

# UNSPOILED SICILY & SOUTHERN ITALY

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## 20 DAYS

### UNSPOILED SICILY & SOUTHERN ITALY



### TOUR OVERVIEW

Starting and finishing in Rome, this tour captures the scenic beauty of the Amalfi Coast, takes in the best of hidden Puglia and southern Calabria and highlights in particular the rich cultural heritage of Sicily.

Long regarded as the 'last bastion of Italy', haunted by its reputation as poor and beholden to the mafia, Sicily insists that change has arrived. Closer to Africa than to Rome, the Mediterranean's largest island was first colonised by the Greeks in the 8th century.

Over time it attracted waves of invaders resulting in an interior enriched by the remains of ancient civilisations and the survival of many old traditions. Greek temples, Roman ruins, Norman churches and Byzantine domes are all evidence of Sicily's rich and diverse past.

With a coastline of some thousand km, Sicily offers the visitor sandy beaches, sheer cliffs and a rich array of delicious local cuisine and full-bodied red wines. If you like Italy, you are simply going to fall in love with Sicily, possibly still one of the best-kept secrets in Europe.

## 3 & 4 NIGHT STAYS





## TOUR HIGHLIGHTS

### ITALY :

Paestum • Amalfi • Ravello • Sorrento  
Polignano a Mare • Alberobello • Matera • Lecce

### SICILY:

Palermo • Monreale • Mondello • Erice  
Segesta • Cefalù • Scopello • Mount  
Etna • Castelmola • Taormina • Siracusa  
Ortigia • Agrigento • Sciacca • Mazara del vallo  
Marsala • Corleone • Selinunte • Catania

(B/L/D) Breakfast / Lunch / Dinner included



### DAY 1 - ARRIVAL ROME

#### Amalfi Coast Region (3 nights)

Benvenuti! At Rome airport your tour director and coach will be awaiting you at the airport for transfer to your hotel on the Amalfi Coast. Upon arrival, you will enjoy a light lunch followed by hotel check-in. Many writers have written about the natural beauty of this part of the Italian coast and the islands in the Gulf of Naples, Capri, Ischia and Le Sirenuse, home of the mythical sirens, are sure to call you back long after.

Famous for its breathtaking caves and subtropical vegetation the charming villages attract many visitors. The afternoon is at your leisure to rest or explore the local surroundings. Dinner at the hotel. (L/D)

### DAY 2 - PAESTUM

Buon giorno! We start our adventure with a guided visit of Paestum, a former Greek colony and part of the 'Magna Grecia' located on the coast of the Tyrrhenian Sea. The ruins of Paestum are famous for their three ancient Greek temples in the Doric order, dating from about 550 to 450 BC.

This area of Italy is also known for its Buffalo Mozzarella production and in the afternoon we will visit a typical farm for a tour and tasting of this famous delicacy. The evening is at your leisure to explore and try one of the local trattorias for dinner. (B)



### DAY 3 - RAVELLO - AMALFI

Today you will enjoy a panoramic tour of the scenic coastline of the Amalfi Coast partly by bus and partly by foot, offering a relaxing day out. At its peak in the 11th c. Amalfi was a supreme naval power and a bitter enemy of the north. The town flourished in the 9th c. through its connections with the Orient. The city claims it introduced to Italy such modern wonders as paper, coffee and carpets.

This 50 km stretch of coastline running from Sorrento to Salerno is one of Europe's most beautiful. Today we will spend time in Ravello, high above the sea, and have lunch in Amalfi. We will also view the town of Positano with its hillside houses during a brief photo stop. Dinner again at the tables of our hotel. (B/D)



#### DAY 4 - CASTEL DEL MONTE

##### Puglia Region (4 nights)

After a good rest and a leisurely breakfast (in Italian 'colazione'), this morning we venture further south to enter the heartland of Puglia, the region that is probably best known for its typically shaped 'Trulli' houses and strong Baroque influences. It is also one of the nation's largest wine regions and producer of olives, citrus fruits and vegetables. This ancient land, the heel of Italy's boot, has some of the country's most unspoiled scenery, fascinating artistic and historical sites and sandy beaches.

On sea voyages to their colonies and trading posts in the west, the ancient Greeks invariably headed to Apulia first, it was the shortest crossing, before filtering southward into Sicily. En route we will enjoy a guided tour of the enigmatic, octagonal Castel del Monte. A unique piece of medieval military architecture, the castle is a successful blend of elements from classical antiquity, the Orient and north European Cistercian Gothic. Dinner at our hotel. (B/D)

#### DAY 5 - ALBEROBELLO - POLIGNANO A MARE

Alberobello is the town with the greatest concentration of the beehive shaped 'Trulli'. The origins go back to the 13th c. and possibly further. They are built on local limestone, without mortar, with a hole in the top for escaping smoke. Some are painted with mystical or religious symbols, some are isolated, others are joined together with roofs on various levels.

