a little of everything, is still present in the whole city and above all in the popular district at the edge of the big historical markets: the Vucciria (from French bucherie - butcher's shop), the Capo, Ballarò (perhaps the most multiethnic corner in the city) and the Borgo Vecchio. You can get it following the strong smell of fried food: put in big vessels at random covered by paper, the typical "panelled", above mentioned, are on show behind the glass, to be tasted with big bun of bread and sesame, often combined with the fried "cazzilli" (that is croquettes made with potatoes and then fried with oil). Not less delicious are the fried aubergines or the "cicireddu", that is very small fish dipped in flour and fried at the moment. The sign "pani cà meusa" still exists at the door of the fried food shops. This means that there the tradition is really respected. It's a food very tasty but reserved to strong palates. The ox entrails, spleen and lung, are fried in lard, and then put inside the bread with lemon on or in some cases with ricotta or local cheese. Not less popular is the "stigghiola", skewer of sheep or calf grilled.

Born with Arabs, the markets present in many cities and small town of the island preserve intact the Arab roots of the Sicilian culture in the way of putting the fresh fruit, the orange above all, dried fruit, but also the big variety of exotic products, such as the spices coming from the near and far East, and the olives with their incredible types





The fish market of Catania

and smell of garlic, wild majoram and chilli. Wonderful are the counters of fish, as in the famous Mercato del Pesce of Catania. Here big swordfishes, dark groupers, gilthead and sargo, mussels and clams, octopus and many others shellfish dominate. They are rich in blue fish, among already cleaned sardines, mackerels, silvery spatula and gurnard. The lobster, from the big and red ones of Mazara del Vallo, to the small ones from sand, often already cleaned and shelled. Inside the markets of Sicily you can speak, negotiate and live immersed in a world that seems almost a theatre.



Bread with spleen pedlar

*Vucciria market,
Palermo working the wicker*





Lavorazione del vimini

Craftsmanship

What are not able to do the hands of Sicilians?... In the island they work the iron as it could be a piece of embroidery and they embroider as they could chisel. They inlay the wood as they would carve the marble and they use the colours of the various marbles as they would paint a picture. In conclusion, from ceramics to majolica, to the most precious laces, passing through the wrought iron working that make the Art Nouveau style eternal.

Unique are the objects made with lava stone, very often decorated with the same process of ceramics, really incredible traces of how Sicily could use everything nature offers to it, even the very strong lava, worked in the right way, could become everything, starting from the simple knick-knack up to the strongest furniture. As for example the incredible tables- decorated in a splendid way- but also the goldsmith's wares, miniature or the "simple" furnishings.

The craftsmanship produced in the Albanese speaking countries is extraordinary. In Piana degli Albanesi, for example, they produce the most original goldsmith's wares in the island: pectoral with coral heart, ear-ring in gold with the typical shape as a small boat (the pindajet), or the splendid silver girdle (brezi) typical of the traditional arbëreshë dress. The Byzantine icons are beautiful, worked with the

Typical girdle of the arberesche dressing





The artistic ceramic

ancient system of the gold leaf still today. Famous are the ceramics and majolica, very precious manufactured articles well-known since ancient times. Perhaps Caltagirone is the most well-known area, but we don't have to forget that the ceramics is one of those traditions that in Sicily are handed down since the mists of time. Further places where to find out wonderful ceramics are Santo Stefano di Camastra (Messina), Sciacca and Burgio (Agrigento). Vases, tiles, but also plates and watches enlightened by the special combination of the blue and yellow colours. Not less important are the terracotta figures.

We distinguish the genuine imitations producing, with special processes of advanced technology, the hand-made article of Greek Sicily, whose ochre and black are the most distinctive features. And if the embroider is still today the most popular hobby, the "trappiste" are real and true curiosities for sure. It's about carpets interwoven with strips of coloured cloth that could be found in the Trapani area still today.

But everywhere, the objects obtained by weaved palm leaves, such as baskets, bags, pannier and so on. Above all in Syracuse area, you can buy paper obtained according to the ancient papyrus working.

The working of the papyrus





Bar in the historic areas

Hotel Accommodation

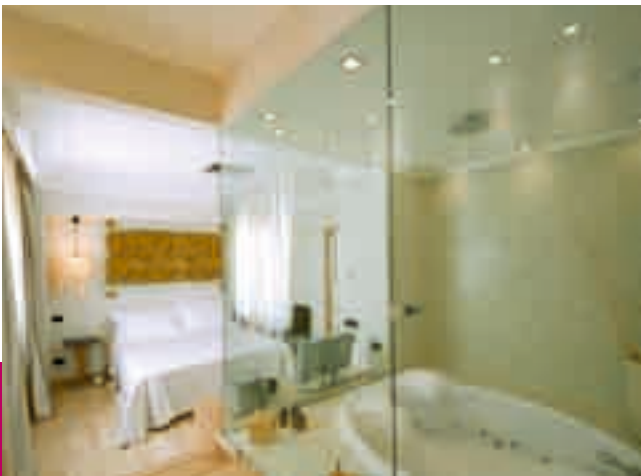
Sicily has a long tradition of hospitality. The historical hotels that had made Sicily the famous destination all over the world attracting European nobles, artists and travellers between the end of the 19th c. and the beginning of the new century, form the big treasure of the Sicilian hotels. Numerous and new hotel realities are added to them. They meet the new life style and the new demands of a market more oriented towards an exclusive and quality holiday. Recently, thanks to the contribution of the Community funds provisioned by UE, the situation of many hotels is considerably grown. In addition to the 5 stars de luxe grand hotel present in the Island, usually placed between Taormina and the capital provinces, and the big and small hotels restructured following the modern criteria, there's the supply of the new services as the wellness centres, sports grounds, the equipped beaches and the docks. But it's the rescue of the not used architectonic properties, historical buildings placed in strategic positions, sometimes descending sheer into the sea, with a very ancient charm really unique that, on private or public enterprise, have been transformed to create the very news in matter of accommodation in a few years. We are speaking about ex convents, palaces, farms, castles, big tuna fish station, level-crossing keeper's house, old saltpans, country farms, which vie for offering charm environments and astonishing the traveller with a very special charm, where Sicily always stands out with its complete uniqueness. A travel, that one among the new accommodation of the island, that really leads us in each corner:

Elegant farm holidays

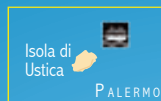


*Sea view hotels*

from the sea of the small islands to the big areas of the inside. The B&B accommodation has spread in the centre area, very good form for visitors who love the “self-made tourism” and look for a personal relation with places. There’s no palace in Palermo, Caltanissetta, Catania, Siracusa, Ragusa that don’t count on a new small reality month by month. They vie for offering views that leave you speechless, rooms with design furniture or antique furniture, breakfast based on house products and a lot of cordiality. All this at unbeatable prices. The rescue of farm holidays have increased a lot the country accommodations: almost every big farm house of West and East Sicily offer swimming-pool, riding-ground, mountain bike itineraries but above all cooking courses and a unique gastronomy in the world.

*Luxurious hotels in the city centre*

Maps of the provinces
















LEGENDA

-  Provincial capital
-  Provincial borders
-  Motorways
-  Main roads
-  Secondary roads
-  Naturalistic areas
-  Airports
-  Ports

Legenda

-  Provincial capital
-  Archeological site
-  Motorways
-  Main roads
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-  Spa
-  Castle
-  WHL Unesco site







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