

TOUR WITH US

the way to travel

SICILY

Day by day itinerary



DAY
1

Ben arrivati! Welcome to Sicily, welcome to Palermo!

After settling down at the hotel, we will gather for our first dinner - a time to meet your fellow travelers and talk about the next day's program.

Those who will arrive early in the day, will have some time to explore downtown Palermo.

Palermo



START THE JOURNEY with 7 nights in Palermo; we will take you on day trips to explore the Western region of Sicily known for its blending of Byzantine, Greek, Roman, Phoenician, Arab, Jewish, Gothic, and Norman traditions, heritage, and art. We will explore traces of these ancient civilizations such as the magnificent Cappella Palatina in Palermo, view the glittering mosaics in Monreale's Benedictine cloister, visit one of the greatest

legacies of ancient Greece - the Valley of the Temples in Agrigento, and the medieval town of Erice, a sacred site for the Greeks and Romans. During the 11th and 12th centuries, this area of Sicily was the most culturally advanced and richest Mediterranean state, thanks to its confluence of cultures. No wonder the Sicily of today is a stunning explosion of colors, scents and light!

DAY 2

Jewels of Palermo

Get ready to discover a fascinating city where different religions and cultures coexisted harmoniously, producing beautiful works of art.

Our guide Francesca will show us the **Palazzo Reale** and the **Cappella Palatina**.

We will mix with the local people at the **Ballarò market**, which offers an enticing variety of food stands, from freshly caught seafood to colorful vegetables and fruits. The market will also be our lunch venue where we will experience the typical Sicilian *Street Food*.

A little more history will follow in the afternoon with a visit to the **Martorana Church**. In the late afternoon, you will have free time for shopping or exploring the town by yourself.

We will end the day with a wonderful dinner at the hotel.



eigns, who conquered Sicily in 1072, chose the palace as their main residence, expanding and transforming the building into a complex, multi-purpose center that expressed the full power of the monarchy. King Roger II added the famous Cappella Palatina to Palazzo Reale in 1132, making it the focus of the palace and one of the most visited sites in Palermo.

CAPPELLA PALATINA

This UNESCO World Heritage site, a splendid example

PALAZZO REALE O PALAZZO DEI NORMANNI

The Royal Palace, known as The Norman Palace, is the oldest royal residence in Europe. Its construction began during a period of Islamic domination in the 9th century and many Arab architectural elements are still visible in vaults, basements and foundations. The Norman spher-



of Arab-Norman art, is located inside the Palazzo dei Normanni. The amazing interior is covered in glittering 12th century Norman-Byzantine mosaics, with an extraordinary depth and vividness achieved by gold-backed tesserae and silver mosaic tiles. The interior is capped by a 10th century Arab honeycomb stalactite wooden ceiling. The ceiling imagery is painted with biblical scenes as well as scenes of Arab and Norman court life, full of symbols and allegories. The texts in the chapel are written in Latin, Greek and Arabic, exemplifying the social-cultural syncretism between Western, Byzantine and Islamic cultures in Sicily.

IL MERCATO DI BALLARÒ

The Ballarò market in downtown Palermo is one of the most interesting of its kind; the delicious food offered by vendors reflects Sicily's Arab and Jewish culinary heritage.



CHIESA DELLA MARTORANA

One of the finest examples in Italy of Byzantine churches of the Middle Ages, this church is also called La Martorana. It is known for its stunning mosaics and is a blend of various artistic, architectural and cultural styles spanning several centuries. Today, even though La Martorana belongs to the Catholic Church, the liturgy is officiated in the ancient Greek language with spiritual traditions of the Orthodox Church. *Martorana fruit*, traditional marzipan sweets shaped like fruits, were invented by Palermo's Benedictine nuns. They made small oranges with colored almond paste and hung them in orange trees to impress King Charles V, who visited the convent and its garden in 1537. Try sampling these treats, available in Palermo's candy shops!

DAY
3

The Mosaics

The day begins with visits to two magnificent sites close to Palermo; the **Cathedral** and the **Cloister of Monreale**.

