



SPLENDOURS OF SICILY

Closer to Africa than Rome, Sicily's successive waves of conquerors have each left their mark on this sunny open-air museum with its Greek temples and Norman churches, Baroque palaces and dramatically located cliff-top villages.

Tailor-Made Journeys, Suggested Itineraries



Europe, Italy



10 days from AU\$16,830 pp



Private

Journey Overview

Closer to Africa than Rome, Sicily's successive waves of conquerors have each left their mark on this sunny open-air museum with its Greek temples and Norman churches, Baroque palaces and dramatically located cliff-top villages. Lush mountains, sun-drenched plains and sandy beaches are a backdrop to the bustling cities of Palermo and Syracuse while its cuisine is a rich blend of styles.

Journey Highlights

- Absorb the rich Moorish and Byzantine architectural heritage of Old Palermo
- Explore Mt. Etna by jeep and hike towards the summit
- Ornate Sicilian Baroque architecture in Noto, Ragusa and Modica
- Taste the best of Sicily's fusion at local providores, cafés, gelaterias and trattorie
- Savour Sicilian wines at a vineyard on the slopes of Mt. Etna.



Itinerary

Day 1: Arrive Palermo

Welcome to Sicily where you are met and transferred to your luxury hotel on the Bay of Palermo.

Hotel Villa Igiea

Day 2: Palermo - Monreale - Palermo

Begin your adventure at Monreale on the outskirts of Palermo to see the stunning cathedral and cloisters. Afterwards head back into town to discover the Palermo Duomo, intriguingly built on the site of a Muslim mosque. In the Quattro Canti, admire the 12th century San Cataldo Church with its Moorish-style architecture and La Martorana Church, decorated with beautiful Byzantine mosaics. Visit to the impressive Palazzo dei Normanni and Palazzo Albatellis.

Hotel Villa Igiea / Meals: B

Day 3: Palermo - Segesta - Agrigento

Explore the rugged west of Sicily starting off at Segesta, one of the finest surviving Greek temples in Sicily. Continue along the coast and visit a wonderful wine cellar for a tour and tasting before heading to your hotel which boasts spectacular views over the Temple of Agrigento.

Villa Athena / Meals: B

Day 4: Agrigento

Rise early and visit the 2,000-year-old Temple of Concordia before the crowds, being led by your guide, on an in-depth visit to the fascinating Valley of the Temples, one of the most significant archaeological sites in Sicily. Visit the impressive remains of five Doric temples at this richly preserved 5th century BC site, resplendent with thousand-year-old olive trees, almond groves and diverse Mediterranean flora. The Temple of Concordia, one of the best-preserved Greek temples anywhere in the world, is a standout. The afternoon is yours to relax and enjoy your beautiful hotel.

Villa Athena / Meals: B

Day 5: Agrigento - Piazza Armerina - Syracuse

Continue to the lesser visited south-eastern corner of Sicily pausing in the graceful old town of Piazza Armerina which is surrounded by forest. Wander through the ancient site of Villa Romana del Casale, originally home to Maximianus Herculeus, Diocletian's co-emperor, and his son Maxentius. Admire the stunning mosaics depicting scenes of mythology, hunting and domestic life. Next stop is Caltagirone, the pottery capital of Sicily. Take your time strolling through the historic centre of town and browse the shops and stalls selling the beautiful ceramics. Arrive into Syracuse later this afternoon.

Ortea Palace Luxury Hotel / Meals: B

Day 6: Syracuse

The city of Syracuse, birthplace of Archimedes, was once described by Cicero as "the greatest Greek city and the most beautiful of them all". What began as a small Greek outpost would eventually become one of the most prosperous and powerful states in the entire ancient world. Start your exploration at the magnificent 5th century BC Temple of Athena, located in the heart of the Ortygia neighbourhood, one of Sicily's most picture-perfect destinations and known for its charming shops and restaurants. This little island connected to the main city of Syracuse is a listed UNESCO World Heritage Site and has always been a strong focal point of the city.

Ortea Palace Luxury Hotel / Meals: B

Day 7: Syracuse - Noto - Ragusa - Modica - Syracuse

Explore the glorious Baroque towns of Sicily's south east where honey-coloured facades glow in the sunshine. Admire the splendid cathedral in Noto, the medieval centre of Modica and hilltop Ragusa where the old and new towns contrast urban order with charm and atmosphere. Pause for refreshments along the way enjoying local delicacies from artisanal chocolate and nougat to gelato and caciocavallo cheese.

Ortea Palace Luxury Hotel / Meals: B

Day 8: Syracuse - Castelmola - Taormina

Travel north to Castelmola, a tiny hamlet with sensational views. Continue to Taormina for a walking tour. Visit the Greek Theatre, originally built by the Greeks and rebuilt later by the Romans. Overlooking the surrounding countryside and Mt Etna, views from the amphitheatre are spectacular. Enjoy the rest of the day at leisure.

The Ashbee Hotel / Meals: B

Day 9: Taormina - Mt Etna - Taormina

Explore the area around Mt Etna, Europe's biggest active volcano, by jeep. Pass by the villages of Piedimonte Etneo and Linguaglossa and head off road to "grotta del Corruccio", a lava cave which you explore by torchlight. Continue to the Sartorius craters where you hike to the top to admire the views. Reward yourself with lunch in a local winery before returning to Taormina.

The Ashbee Hotel / Meals: BL

Day 10: Depart Taormina - Catania

Transfer to Catania Airport for your departure flight.

Meals: B

Map



Accommodation

Villa Athena



Modern day Agrigento is home to one of Sicily's most famous historical attractions - UNESCO World Heritage Site The Valley of the Temples. This archaeological park is home to a collection of eight temples which together comprised the ancient Greek city of Akragas. As one of the finest hotels in the region - and the only five star hotel in the valley - Villa Athena's exclusive location in this private park is second to none. With rustic Saracen olive trees and centuries-old palms watching over the ancient and tranquil landscape, it's as if time has stood still for thousands of years in this oasis of history, tradition and culture.

Villa Athena's interiors are bright and fresh with white walls and refined and elegant furnishings paying homage to the location's past. All rooms feature complimentary internet access, LCD TV, and a mini-bar, while some even have a private spa. We recommend requesting a room overlooking the magnificent Temple of Concordia - dating back to the 5th century BC it is one of the most notable examples of Ancient Greek architecture due to its state of preservation.

Outside, terracotta pathways meander through the distinctly Mediterranean garden towards a large outdoor swimming pool lined by sun loungers. Ruins of an early Christian basilica dating back to between the 5th and 6th Century AD can be seen here, as well as a refined marble Pluteus - a clear

testimony to the presence of Christianity in the eternal valley. The hotel restaurant, Il Granaio di Ibla, serves authentic Sicilian cuisine complemented by an extensive wine list, while glorious temple views can be enjoyed from The Belvedere Terrace when dining by candlelight.

Why we like it

- Historic 17th-century villa shrouded by myths and legends of a previous time
- Located in the heart of UNESCO World Heritage Site, The Valley of the Temples
- The only five star hotel in the region
- An intimate property with just 27 boutique rooms
- Ideal for those with an interest in the history and culture of Ancient Greece

Dates & Pricing

From \$16,830 per person twin share (low season) and from \$18,670 per person twin share (high season). Solo travellers on request.

As this Tailor Made Journey can be personalised to your specific requirements, it is not available for online booking. Depending on your preferred dates and arrangements, final pricing will vary.

Please call A&K on 1300 851 800, send us a **booking enquiry** to book this journey or contact your travel advisor.

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