



Sicilian Gateway Tour - 5 days

4 nights/5 days private tour of Sicily with English speaking driver escort exploring a simple showcase of the Island with a nice sense of the most important sites



Location

Agrigento



Days

5



Duration

5 Days



Category

Multi Days



Season

All Year



Tour Type

Private

TOUR OVERVIEW

Route:

Land: Palermo airport (PMO – Falcone Borsellino International Airport), West Side

Leave: Catania airport (CTA – Fontanarossa International Airport), East Side

Day 1 – LAND: Palermo airport (PMO: Falcone Borsellino International Airport)/Town

Day 2 – Palermo (visit: the Best of Palermo) and Monreale (visit: Dome)

Day 3 – Palermo/Agrigento (visit: Temples) and Piazza Armerina (visit: Roman Villa)/Taormina

Day 4 – Taormina

Day 5 – Taormina/LEAVE: Catania airport (CTA: Fontanarossa International Airport)

Recommended Licensed Local Guide:

-Palermo and Monreale: already included

-Agrigento: to visit the Temples Valley

-Piazza Armerina: to visit the Roman Villa of Casale

-Taormina: Half Day Walking Tour: 9AM-12PM or 2PM-5PM

LEGEND AND IMPORTANT INFORMATION

TOUR CODE: GATE5

TOUR ITINERARY



Day 1

Palermo airport/town

Approximately Travel Time and Unit: 39 Minutes - 20 Miles (31 Kilometers)
Private Vehicle and Italian Speaking Driver Disposal: transfer-in only

Welcome to the warm, beautiful and pleasant island of Sicily! Upon arrival at Palermo Falcone-Borsellino Airport (PMO | Your Arrival by TBA) please proceed through Passport Control and collect your luggage inside the customs area. Then transfer in town



Day 2

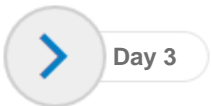
Guided walking tour of Palermo and Monreale

Palermo and Monreale, English Speaking Local Guide included, full day from h 8.30AM
English Speaking Driver Escort Disposal: NO
Taxi and Italian Speaking Driver Disposal: only transfer from Palermo to Monreale and return transfer

Today meet your English Speaking Guide and departure by Taxi to Monreale to see where the Arab-Norman art and architecture reached the pinnacle of its glory with the Dome, launched in 1174 by William II. It represents the scene from the Old and New Testaments all in golden mosaics. The story of how this splendid cathedral came into being starts when the Arabs took control of Palermo in 831. They transformed the cathedral into a mosque and banished the Bishop of Palermo from town. Not wishing to venture too far from his beloved cathedral, the Bishop settled in a small village in the hills overlooking Palermo, the site of modern-day Monreale. There, he built a modest church to keep the flame of local Christian worship alive. Some 240 year later, in 1072, the Normans drove the Arabs from Sicily, establishing Palermo as their capital and re-consecrating the Cathedral. In 1174, in an act of piety, thanksgiving and commemoration of the exiled Bishop, King William II ordered the construction of a new church in Monreale, dedicated to the Virgin Mary. Enlightened, tolerant and appreciative of many aspects of North African and middle-eastern culture and art, William II employed the very best Arabic and Byzantine (as well as Norman) craftsmen to work on the cathedral. The result is a fabulous and fascinating fusion of architectural styles, artistic traditions and religious symbolism.

Later a Taxi will drive us back to Palermo to visit the Cathedral erected in 1185 by Walter Ophamil (or Walter of the Mill), the Anglo-Norman archbishop of Palermo and King William II's minister, on the area of an earlier Byzantine basilica. By all accounts this earlier church was founded by St. Gregory and was later turned into a mosque by the Saracens after their conquest of the city in the 9th century. Ophamil is buried in a sarcophagus in the church's crypt. The medieval edifice had a basilica plan with three apses,

of which only some minor architectural elements survive today. Then explore a lively open air street market, a place overflowing with beautiful fresh fish, and local vegetables and cheeses. Originating from the era when Sicily was occupied by the moors, this 1000 year old market has run much in the same manner for centuries. It has strong Arab influences, resembling an eastern souk, and these influences are also evident in the merchandise itself. Next to mounds of ricotta and caciocavallo cheeses, barrels of olives and fat slabs of swordfish sit saffron and other spices, as well as sacks of beans and gorgeous indigenous fruits and local vegetables. Here you will have the opportunity to taste a typical palermitano dish, such as the famous Panelle (a thin paste of crushed ceci/garbanzo beans rolled into sheets, fried and served in pizza-like slices). We then continue by seeing Piazza Pretoria with its spectacular fountain and Via Maqueda, whose "Four Corners" converge Palermo at a quartet of baroque palaces left over from the heyday of Spanish rule dating from 1560. Before we return to your hotel we stop to admire the Massimo Theatre, an imposing Neoclassical edifice that is the largest theatre in Italy (external view).