After lunch at a local traditional osteria, we will go back to Palermo where these options, close to the hotel, will be available:

- **Quattro Canti**, an octagonal piazza with four sides being the streets and four Baroque buildings, four fountains with statues of the four seasons, sculptures of the four Spanish kings of Sicily, and of the patronesses of Palermo.
- The **Praetorian Fountain** built in the city of Florence in 1554, then transferred to Palermo in 1574.
- The **Teatro Massimo**, the biggest theatre in Italy, renowned for its perfect acoustics.
- Other options - shopping, napping, gelatos or whatever you wish!

Dinner will be served at the hotel.

CATTEDRALE DI MONREALE

The Cathedral of Monreale was built by William II in the 12th century on the site of an earlier Greek church and is one of the greatest examples of Norman architecture in the world. What makes this church so splendid is the



marvelous interior with a rich decor of mosaics that cover the upper portions of the walls and marble paneling on the lower surfaces, the columns with decorative capitals and an ornamental floor in the sanctuary. The style of this cathedral is a magnificent fusion of Western and Eastern influences - Byzantine, Romanesque, Arab, and Norman.

IL CHIOSTRO

The splendid cloister of Monreale delights the eyes and



spirit, a masterpiece of sculpture and inlaid precious stones. The cloister has a square shape with pointed arches supported on 228 white marble columns, richly decorated with figure carvings and mosaic work, with patterns in gold and colorful glass tesserae. The unique

capitals, there is not one identical to the other, are carved with biblical scenes, allegories and foliage. At one angle of the cloister is an Arabesque marble fountain (designed by Islamic artists). The fountain's arcing water 'branches' were designed to resemble a palm tree.

DAY 4

A Corner of Ancient Greece in Sicily

Today we will visit **Segesta**, one of the best preserved and most beautiful of all the Greek archaeological sites in the Mediterranean! Viewing Segesta's Great Temple and its Amphitheater overlooking the rolling hills of Sicily, you might wonder whether you have been transported to ancient Greece.

We will have lunch in **Erice**, the medieval hilltop town that was once a site where Greeks worshipped Aphrodite. An aura of mystery still lingers and a stupendous view that you can enjoy before we return to Palermo for dinner and a restful night.

SEGESTA

During the Greek domination, circa 600 BC, Segesta peacefully assimilated Greek culture and became one of the most important Greek cities of antiquity. Of particular beauty is Segesta's Doric temple, also called the



Great Temple, and the amphitheater built with blocks of local limestone that follow Greek-Hellenistic architecture patterns. The Great Temple also offers a marvelous view of the hills and sea.

ERICE

Erice, a medieval town with ancient origins, is spectacularly located on a mountainous hilltop with inspiring views of the valley below, the sea, coastline and the nat-



ural harbour of Trapani. Its famous shifting clouds, often called "kisses of Venus" give Erice an air of mystery that could explain why it has been an important sacred site for the different civilizations that settled in the area. When Erice was a prosperous Elymian city, around 1100 BC, a shrine was dedicated to Astarte, a Phoenician fertility goddess; later, in the same site, Aphrodite was worshipped by the Greeks and Venus by the Romans. Erice is also known for its legendary pastry shop, Maria Grammatico's Via Vittorio Emanuele. Considered to have the best pastries in Sicily, the shop offers Maria's 'pasticcini', exquisite fine pastries, famous throughout Italy and beyond.

DAY 5

Mountains and Sea

Today promises to be a full day, starting with a drive through the **Madonie Regional Natural Park**, as we head towards **Castelbuono**.

You might forget, for a moment, that you are in Sicily viewing the Madonie Mountain Range, Sicily's highest mountains, and the fairytale mountain villages in the Park.

Castelbuono, translated as Good Castle, is also known for its good food and we will stop for lunch here, after

visiting the castle.

We will spend the afternoon in **Cefalù**, with its pristine ocean waters and warm sandy beaches.

Some activities to choose from:

- Visit the Cathedral.
- Discover the ancient medieval lavatory.
- Dip your feet in the sea, walk the sandy beach or just explore Cefalù's picturesque alleys.

