

VITORITALY®
Italy with Italians

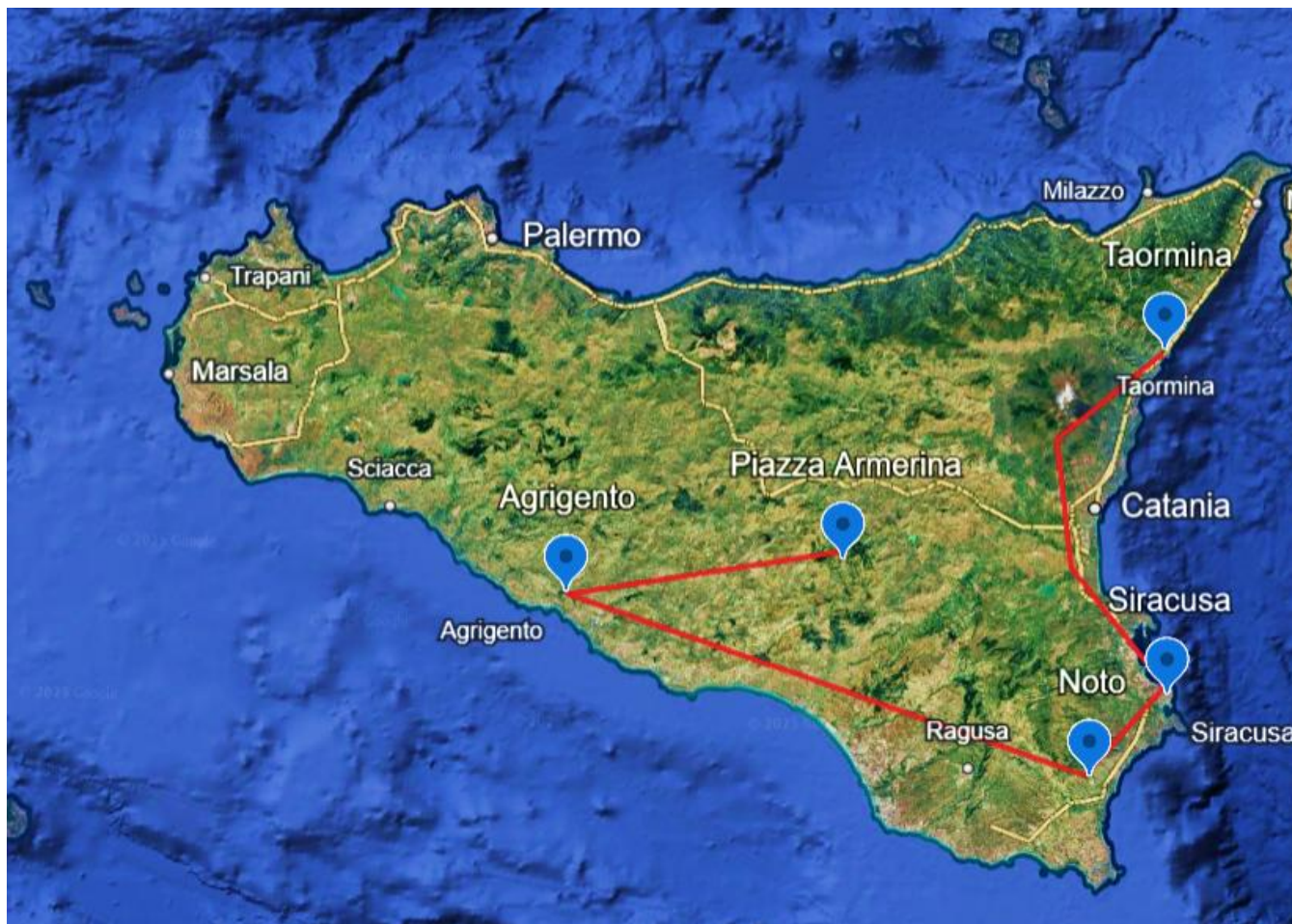
1 WEEK IN EASTERN SICILY

Piazza Armerina, Agrigento, Val di Noto,
Siracusa and Taormina

PROGRAM



Around Eastern Sicily, the cradle of Italian civilization: glamorous Taormina, Greek Siracusa, Val di Noto and its marvellous Baroque, Agrigento and its imposing Temple.
At the discovering of the culture and spirit of this wonderful island!