Palermo/Agrigento and Piazza Armerina/Taormina

Approximately Travel Time and Unit: Full Day - 250 Miles (390 Kilometers)

Private Vehicle and English Speaking Driver Escort Disposal: full day from h 8.30AM

Agrigento, English Speaking Local Guide NOT included

Piazza Armerina, English Speaking Local Guide NOT included

Today departure for Agrigento. to visit the finest of all ancient Greek sites—the complete Doric Temples (Admission fee: not included), one of Sicily's most famous historical attractions. This is one of the most outstanding examples of Greater Greece art and architecture, and is one of the main attractions of Sicily as well as a national monument of Italy. The area was included in the UNESCO Heritage Site list in 1997. Founded as a Greek colony in the 6th century B.C., Agrigento became one of the leading cities in the Mediterranean world. Its supremacy and pride are demonstrated by the remains of the magnificent Doric temples that dominate the ancient town, much of which still lies intact under today's fields and orchards. This splendid archaeological park consists of eight temples (and various other remains) built between about 510 BC and 430 BC: the Temple of Hera, the Temple of Concordia, the Temple of Heracles, the Temple of Olympian Zeus, the Temple of Castor and Pollux, the Temple of Hephaestos, the Temple of Demeter, and the Temple of Asclepius (the God of Medicine). Apart from this latter, which is to be found on the banks of the Akragas river, all are situated in the same area on rocky crests south of modern day Agrigento (not really in a Valley at all!).

Later this afternoon onto Piazza Armerina situated deep in the Sicilian hinterland, at 721 metres above sea level, one of Sicily's most frequented tourist spots. However, it is not the town that most people come to see, but the famous Villa Romana del Casale (Admission fee: not included). Built in the middle of the 4th Century AD as a hunting lodge by a Roman patrician (it is not known for sure who the owner was) the Villa is home to some of the best preserved and extensive examples of Roman mosaics spread over around 3500mt. The villa is one of the most luxurious of its kind. It is especially noteworthy for the richness and quality of the mosaics which decorate almost every room; they are the finest mosaics in situ anywhere in the Roman world. These extraordinarily vivid mosaics, probably produced by North African artisans, deal with numerous subjects, ranging from Homeric escapades and mythological scenes to portrayals of daily life, including the famous tableau of girls exercising in their "bikinis".

Later we then continue to Taormina, the world famous resort town of Sicily.



Day 4

Taormina

Approximately Travel Time and Unit: -
Private Vehicle and English Speaking Driver Escort Disposal: NO
Taormina, English Speaking Local Guide NOT included

Today is at leisure: enjoy a drink at the tables of Caffè Wunderbar (or similar) in Piazza IX Aprile may set you back a few euros, but you'll be basking where Tennessee Williams and Elizabeth Taylor basked before you. As well as the famed Greek-Roman Theatre (Admission fee: not included), there are several minor sites to be discovered around Taormina. The attractive principal thoroughfare, Corso Umberto is pedestrian and ideal for strolling and window-shopping. Picturesque lanes above and below the Corso are interesting to explore, while if you want to stretch your legs further there are attractive walks up into the hills, or down to the sea. Given its compact size, Taormina has a huge range of bars, cafes and restaurants where you can while away pleasant hours while admiring the views.



Day 5

Taormina/Catania airport

Approximately Travel Time and Unit: 50 Minutes - 45 Miles (70 Kilometers)
Private Vehicle and Italian Speaking Driver Disposal: transfer out only

Today departure for Fontanarossa Catania airport (CTA | Your Departure by TBA)

TOUR MAP



WHAT IS INCLUDED?

- ✓ Airport transfers
- ✓ All sightseeing, tasting and excursions as specified in the itinerary
- ✓ English speaking Driver
- ✓ One snack and wines
- ✓ VAT
- ✓ Vehicle with air conditioning

NOT INCLUDED

- ✗ Admission fees
- ✗ Beverage and meal not specified
- ✗ City taxes
- ✗ Gratuities and tips
- ✗ Hotel accommodation
- ✗ Intercontinental/Local Flights
- ✗ Licensed Tourist Guide
- ✗ Travel Insurance