In the afternoon, we visit the town of Polignano a Mare and enjoy free time for lunch. Overlooking the Adriatic Sea, the town is perched on impressive cliffs and the well-preserved old centre is well worth a visit. Dinner at our hotel. (B/D)

#### DAY 6 - MATERA

One of southern Italy's most iconic towns and a World Heritage Site since 1993, Matera is known for its elegant Baroque churches, palaces and wide squares filled to capacity during the evening's 'passeggiata' when the locals turn out en masse to stroll the streets. What really sets this town apart however is the 'sassi', rock hewn cave dwellings piled atop of one another and straggling along the sides of a steep ravine. Dinner at the hotel. (B/D)

#### DAY 7 - LECCE

Sometimes described as the 'Florence of the South', Lecce has a charming historic centre, it is a minor Baroque masterpiece and we will enjoy the best on offer during a guided visit. Its history goes back a long way, you can still see ruins of a Roman theatre and amphitheatre, but the period which led to the town's current fame was during the 17th century.

This time of prosperity started grand developments and the construction of palaces and churches. These buildings adapted the fashionable Baroque style to the soft local limestone, with decorations and cherubs extravagantly covering facades and doorways. These days, the production and sale of olive oil, wine and ceramics continues to be the mainstay of the local economy. Dinner at the hotel. (B/D)



#### DAY 8 - TRANSFER TO CALABRIA - SICILY

##### Northern Sicily Region (1 night)

Slowly arriving in the most southern part of Italy, we enter the region of Calabria known for its warm climate, rocky coastline and sandy beaches not to mention the strong and traditional flavours of its local cuisine.

This is the region where seafood really shines, calamari, bream, sea bass and swordfish will be present on the menu, just to name a few. Unbeknown to many, the south was also a major crossroads for ancient Greek colonies and is heavily influenced by its former Norman and Spanish occupations.

Today we sail the waters and take a 20 min ferry to Sicily for our overnight near Messina. Dinner at our hotel. (B/D)



## DAY 9 - CEFALÙ

(Northern Sicily Region (3 nights))

Before we head for Palermo, we break our journey for a stop in Cefalù, an attractive beachside village dominated by a large rock and the twin pyramid towers of the Cathedral offering a rare beauty inside. Cefalù, with narrow medieval streets, many good restaurants, bars and shops is well worth a visit.

Closer to Africa than to Rome, the German poet Goethe wrote: 'To have seen Italy without having seen Sicily is not to have seen Italy at all for Sicily is the clue to everything.' Greeks, Romans, Normans, Spanish, Austrians, French and the British have all left a fascinating cultural legacy on this island. Greek temples, Roman ruins, Norman churches and Byzantine domes are all strong evidence of Sicily's rich and dynamic past.

Only half an hour from mainland Italy, but a world apart, the Mediterranean's largest island has long been the 'last bastion' of Italy. At night, dinner at a nearby local restaurant. (B/D)



#### DAY 10 - PALERMO - MONDELLO - MONREALE

The ancient town of Palermo has been a major crossroad for civilisation in The Mediterranean throughout the ages. With its superb position by the sea, at the foot of Monte Pellegrino with the fertile Conce D'Oro Valley, the city was once regarded as one of the grandest cities in Europe. Enjoy a walking tour through the streets of the historical centre and visit the town's popular street markets. Palermo certainly has many different 'faces'. We continue with a visit to Mondello and enjoy free time for lunch.

Today we also visit nearby Monreale, the town is famous for its stunning Norman 12th c. Cathedral and is considered one of the finest examples of Norman architecture (King Roger II) in Sicily. Today should also offer free time in the large open-air 'Ballaro' market. At night, dinner at a nearby local restaurant. (B/D)



#### DAY 11 - CORLEONE - HINTERLAND

Today a relaxing day is planned to visit one of the most infamous of Sicilian towns, Corleone. Best known of course for its 'connection' to the sequel movies, 'The Godfather'. We have no doubt all seen the fate of several generations of Italians and being so close to where it all started, a visit must be included today. Your tour director will tell you some tales and legends but rest assured, you are in good hands today! After an organised lunch, we will return to Palermo. The evening is at your leisure. (B/L)



#### DAY 12 - ERICE - SCOPELLO Western Sicily Region (4 nights)

After hotel check-out we start the day in Erice, a picturesque medieval town located at the top of a mountain set 751 metres above sea level overlooking most of the western region, the Mediterranean Sea and the Egadi Islands. Today also includes a visit to Scopello, a charming hamlet still relatively untouched. This part of western Sicily feels truly different. Dinner tonight at our hotel. (B/D)



#### DAY 13 - MARSALA - SEGESTA

Today we start exploring the local area as we embark on a visit to Marsala, famous for its wine, mythology and history. It is a pleasant, lively town with many interesting historical sites, different cultural influences and a colourful open-air morning market.

In the afternoon enjoy a taste of its famous export product, its sweet dessert wine. The wine was 'discovered' by Englishman John Woodhouse, who after landing in the city in 1773 and tasting the local product, decided it should be marketed throughout Europe. Marsala wine is well known all over the world and today will naturally include a guided tour and tasting to a local winery with Marsala wine bottled exclusively in this unspoiled part of Sicily.