TOUR HIGHLIGHTS

- Piazza Armerina, the home of Roman patricians
- Agrigento, in the footsteps of ancient Greeks
- Val di Noto, the triumph of the baroque
- Siracusa, encapsulating Sicily's timeless beauty
- Taormina, a patch of paradise

ITINERARY SUMMARY

AREA	ACTIVITIES INCLUDED IN THE PROGRAM
Day 1 Catania Airport	- Arrival at Catania Airport - Pick up and transfer to your accommodation in Piazza Armerina area <i>Overnight in Piazza Armerina area</i>
Day 2 Piazza Armerina	- 1.5-hour private visit of Villa Romana del Casale in Piazza Armerina with an <u>Authorised Tourist Guide</u> - Transfer to the your accommodation in Agrigento area <i>Overnight in Agrigento area</i>
Day 3 Agrigento	- 2-hour private walking tour of the Valley of the Temples Archeological Area with an <u>Authorised Tourist Guide</u> - Transfer to your accommodation in Val di Noto area <i>Overnight in Val di Noto area</i>
Day 4 Val di Noto	- Full-day excursion in Val di Noto area with an <u>Authorised Tourist Guide</u> : Noto, Ragusa, Modica <i>Overnight in Val di Noto area</i>
Day 5 Siracusa	- Half-day excursion to Siracusa and Ortigia - 2-hour private walking tour of Siracusa city centre with an <u>Authorised Tourist Guide</u> - Sicilian Cooking Class in Val di Noto area <i>Overnight in Val di Noto area</i>
Day 6 Taormina	- Transfer to your accommodation in Taormina - Free time in Taormina - Admission to the Greek Theater <i>Overnight in Taormina</i>
Day 7 Mt. Etna	- Full-day excursion to Mt. Etna area - Visit to a local wine cellar with tastings <i>Overnight in Taormina</i>
Day 8 Catania Airport	- Transfer to Catania Airport - Departure from Catania Airport

QUOTATION

March 1st to May 31st – October 1st to 31st (Shoulder Season): € 4,745.00 / pax (2-pax group) – € 3,345.00 / pax (4-pax group)

June 1st to September 30th (High Season): € 4,895.00 / pax (2-pax group) – € 3,540.00 / pax (4-pax group)

Larger Group, Single Occupancy, other options: price upon request

WHAT'S INCLUDED

- **Accommodations in Double Room with Continental Breakfast (*):**

- Day 1: 3* Hotel in Piazza Armerina area
- Day 2: 3* Hotel in Agrigento area
- Days 3 to 5: 3* Hotel in Val di Noto area
- Days 6 & 7: 3* Hotel in Taormina

(*) The Hotel list is available upon request

- **Transfers (**):**

- Day 1: Pick up at Catania Airport and transfer to your accommodation in Piazza Armerina area
- Day 1: Transfer to your accommodation in Agrigento area
- Day 3: Transfer to your accommodation in Val di Noto area
- Day 6: Transfer to your accommodation in Taormina
- Day 8: Transfer to Catania Airport

(**) All transfers by private Sedan (2 pax) / Minivan (3 to 6 pax) / Minibus (7 to 15 pax)

- **Guided Visits / Tours (***)/ Activities:**
 - Day 2: 1.5-hour private visit of Villa Romana del Casale in Piazza Armerina area with an Authorised Tourist Guide
 - Day 3: 2-hour private walking tour of the Valley of the Temples Archeological area with an Authorised Tourist Guide
 - Day 4: Full-day excursion to Val di Noto area with an Authorised Tourist Guide: Noto, Ragusa and Modica
 - Day 5: Half-day excursion to Siracusa and Ortigia - 2-hour private walking tour of Siracusa city centre with an Authorised Tourist Guide - Sicilian Cooking Class in Val di Noto area
 - Day 6: Full-day excursion to Mt. Etna area – Visit of a local wine cellar with tastings
- (***) All tours by private Sedan (2 pax) / Minivan (3 to 6 pax) / Minibus (7 to 15 pax)
- **Admission tickets:**
 - Villa Romana del Casale in Piazza Armerina
 - Valley of the Temples Archeological Area in Agrigento
 - Greek Theater in Taormina
- **Full emergency assistance 24 hours/day by our Back Office**
- **List of recommended restaurants along the itinerary**
- **All taxes**

NOT INCLUDED IN THE PRICE

- All transfers and other services not specifically mentioned in the above program
- Meals, wine and beverages
- Porterage fees at every accommodation
- Camera or Video fees
- Tipping for local guides and drivers
- Laundry, telephone calls and other expenditures of personal nature
- Travel / Vacation insurance

OPTIONS

- Other options upon request

TOUR MAIN FEATURES

PIAZZA ARMERINA

Benvenuti in Italia, welcome to Sicily!