We will return to Palermo for dinner at the hotel.



CASTELBUONO

Halfway between the sea and mountains in the midst of manna ash woods and a chestnut forest, the city of Castelbuono takes its name from the castle built in 1317 in what used to be an ancient Byzantine town. The city developed around the castle, achieving economical and political importance and becoming a small, autonomous state. By the 15th century, Castelbuono was a lively center that welcomed prestigious artists from different cultures and experienced an urban expansion that included churches, monasteries, a theater and fountains. In the 16th century, Castelbuono became the capital city of Madonie.

CEFALÚ

Cefalú is among the most beautiful towns in Italy and one of the greatest seaside resorts throughout the region; its white sandy beaches and pristine waters attract millions of tourists from all over the world. The old town of Cefalú has a medieval layout with narrow streets, paved with beach pebbles and limestone. In the center of the village is the Norman-Arab style cathedral of Cefalú, built in the 12th century.



The Phoenician, the Wine & the Salt

Today the coast will offer us several surprises, including the windmills in the **Saline of Trapani**.

The tour will start with a 2-hour drive to the western coast of Sicily to visit the town of **Marsala** and enjoy a wine tasting accompanied by local dishes

After lunch, we will take a short drive, followed by a boat ride, to the San Pataleo Island to visit **Mozia**. This city was once an important colony of Carthage, a Phoenician-founded city in Northern Africa. Here there is rare and exciting evidence of the four centuries of Phoenician influence in Sicily.

Back to the mainland, we will take a short drive to the Saline of Trapani to end our tour with a walk around this surreal white landscape while watching the sunset, then dine at the local restaurant.

in the 16th century, with a new phase of expansion, becoming one of the most important Sicilian strongholds. In recent years, Marsala has become one of the world's great destinations for kitesurfing. Shallow, warm waters, strong winds and a huge lagoon make it popular with beginners and experts!



MARSALA

Marsala, built on the ruins of the ancient Punic city of Lilybeo, passed into the hands of the Romans in 241 BC to become one of the most important centers of the Mediterranean, enriched with villas and public buildings. The Arabs, in the 8th century called it Marsa Alf (Port of Alf) or, perhaps, Marsa Allah, (Port of God). The economic and population growth led to a major urban development. Marsala was able to enjoy a period of development and prosperity under the Spanish rule

MOZIA

Mozia was once an ancient Phoenician city located off the western coast of Sicily, north of Marsala. It now belongs to the Whitaker Foundation, which hosts a small but fascinating museum with a unique view of Sicily's Phoenician history. The museum also displays Egyptian,



Corinthian, Attic, Roman, Punic and Hellenic artifacts, including the Mozia Charioteer. This marvelous marble statue was found in 1979 in a Phoenician fortification and is considered the finest surviving example of early Greek sculpture in the world.

SALINE DI TRAPANI

The natural reserve of Saline of Trapani and Paceco, a regional nature reserve established in 1995, covers nearly 1000 hectares and is one of the most important coastal wetlands in western Sicily, offering shelter to many species of migratory birds on route to Africa. Much of the reserve is made up of privately owned salt pans, where salt mining using traditional techniques is still practiced. The picturesque landscape is dotted with wind-

mills which were used to pump water during medieval times. Several continue to function today, pumping water through sluice gates into or out of various basins. Piles of harvested salt lie between the road and the basins waiting to be dispatched.



DAY
7

From Secret Dungeons to Towers: Discovering the Treasures in Palermo

Autumn tour:

Once a year during the month of October, Palermo opens dungeons, towers, villas, chapels, domes, theaters, museums and more! Le Vie dei Tesori, **The Treasures Road**, offers a unique opportunity to discover many treasures that are usually not open to the public.

Spring tour:

Other treasures are open all year round and plenty for only one day! We had already visited some of the most famous monuments and today, during our walking tour we will enjoy some of the other jewels like: The Church of the Gesù, The Cathedral and the La Zisa castle.

