



# Discover Sicily

“To have seen Italy without seeing Sicily is not to have seen Italy at all, for Sicily is the key to everything,” wrote German poet Johann Wolfgang von Goethe in his classic eighteenth century travelogue, *Italian Journey*. Goethe was neither the first nor the last to wax rhapsodic about Sicily—the singular and sublimely beautiful island at the very crossroads of Europe and Africa, where splendid Greek ruins mingle with the remains of Phoenician, Roman, Byzantine, Arab, Norman and Spanish civilizations.

Separated from the Italian mainland by only a narrow strait—the Stretto di Messina—Sicily seems nonetheless a world apart. The island’s history of rule by so many successive Mediterranean powers has left the Sicilian people with a unique cultur—



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characterized by an openness to foreigners, a distinctly eclectic cuisine and a richly varied architectural heritage.

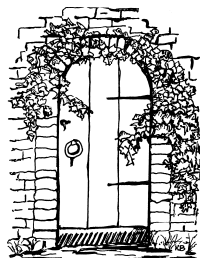
To set foot on Sicily is to walk where Ulysses tricked the Cyclops Polyphemus, where Persephone was abducted by Hades, and where Daedalus landed ashore, pursued by Minos from neighboring Crete. Indeed, the Sicilian landscapes seem to echo with an endless medley of mythological refrains.

Visiting Sicily, however, is not about living in the past—but in the present moment. A steaming plate of *swordfish involtini* or *spaghetti alle vongole* set before a hungry traveler makes the point well enough. Come to Sicily to reawaken your senses, to rediscover the beauty of nature, to enliven your imagination. Come to Sicily to seize the day!

*The Doorways staff is delighted to acquaint you with our selection of exceptional vacation residences on the enchanting island of Sicily.*

## Why Sicily ?

- Exceptional Art
- Fascinating Mythology
- Ancient Temples
- Mighty Volcanoes
- Thermal Hot Springs
- Exquisite Wildflowers
- Wonderful Seafood
- The Freshest Fruits and Vegetables
- Lovely Ceramics



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## Palemo

It is easier, in reaching Sicily, to fly into Palermo airport than to brave Scylla and Charybdis, as Odysseus did in crossing the Strait of Messina. And so, from Palermo, Sicilian city of art, we begin our tour. Founded as a Phoenician trading post in the eighth century B.C., Sicily’s capital city is characterized today by a lively interplay of past and present. While the northern part of town is dominated by commercial buildings and modern dwellings, Palermo’s old town is a magnificent living museum.

Many of the city’s monuments remain from the eleventh and twelfth century Norman period—among these the cathedral and an imposing palace. At the heart of the palace is the gorgeous Cappella Palatina—its interior adorned with glittering Byzantine-influenced mosaics. Striking mosaics can also be seen in La

Martorana, one of the many interesting churches in Palermo’s *Albergheria* district, but the most remarkable examples of the form are found a short drive east of town at the cathedral of Monreale. Palermo’s archeological museum is also worth a visit, particularly for its collection of metopes—ancient stone carvings from the temple of Selinunte.

While in the city, don’t miss a visit to the Vucciria Market, whose stalls, laid out over several streets, offer everything from fresh seafood to appliances. And be sure to stop in to see the thousands of mummies in the catacombs of the Convento dei Cappuccini.

For a break from exploring, relax in Favorita Park at the foot of Monte Pellegrino, or take the winding road to the summit to enjoy the panoramic views.

## Western Sicily

Until the late Middle Ages the predominant cultural influences in western Sicily were North African and Arab, rather than Greek, as was the case farther east. Here, the ancient Phoenicians thrived, building great seaports on the island of Motya—just off the coast—and at Lilybaeum (modern-day Marsala).

Relics of Phoenician antiquity are well preserved in excavations and an excellent museum on Motya, and in another fine museum at Marsala, where the fascinating remains of a sunken Punic ship can be seen. (Marsala is, of course, known for its distinctive wine—for a tasting tour, visit the Florio Winery south of town.)

Contemporaries of the Phoenicians, the Elymians settled on nearby Mt. Eryx, where they erected a temple devoted to the goddess of love.

Nothing but the base of the temple remains in present-day Erice, but the town's maze of medieval lanes and staircases is a pleasure to explore.

The Elymians are also credited with the construction of the eerily beautiful Temple of Segesta, a short drive to the southeast of town. An air of mystery surrounds the monument, as it was never finished and no



one seems to know to which deity it was dedicated. Other attractions at Segesta are an impressive Greek theatre and a spa of sulfurous hot springs, the Terme Segestane.

## The South Coast

Sicily's south coast is distinguished by ancient sites of devotion. At Selinunte visitors discover a dramatic sea-front acropolis and a neighboring sanctuary, both scattered with temples dating from across the centuries. In the hills to the north lie the Rocche di Cusa, awesome ancient quarries from which the stone for many of the temples was drawn.

A delightful beach is found not far from Selinunte at Marinella Lido, and a popular spa resort at nearby Sciacca.

Following eastward along the coast, one finds Agrigento, a hilltop city of Greek origin, overlooking Sicily's most celebrated archeological

site, the Valle dei Templi (Valley of Temples). At the heart of Agrigento's old town is a verdant sloping square, the Piazzale Aldo Moro, and to its north a bustling pedestrian thoroughfare. Known as the Via Atenea, this colorful street is home to historic churches and other monuments, as well as shops and caffès.