In Piazza Armerina, you will visit one of the most remarkable examples of Roman art in the whole Mediterranean area: **Villa Romana del Casale.**

Originally the property of a powerful Roman family, this majestic Imperial villa is a magnificent rural abode, fascinating for its exquisite mosaics, considered the most beautiful and best-preserved of their kind. The fruits of meticulous labour, these precise yet moving images make for a significant adornment to what remains of this luxurious residence – made a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 1997.



Dating back to 320-350 A.D., the villa most likely belonged to a member of Rome's senatorial class, probably a governor of the Eternal City itself (Praefectus Urbi). However, some scholars would maintain that the villa was built and eventually expanded upon the official commission of an Imperial functionary of a high order; they have identified this person as Maximian, a Tetrarch (one of four co-Emperors) of Diocletian.

Archaeologists undertook an important excavation project in the mid-18th Century, bringing to light 37,674 sq ft of mosaic flooring – figurative and geometric – along with wall mosaics, columns, statues, capitals and coins. The theme of the mosaics is the celebration of the homeowner. Moreover, much of the house exhibits a definite influence from North African art styles, leading diggers and academics to believe that some construction workers were from the African Continent. The viewer can detect varying styles and narrative cycles in the mosaics: one is dedicated to mythology and Homeric poems, while another refers to nature and scenes from the Roman aristocracy's quotidian life.

Today, visitors will find many different sections of the villa open for observation: the spa complex; the porticoed entryway courtyard and honorary arch; the Vestibule and central, peristyled courtyard; the servants' quarters that include the Piccola Caccia room, the Grande Caccia corridor (spaces that contain small and large hunting scenes, respectively) and the Palestrite room; the northern central apartments with a mosaic of Ulysses and Polyphemus and the chamber of Amore and Psiche; the main southern apartments with a mosaic of the myth of Arion and the room of Eros and Pan; the Triclinium (formal Roman dining room) and portico; and the Basilica.

AGRIGENTO

In the Valley of the Temples (a UNESCO World Heritage Site), the fascination of ancient history blends with the beauty of nature. The sea on one side, the old city hill on the other, the majestic Doric-style temples rising in the centre of it all, and the tones of the tufo with which they are constructed create a picture-perfect setting.

The **Temple of Concordia** is the most well-preserved of the temples, having been transformed into a church. The **Temple of Juno** still boasts 25 of its original 34 columns to support its structure. Then the **Temple of the Dioscuri** is considered the most symbolic, while the **Temple of Hercules** is the oldest. Together with the Temple of Zeus, these five giants dominate the Valley.



Leaving the Valley and heading towards the city, you will come across the remains of the **Hellenistic-Roman Quarter**, with its houses decorated in beautiful mosaics. The ancient shops, wells, cisterns and sewer system lend a relatively clear idea of how the old city looked. Evidence abounds from the Greek era: be sure to see the fascinating objects at the **Regional Archaeological Museum**; they originate from the ancient area of Akragas.

Through the **Porta di Ponte**, you will enter the ancient quarter of Agrigento, still conveying the image of a Medieval village, with its narrow roads and steep, winding alleys all converging towards the main road. Stroll through the ancient city and wander to the Cathedral, where a grand stairway leads to the churchyard and bell tower, the construction of which has never been completed.

VAL DI NOTO

In southeastern Sicily, **Val di Noto** (the Noto Valley) – with its eight gorgeous late-Baroque cities – became one of the Italian UNESCO World Heritage Sites in 2002. The eight, Caltagirone, Militello Val di Catania, Catania, Modica, Noto, Palazzolo, Ragusa and Scicli, already existed during the Medieval Age. Still, they were rebuilt (in part or entirely) after the catastrophic earthquake of 1693. Following the stylistic model predominant during the era, the cities' architecture, urban plan and decorations constitute the culmination of one of the last periods of Baroque's flourishing in Europe.

Known in antiquity as Ibla, **Ragusa** features two somewhat different city centres, one reconstructed from the ground up in the new style after the events of 1693 and the other according to its original Medieval look. An itinerary through the Baroque in Ragusa winds among nine principal churches (e.g. San Giovanni Battista, San Giorgio, Santa Maria dei Miracoli) and seven palazzi (including the Cancelleria, Bertini, and Cosentini).