Prepare for a feast of art, food and history, all concentrated in Palermo's downtown area.

We'll celebrate our wonderful experience in western Sicily, with a farewell dinner in a Palermo's historic palace.

Don't forget to pack for tomorrow's early departure.

World War II and the earthquake of 1968, Palermo has successfully transitioned into a modern and vibrant city, the bustling capital of Sicily.



PALERMO

Situated on one of the most beautiful promontories of the Mediterranean, Palermo is a fascinating destination with its colorful history, varied architecture, distinct gastronomy, and excellent weather. Founded in the 7th century BC by Phoenicians, it was later conquered by Romans, Arabs, Normans and Spaniards, who have left deep artistic and cultural traces throughout the city. Palermo is a treasure chest full of precious jewels waiting to be discovered and encapsules many splendid points of interest that have been designated UNESCO World Heritage Sites. Greatly affected by the bombings of

LE VIE DEI TESORI

Le Vie dei Tesori was created to offer the people of Palermo the opportunity to deepen their relationship to their own city, to explore its many Arab-Norman churches, Roman archeological sites, baroque buildings, mansions and Liberty Style palaces. During the month of October, Le Vie dei Tesori invites Palermo citizens to enter these cultural spaces as meeting places and points dialogue, to use them, to live them. Many residents volunteer to host walks, artistic and musical events and tours. For visitors, this offers a unique opportunity to see Palermo's heritage and create itineraries available only during this special month.

DAY
8

To Ancient Greece and the East Coast

Get your luggage ready; today we will travel towards the East Coast with Modica as our destination and base camp for the rest of the tour. Before we get there, we will stop in **Agrigento** to glimpse the magnificence of what was once Ancient Greece.

After lunch, we will drive to our boutique hotel near **Modica**, unpack and relax.

columns, were built in ancient Akragas, a city described by Pindar as “the most beautiful city built by mortals”. Akragas reached its zenith in the 5th century BC and was one of the leading cities of Magna Graecia, with a population estimated between 200,000 to 800,000. During the Punic Wars, it was conquered by the Romans, who latinized the name to Agrigentum. Later it fell under Arab rule, with the name of Kerkent and, in 1089, it was conquered by the Normans. Built high on a steep hillside, the massive temples also offer expansive views of the sea.



AGRIGENTO

Stretching along a ridge to the south of Agrigento are a string of Greek temples, a sight comparable to the Acropolis. Valle dei Templi, The Valley of the Temples, is among the largest and best-preserved ancient Greek sites outside of Greece itself. These splendid temples, with Doric style



COMPLETE THE JOURNEY with 7 nights in Modica; from here we will explore the Eastern part of Sicily, a captivating region with its varied and extraordinary landscapes. Towering over the coast of Eastern Sicily, Mount Etna is the highest and largest active volcano in Europe, with terraced slopes that produce deservedly famous wines. Sicily's tranquil beaches with black, silver and white sand attracted the Greeks who founded Syracuse, the

largest city of the ancient world, surpassing even Athens. Here you will discover Sicily's complex layers of Greek, Roman, Medieval and Baroque history. We will also visit the stunning Villa Romana del Casale, which houses the largest and richest collection of Roman mosaics in the world, and the cities Modica and Ragusa, with their wonderful examples of baroque art and architecture.

DAY
9

Baroque Exuberance

Today's itinerary promises short drives to nearby places - **Modica** and **Ragusa Ibla**, two of the most beautiful baroque cities in all of Italy.

After breakfast in our new hotel, we will take a 10-minute

drive into Modica for a guided walk and visit to the **Cathedral of St. George**. Modica is also home of an ancient chocolate atelier which we'll be visiting.

A light lunch will be served at the hotel before heading to Ragusa Ibla to enjoy a guided walk and a bit of free time. Dinner tonight will be at a restaurant in Modica.