South of the Piazzale, the Via F. Crispi slopes down to Agrigento's archeological museum, where relics removed from the temple sites are displayed, and finally to the spectacular temples of Jupiter, Juno, and Heracles. On the way, pause at the museum to view the excavations in the Hellenistic Roman Quarter.

## The Island's Interior

The wonders of Sicily's seaside temples and landscapes can tend to draw attention from the island's interior, but inner Sicily guards treasures of its own and is blessed with an abundance of natural beauty.

The hilltop town of Enna, sometimes called "the navel of Sicily," has preserved to this day an essentially agrarian economy, and with it a keen sense of local cultural heritage. Highlights of Enna are the imposing 12th century Castello di Lombardia—crowned by six of its original twenty towers—and a great tower nearby named for the emperor Frederick II.

Views from the tower or any of the ring roads encircling Enna have earned the town yet another, perhaps more elegant nickname: "Sicily's belvedere." All around lie clear blue lakes and mountain slopes, which in springtime are adorned with scores of wildflowers.

Of the neighboring hill towns, Piazza Armerina stands out: a somnolent beauty set amid a lush forested area, the town is famous today for the excavation of the Roman Villa of Casale a few kilometers to the southwest. Visitors come to Armerina to see some of the most remarkable well-preserved Roman mosaics in the world.



## The Southeast

Along the eastern coast of Sicily lies a string of lovely Baroque towns, Noto most prominent among them. Like many of its neighbors, Noto was all but destroyed in the earthquake in 1693 and was then carefully rebuilt in the style of the day. Wander at leisure and admire the splendid Baroque town hall and Cathedral, stop at a bakery to sample one of Noto's specialty cakes or simply relax in the harmonious little Piazza del Municipio.

A few kilometers from Noto, one

## Siracusa

Just a short stretch up the coast lies Siracusa—a wonderful Sicilian city retaining traces of its history as a great Magna Grecia port. Siracusa's old town, Ortigia, lies across a bridge from the rest of the city. Visitors can enjoy strolling Ortigia's bustling port area, shopping in the open-air market or cooling off with a popular Sicilian treat, a *granita*, in one of the delightful public squares. When the dinner hour rolls around, it is time to try one of the many local restaurants specializing in seafood delicacies.

Siracusa is also home to many monuments and museums. The Duomo is a fascinating reminder of

encounters a natural and archeological wonder. Along the extensive gorge known as the Cava d'Ispica are catacombs and cave dwellings carved into the rock face. Byzantine monks eventually claimed many of the ancient dwellings, expanding some into chapels, where traces of fresco paintings are still observed today. If exploring puts you in the mood for a swim, the Gulf of Noto boasts a

Villa Livia



Sicily's intricate cultural history: a structure of Doric origins incorporating Byzantine, Norman, Renaissance and Baroque elements. The Parco Archeologico on the edge of town is a fascinating array of Greek, Roman and early Christian remains, including a Greek theater, still in use, and a world-class archeological museum. Nearby is a mysterious cavern known for its perfect acoustics as the "ear of Dionysius." (If you have secrets, leave them outside!)

## The Ionian Coast and Taormina

To the north of Siracusa, the famous and famously terrible Mount Etna presides over the coast of the Ionian Sea. Those who crave the closest possible contact with Europe's largest active volcano can take advantage of any of a number of roads leading up to the crater. Etna's environs display richly varied landscapes, from thick oak and chestnut forests to thriving citrus and olive groves. At the base of the mountain lies the mysterious wonderland of the Alcántara Gorge, where the river of the same name has carved a colorful passage through the volcanic basalt, leaving strange and wonderful natural sculptures in its wake.

Beyond Alcántara, atop a craggy perch on Monte Tauro, the town of Taormina overlooks the turquoise waves below. Etna's awesome slopes offer a dreamy backdrop for Taormina. It's winding lanes and peaceful *piazze* are an ideal setting to experience the *dolce far niente*—the cherished Italian art of doing nothing at all. But don't travel on without seeing the magnificent Greek theatre, dating from the third century B.C.

## Strait of Messina and the Tyrrhenian Coast

Homer's monstrous Scylla and Charybdis are today more commonly thought of as whirlpools, turbulent points of contact between the Ionian Sea and the Tyrrhenian, where the two meet in the narrow Strait of Messina. Rounding the bend from Taormina one discovers several highlights along Sicily's north coast. At Tindari lie beautiful 4th-century B.C. ruins of an ancient city known as Tyndaridae, as well as the Sanctuary of the Black

Madonna—home to the much celebrated Byzantine icon.

Along the road to Palermo is Santo Stefano di Camastra, a tiny market town of colorful ceramics crafted from Sicily's finest clay; and farther west is the lovely Cefalu, best known for its striking Norman Cathedral and for the glorious 12th century mosaics within. Pretty beaches around Cefalu beckon to the weary traveler, offering a refreshing dip.

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*We hope  
you will enjoy  
discovering Sicily!*

<b>Destination</b>	<b>Km from Siracusa</b>	<b>Time</b>
<b>Taormina</b>	104	1:35
<b>Agrigento</b>	218	3:40
<b>Caltagrione</b>	106	1:45
<b>Catania</b>	60	0:50
<b>Cefalù</b>	227	3:45
<b>Etna</b>	87	1:30
<b>Messina</b>	166	2:15
<b>Noto</b>	33	0:35
<b>Palazzolo A.</b>	40	0:40
<b>Palermo`</b>	259	3:00
<b>Piazza Armenia</b>	135	2:30
<b>Ragusa</b>	86	1:20

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