We also view the nearby salt pans and windmills on the way to Segesta, founded on and around Monte Barbaro. The Greek theatre and Doric temple are located high on a hill offering stunning views. In ancient times the city of Segesta spent much of its time in constant conflict with Selinunte in the south. Dinner at the hotel. (B/D)







#### DAY 14 - SELINUNTE

This morning we explore the nearby town of Selinunte, an ancient Greek settlement founded in the 7th c. BC. Once prosperous and powerful, this city is one of the most captivating ancient sites in Sicily, the temples will impress. In the afternoon, an organised lunch has been included for your pleasure at a typical Sicilian family home, a wonderful opportunity to interact with the local community. Dinner at the hotel. (B/L/D)

#### DAY 15 - SCIACCA - MAZARA DEL VALLO

We will start the day with a visit to nearby Sciacca, a good opportunity to buy those last souvenirs including typical regional ceramics. The town of Sciacca started life as a Roman settlement but only really took off with the arrival of the Arabs. The Normans fortified this prosperous farming town and these days it is a bustling port. Today we also spend time in the charming fishing port of Mazara del Vallo to view the bronze statue of the 'Greek dancing satyr'. At night, once again, a typical Sicilian dinner is planned at our hotel. (B/D)



#### DAY 16 - AGRIGENTO - TAORMINA

##### Eastern Sicily Region (4 nights)

Transferring to the eastern side of the island, today we take in Agrigento and visit the famous 'Valley of the Temples', one of the most representative sites of Greek civilisation in the Mediterranean Sea. During a relaxing morning walk, we will admire some of the most beautiful and best-preserved temples of the Magna Grecia, a fascinating rich and varied combination of history, myth, architecture and nature. Dinner at a local restaurant. (B/D)

#### DAY 17 - CASTELMOLA - TAORMINA

In the morning we head for Castelmola, one of the most beautiful medieval villages in Sicily. We continue with a visit to the picturesque town of Taormina and walk through the historical centre, followed by lunch and free time. Taormina, truly beautiful and famous for its Greek/Roman amphitheatre, its enchanting view of the Ionian Sea and Mount Etna, has been an exclusive Sicilian hotspot since the beginning of the 19th c. where many noble and rich families of northern Europe spent winter due to its mild climate.

Today however Taormina is famous for its 'La Dolce Vita' lifestyle, beautiful views and shops. Sicilian cuisine reflects the famous Mediterranean influences that have left their mark on the island, fish, vegetables, grains and couscous are very popular. The evening is at your leisure, a perfect opportunity to explore and have a taste of the local cuisine. (B)



PICTURESQUE SEASIDE VILLAGES  
WHERE THE RHYTHMS OF DAILY LIFE  
ARE UNCHANGED OVER GENERATIONS





#### DAY 18 - CATANIA - MOUNT ETNA

We will start our day with some free time in Catania, an ancient port settlement and the island's second largest city after Palermo, to visit the local fish market La Pescheria. Dominating the landscape in eastern Sicily between Taormina and Catania, Mount Etna (3350 metres) is Europe's largest live volcano.

Today we depart for Rifugio Sapienza (1900 metres above sea level) where it will be possible to visit the small inactive Silvestri craters. A visit to a local winery will rank amongst one of the highlights of your trip. The evening is free to sample some more of Sicily's delicious cuisine. (B)

#### DAY 19 - SIRACUSA - ORTIGIA

We set out and drive south to enjoy a guided tour of the ruins of Siracusa. Once a powerful Greek city rivalling Athens and one of the highlights of your visit to Sicily, the city was founded in 734 BC and colonised by Corinthians who established their settlement on the island of Ortigia.

Today you will visit the archaeological zone, the Greek theatre, Roman amphitheatre, the Ear of Dionysus and the Latomie. Lunch on the Island of Ortigia. A farewell dinner is planned at a local restaurant. (B/D)

#### DAY 20 - CATANIA - ROME FCO AIRPORT

All good things come to an end and after breakfast and hotel check-out we head for Catania airport to board our flight to Rome international airport where your tour director will wave goodbye.

This relaxing tour of Sicily and southern Italy is ideal for all who wish to experience something very different. (B)

Due to flight schedules, the tour itinerary of the Sicily portion of the tour may be done 'in reverse' meaning a start in Catania and finishing the tour in Palermo.

From time to time, some of the historical sites of Sicily may be closed for restoration works, in which case we will give it our best to replace the original site with one of similar interest.



## TOUR PRICE INCLUSIONS

Meet and Greet Rome FCO International Airport. Return airport transfers in Europe. One-way ferry Calabria (Southern Italy) to Sicily, one-way economy class flight from Catania (Sicily) to Rome.

19 nights in charming boutique/heritage accommodation including daily buffet breakfast, 3 course dinner (or lunch) with beverages based on typical traditional regional cuisine where indicated.

Private coach travel in Europe, entry fees covering sightseeing and entertainment, hotel service charges city taxes, most tipping, baggage handling (1 bag pp). Services of a full-time professional tour director and local city guides.



## DEPARTURE SCHEDULE LAND ONLY - 20 DAYS

Start date Rome - Friday, 30 August 2024

Finish date Rome - Wednesday, 18 September 2024

Tour Price pp/twin share - AUD \$13,795

Single Supplement - AUD \$2,495