MODICA

Modica, located in southeastern Sicily, is a captivating historic town. After being ravaged by earthquakes in 1613 and 1693, and floods in 1833 and 1902, Modica was largely rebuilt in Sicilian Baroque style. The city's palazzi and houses rise from the bottom of a gorge and look like they are stacked on one another! Modica's listed as a UNESCO World Heritage Site for its historic center, which includes the Cathedral of San Giorgio, which you might have seen if you're a fan of television's fictional Sicilian detective, Inspector Montalbano.



CIOCCOLATO DI MODICA

Eating chocolate can help you lose weight?! Many of Modica's chocolate shops display articles claiming that a square of dark chocolate reduces sugar cravings and helps you lose extra pounds! Modica is well known for its specialty chocolate, made following ancient Aztec methods and recipes. We will visit a chocolate shop to watch a chocolatier at work. Influenced by Aztec traditions, the chocolate will be made at low temperatures to prevent the alteration of organoleptic cocoa com-



ponents, giving the dark chocolate a slightly granular texture and rich, aromatic flavor.

RAGUSA

Ragusa is called the *city of bridges* because of its three very picturesque bridges and is also known as the *island within an island or the other Sicily*, due to its history. After a devastating earthquake in 1693, the city was reconstructed in the 18th century and divided Ragusa into two sections. Upper Ragusa, known as Ragusa Superiore, is situated on a plateau, and Ragusa Ibla, down below was reconstructed from the city's ruins and rebuilt with medieval and baroque influences. Today Ragusa is renowned for its architectural baroque masterpieces and was declared a World Heritage site by UNESCO in 2002.



DAY
10

Cooking Sicilian Food with a Sicilian Mamma

The highlight of the day will be meeting with Giovanna, a Sicilian mamma, and cooking with her in her home.

During **Giovanna's cooking lesson**, we will use olive oil and vegetables from her farm. Her husband will help us discern the quality of various olive oils and teach us how to choose the best.

After this fun, informal class, we will continue our discovery of baroque art in Sicily visiting **Scicli**, an unique city frequently used as a film set.

After a 20-minute drive, we will be back at the hotel and enjoy an aperitif before dinner

SCICLI

Scicli is a monumental baroque city, with varied landscapes as it is a few miles from low, sandy beaches and close to limestone cliffs and gentle hills in the hinterland with olive, almond and carob trees. In 2002, Scicli's historic center was awarded the title of World Heritage Site by UNESCO and has remains of a Greek village and of Carthaginian and Roman settlements. After the fall of



the Roman Empire, Scicli passed to the Byzantines and suffered Barbarian invasions. Under Arab domination, Scicli experienced a period of considerable agricultural and commercial development that lasted until the Aragonese domination. After the 1693 earthquake, Scicli

was rebuilt with exquisite baroque churches, beautiful palaces, piazzas, and public parks. The city's economy is agriculture-based and the area is renowned for its many greenhouses producing the primizie, early fruits, that are exported throughout Italy.

DAY
11

Eating Formaggio Under the Sicilian Sun

Today we start the day early visiting a dairy farm. We will learn about the cheese manufacturing process and taste local cheeses and ricotta.

After a guided tour of the archaeological area of **Syracuse**, we will visit the city's food market where we will have lunch, savoring street food delicacies.

In the afternoon, we will visit the **Island of Ortigia**, separated from Syracuse only by a bridge, but evocative of a different era.

We will walk to the beautiful Ortigia main piazza with its baroque, liberty and rococo buildings.

We'll also stop at one of the piazza's coffee shops before heading back to the hotel.

SIRACUSA

More than any other city, Syracuse encapsulates Sicily's timeless beauty. Ancient Greek ruins rise out of lush citrus orchards, cafe tables spill onto dazzling baroque piazzas, and medieval lanes lead down to the sparkling blue sea. In its heyday, Syracuse was the largest city in the ancient world, bigger even than Athens and Corinth. It was founded by Corinthian colonists and quickly flourished, becoming a rich commercial town and regional powerhouse. Victory over the Carthaginians in 480 BC paved the way for a golden age, during which art and culture thrived and the city's kings commissioned an impressive program of public building. Syracuse has



outstanding architecture that spans several cultures - Greek, Roman and Baroque.