Palazzolo and **Modica** also have two urban centres. The first one in Palazzolo is a Medieval centre around which the old city was rebuilt after the earthquake. The new town subsequently developed around another town centre. The Churches of San Sebastiano, and Saints Peter and Paul are of particular importance. Of rare beauty, Modica and its old Castle centre are high on one of the hills in the Iblei Mountains, while the newly-constructed one lies down in the

valley. Among the spectacular urban monuments, the Cathedral of San Giorgio and the Church of St. Peter (the “Duomo” of the lower city) certainly merit a visit.

The city of Noto is rehashed in an entirely new area, also divided into two levels. The more recent section, on an incline, provides a spectacular composition of streets and buildings in the Baroque, from noble palaces such as Palazzo Ducezio to religious complexes - the Cathedral of San Nicolò, for example. Even Catania had to be born again, ex novo; it is now one of the pearls of the late Baroque, with its splendid Piazza del Duomo - the seat of the Palazzo degli Elefanti and the Amenano Fountain – and the Via dei Crociferi. The Abbey of St. Agatha, the Collegiata Basilica, the Benedictine Monastery and Palazzo Biscari are other places of note.

Cicero defined Syracuse as “the most beautiful city in Magna Graecia.” He was right, of course. Still today, the echoes of its ancient grandeur reverberate from the streets, churches and monuments, corroborating its religious and cultural importance: Syracuse is a destination no traveller should pass up and, with Sicily's Mediterranean climate, can be visited in any season of the year.

Made a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 2005, the city conserves ancient vestiges in every niche and corner, from Classical testimonies to Baroque splendours, all within a landscape of enchanting beauty. The UNESCO Site actually includes two different places: the cave necropolis of Pantalica and the historical centre of Syracuse. Both are evidence of the development and progression of ancient civilizations.

Thanks to its enviable geographic position, Syracuse was a crucial crossroads of commercial exchange since the Greeks settled it. Today, it is a living artefact, connoting the customs and traditions of the many Mediterranean populations that passed through and dominated it, from the Byzantines,

Bourbons, and Arabs to the Normans and Aragonese. Sùraka, as Syracuse is known in Sicilian dialect (meaning an abundance of water), was one of the principal settlements in Magna Grecia, a place of artistic brilliance and commercial power. It was also one of the most important centres of Christianity during the Middle Ages, and it later saw its Baroque golden age after the earthquake of 1693. However, the oldest urban nucleus resides on the little island of **Ortygia**, where we find the Temple of Apollo, the most ancient in Sicily. The remains from the Temple of Athena (5th Century B.C.) were later converted into the Cathedral, while the Temple of Zeus “rui clone” (two columns) because what is left of the entire structure consists of just two columns.

In the 4th Century B.C., Syracuse expanded via the residential quarters of Tyche and (the monumental) Neapolis (Ortygia, Acradina and Epipoli already existed). Traces left by the Roman conquest include the beloved Amphitheatre, while just as magnificent is the Castello di Maniace, a Byzantine citadel commissioned by Frederick II of Swabia.



TAORMINA

Benvenuti in Italia, and welcome to Sicily!

Taormina, the “Pearl of the Mediterranean”, sits on a natural terrace above the sea. The **Greek Theatre** is one of the most suggestive spots, sited in a fantastic position and dipped into the blooming nature of this land. The view goes



across the sea and reaches the Calabria coasts, the town of Siracusa and Etna's peak. Undoubtedly, today and at that time, the audience is fascinated by this beautiful view.

A walk in the **Villa Comunale**, offering typical Mediterranean maquis vegetation with a nice view sheer above the sea, is not to be missed.

The coast offers charming sandy beaches lapped by crystal-clear water: the ones of **Giardini Naxos** and **Mazzarò** are the most frequented. In front of Capo Sant' Andrea, the coast of **Isola Bella** is a protected natural oasis today. After spending the

day at the beach, you can shop in the workshops on the main street, where you can find everything – from pottery to jewels, from clothes to souvenirs. Or you can rest, drinking a lemon slush served with a hot brioche or a typical *cassata siciliana*.

The main food is, of course, fish: *sardines* and swordfish, according to the best Sicilian tradition, but also eggplants, ricotta, olives, and any good product that grows under the sun of this land.

The tour is over, but the memories of a fantastic journey will accompany you for a lifetime!

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Ciao da Vitor



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