ISOLA DI ORTIGIA

Famous for its freshwater springs, the island of Isola Di Ortigia has been inhabited since the Bronze Age. Packed with 2,500 years of history, the island's varying architectural styles encompass Greek and Roman remains, Medieval Norman buildings and baroque structures. The main sites include the Maniace Castle, a towering building from the 13th century, the Fountain of Arethusa in the southern part of Ortigia, and the Cathedral - a Greek temple dedicated to Athena which later was transformed into a beautiful Christian basilica. The other side of Ortigia offers some of the loveliest beaches in the area with transparent, turquoise waters.



DAY
12

A Day Full of Beauty

We will be nourished by both man-made and natural beauty today, with wildlife and exotic birds, colorful fishing boats, cathedrals, and more!

In **Noto**, our first stop, we will stroll through the public gardens and along the main street to see several beautiful Baroque churches: St. Francis Immaculate, St.

Clare, the Holy Savior and Noto's cathedral.

From this splendor, we will migrate to **Vendicari's** Wildlife Oasis to witness a fascinating variety of birds.

After lunch and a wine tasting at Vendicari, we will drive south and arrive in **Marzamemi**, one of Sicily's prettiest seaside fishing villages. Walking along the white sandy beach, we will enjoy the sea breeze before we return to Modica for dinner at the hotel.

NOTO

In ancient times Noto was known as Netum and, according to legend, Daedalus stayed in the city after his flight over the Ionian Sea, as did Hercules when he completed his seventh task. After Roman domination, Noto was conquered and ruled by Arabs from 866 until 1091, when it became the last Islamic citadel in Sicily to fall to the Christians. Later it became a rich Norman city, expanding in the Middle Age with new buildings, churches and palaces. All of these, however, were totally destroyed during the 1693 earthquake. To rebuild the city and relocate it closer to the Ionian Sea, famous architects were hired to plan a new Noto. The rebuilt city was designed with a perfectly proportioned center, whose parallel lines provided a myriad of panoramas. A masterpiece of Sicilian Baroque, Noto is a UNESCO's World Heritage Site.



VENDICARI

Vendicari offers wonderful seaside walks with only the sound of waves, birds, wind and sky; this reserve is the Sicilian beach least visited by humans! Officially established as a natural reserve in 1984, the Wildlife Oasis Vendicari covers approximately 1512 hectares of coastal wetland. It has contributed to the creation of an ecosystem that is the reference point for the thousands of migrating birds of numerous species - flamingos, herons,



ducks, mallards, pintails, terns and others that stop here on their journey from the Sahara desert to their rearing grounds in northern Europe.

MARZAMEMI

Just a few kilometres up the coast from Italy's southernmost point, in the deep southeast of Sicily, is one of Sicily's prettiest seaside villages - Marzamemi, built by the Arabs in the 10th century. The original name was Marsà al-hamam, which means Turtle Dove Bay. Arabs also built Marzamemi's Tonnara, tuna processing plant, which became the most important industry on the island. Although the Tonnara is no longer functional today, Marzamemi continues its artisanal fishing and processing activities, producing dried tuna roe (bottarga), seafood pasta condiments, tuna salamis and much more.



DAY
13

The Volcano

Be ready for an exciting experience today! Although it is the highest and most active volcano in Europe, **Mt. Etna** is both a safe and spectacular destination.

We will take a gentle hike along **Monti Silvestri**, two inactive craters formed as the result of the 1982 Mt. Etna eruption.

Visiting Etna will offer fabulous opportunities for photography - we'll see the **Cassone Lava Cave**, Etna's eruptive fissures, the plateau where the 2001 lava stopped, and

a series of switchbacks crossing the evocative 1983 lava flow. We will also stop to see the effects of the 1991-93 eruption, which seriously threatened the town.

Zafferana Etnea, a town set among the green hills that rise up to Mt. Etna and just minutes from the Ionian Sea, is our lunch stop. Etna's most recent claim to fame is its wineries and wine tasting. What are the flavors of volcanic wines? We will sample them as we enjoy a wine tasting and lunch at one of the best wineries on Mt. Etna!

Our exploration is at its end... time to go back to the hotel to rest and relax before dinner.



MONTE ETNA

Writers have called Mt. Etna the *Wicked Witch*, *the Pillar of Heaven* and many locals call the volcano *Mongibello*, the beautiful mountain, in spite of its danger and mystery. The highest active volcano in Europe, Mt. Etna has attracted the attention of travellers, artists, poets and philosophers for centuries. Etna's frequent eruptions throughout history have changed, sometimes profoundly, the surrounding landscape, at times threatening the people who have settled around it. The first historical references to the activity of the Etna eruption are found in the writings of Thucydides and Diodorus of Sicily and

of the poet Pindar. According to Diodorus, about 3,000 years ago following a phase of violently explosive activity, the inhabitants of the area near Etna moved to the western parts of the island. Although Etna's lava flows and dust clouds bring destruction, they also enrich the soil, making the lower slopes and surrounding planes some of the most fertile regions in Sicily, with vast expanses of vines and citrus groves. Etna's surface is characterized by a variety of landscapes, including dense forests and desolate areas covered by magmatic rock. The volcano's weather can change quickly and, when snow-capped, Etna attracts skiers.



DAY
14

Roman Mosaics and Colorful Ceramics

Even though it is our last day together, there is still much to see! We will view some of the world's most famous mosaics, in the once grand 4th century country villa, **Villa Romana del Casale** in **Piazza Armerina** town. Here we will find the mosaic "bikini girls", who are actually athletes hurling discus, playing ball, lifting weights, sprinting and crowning the winner.

After lunch, we will stop at **Caltagirone** for a ceramics workshop and to see the beautiful buildings in its historic center.

Tonight we will enjoy a festive Farewell Dinner with traditional Sicilian music and dances.

PIAZZA ARMERINA

Situated in the Sicilian hinterland, at 721 meters above sea level, stands Piazza Armerina, a charming town origi-



nally founded by Arabs that is most famous for its Villa of Casale. In addition to its fine Norman and Baroque historic center, important museums, churches and palaces, Piazza Armerina offers a unique cultural celebration - the Palio of the Normans. Taking place every year in August for three days, this event includes a tournament with jousting knights on horseback in colorful costumes. The most significant medieval tradition in southern Italy, this event celebrates the conquest of Sicily that ended Arab rule and created the prosperous County of Sicily.



VILLA ROMANA DEL CASALE

Built in the 4th century as an elegant hunting lodge, the Roman Villa del Casale is home to some of the best preserved and extensive examples of Roman mosaics. These extraordinarily vivid tiles, probably produced by North African artisans, deal with many subjects, ranging from mythological scenes to portrayals of daily life and are made of pieces of finely cut stone, set into mortar for a smooth finish on the floor. The Chamber of the Ten Maidens, nicknamed the *bikini girls*, shows athletic girls exercising in scant two-piece red swimsuits.

CALTAGIRONE

Caltagirone is famous for its ceramics, with their swirling patterns, vibrant colors and detailed designs. Wherever you wander in the old town section of the city, you will see buildings decorated with ceramic tiles and shops displaying a beautiful selection of wares. Caltagirone's ceramic industry has thrived since the time of the ancient Greeks. This charming city is also home to churches, palaces, and elegant 18th century villas. For its architectural heritage, the historic center was awarded the title of World Heritage Site by UNESCO in 2002. Among the most important buildings are The Cathedral of San Giuliano, the Collegio Church, the Palazzo dell'Aqui-

la, The Staircase of Maria Santissima del Monte, the Church of Santa Rita and Santa Chiara, the Palazzo delle Magnolie, plus many others.



**DAY
15**

Arrivederci! See you soon!

After breakfast, the tour ends today with a single ride to the Catania airport, or to your hotel in Catania, if you decide to prolong your visit in Italy. Today will be your last chance to exchange email addresses with your new friends!

Tornate Presto!

Come back soon! We have other enchanting Italian tours.

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