

## Gold Tour - 10 days

10 days Private Tour of Sicily with vehicle and local English speaking driver visiting the most important local highlights, winery, olive oil farmhouse, history and archaeology



Location

**Agrigento**



Days

**10**



Duration

**ND**



Category



Season

**All Year**



Tour Type

## TOUR OVERVIEW

Season: all year available on request

9 nights/10 days

Palermo (2) Marsala (1) Agrigento (1) Syracuse (3) Taormina (2)

Hotel Package: not included but available on request

Airline Tickets: not purchased by us

Land: Palermo airport – West Side

Leave: Catania airport – East Side

Day 1 – Palermo airport > Town

Day 2 – Palermo Guided Walking Tour and Monreale

Day 3 – Palermo > Erice, Olive Oil, Salt Way Road and Marsala Salt pans

Day 4 – Marsala > Turkish Steps and Agrigento

Day 5 – Agrigento > Ragusa and Modica > Syracuse

Day 6 – Syracuse AM Guided Walking Tour. PM relax in Syracuse

Day 7 – Relax in Syracuse

Day 8 – Syracuse > Etna Volcano North Side and Winery > Taormina

Day 9 – Relax in Taormina

Day 10 – Taormina > Catania airport

Featured Licensed Local Guide Recommended for the above tour

-Palermo and Monreale | Already Included in the tour costs

-Agrigento, to visit the Valley of the Temples

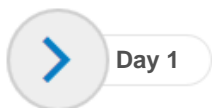
-Syracusa, half day walking tour | Already Included in the tour costs

-Taormina, half day to visit the Greek-Roman Theatre and Corvaja Palace

The rates for the above services are available on request.

TOUR CODE: GOLD10

## TOUR ITINERARY



### Palermo airport (PMO)/town

Private vehicle and Italian speaking chauffeur disposal: transfer in only

Welcome to the warm, beautiful and pleasant island of Sicily! Upon arrival at Palermo Airport please proceed through the Passport Control and collect your luggage inside the customs area. Then meet the driver showing a sign with your name and a short drive takes you to the town.



Day 2

## Palermo Walking Tour and Monreale

English speaking guide disposal: half day from h 9AM

Taxi Service from Palermo to Monreale, round trip: included

Today meet the local guide at hotel and start a lovely walking tour to explore Palermo. Our first stop is at the Palatine Chapel (Admission fee: not included), a finest example of Arab-Norman art in Palermo. Built by Roger II from 1130 to 1140, the chapel is adorned with extraordinary Norman-Byzantine mosaics. We then continue onto the Four Corners which is the junction in Palermo. Effectively, it is the centre point of the four areas of the old town centre. You will almost inevitably pass through it and it is worth stopping for five minutes to have a look at its sculptures which were commissioned by the Spanish Viceroy in 1611. The sculptures on each of the four corners depict a variety of themes, including the four seasons, four Spanish kings and the four patron saints of the old town areas. Going south-east down Via Maqueda you will come across Piazza Pretoria which is home not only to a splendid fountain but several other impressive buildings including, on the right, the City Hall. The fountain, known for generations as the "Fountain of Shame", has an interesting history. The large central fountain is the focal point for sixteen nude statues of nymphs, humans, mermaids and satyrs. If you imagine this being erected during the Inquisition, it is quite easy to imagine why it received its epithet, the "Fountain of Shame". The last but not the least is our stop at the Ballarò Open Air 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).

This afternoon a taxi to join Monreale to see where Arab-Norman art and architecture reached its pinnacle in the Duomo (Tips: not included), launched in 1174 by William II. It represents scenes from the Old and New Testaments all in golden mosaics.

We then return to Palermo.



Day 3

## Palermo > Erice, lunch in an Olive Oil and Salt Way Road > Marsala

Private vehicle and English speaking driver disposal: full day from h 8.30AM

Today meet the driver at hotel and departure for Erice uptown, which was an important religious site associated with the goddess Venus. Wander through its ancient streets and visit some of the famous homemade pastry shops -- world-famous for marzipan candies and other delicacies like almond and pistachio pastries -- and the lovely preserved Mediaeval town offering the most breathtaking views and a palpable sense of history. Then by walk we join the most visited sites: the Pepoli Castle and Venus Castle. The former was built by the Arabs while the latter was a Norman construction with imposing towers that derived its name from the fact that it was built on the site of the ancient Temple of Venus, allegedly founded by Aeneas.

Later we travel in the country side and we soon arrive in an olive oil farmhouse for our delicious lunch

We then travel from Erice to Trapani-Marsala Salt Way Road, skirting the lagoon to see the snow-capped

mountains but hills of salt, one of the Sicilian economy's historical resources that was already very precious in the days of the Phoenicians, who were the first to bring some form of technology to its production. The favourable climatic circumstances, such as high temperatures and a wind that increases evaporation, plus the shallowness of the water, contribute to create the evocative and unreal scenario created by the salt flats, which form a sort of immense chessboard that ranges in colour from off-green to pink. The tourist paths for visits to the salt flats wind their way around the great basins and, running along the edges of the tanks of seawater - which glistens in the sun as it crystallizes - finally reach the mounds of salt. These mounds are topped by a series of recently restored windmills that recall the days when they were among the main instruments for pumping the water and grinding the salt. A panorama that has to be enjoyed, preferably at sunset, when everything becomes tinged with red. We then arrive at the salt pans Saline Ettore Infersa (Admission fee: non included) which offer a truly unique landscape. Windmills, first introduced during mediaeval times, dot the horizon, a testament to how things were once done, though one or two continue to function, pumping water through the sluice gates into or out of the various basins. Piles of harvested salt, neatly covered with terracotta tiles, lie between the road and the basins waiting to be despatched.



Day 4

## Marsala > Turkish Steps and Agrigento

Private vehicle and English speaking driver disposal: full day from h 9AM

Today, on the way to join Agrigento, we drive across coastline, beaches and cliffs, including the remarkable white chalk ones of the Turkish Steps-Scala dei Turchi. The name translates as Turkish Steps, and indeed there is a striking resemblance to Pamukkale, Turkey. However the explanation on the history of the name is that the Scala dei Turchi was the place Arab pirates, locally referred to as "turks", anchored their boats out of the wind while they pillaged the surrounding area. The "Scala dei Turchi" is a splendid, blinding, white jewel that frames the clear blue sea. One cannot describe the view and communicate it all: you have to live immersed with all your five senses in the magic of this incredible cliff of white marl. It's a fascinating place, where centuries of rain and wind have carved a natural staircase and whose white color is made more dazzling by the sunlight. The Turkish steps is not only a natural feature, but is also a part of local legends: it is said that the Saracen pirates (for the Sicilians, the "Turks", which is a negative connotation that indicates all the people that were once devoted to piracy), docked ships in the calm, clean waters, protected by the "Scala", and climbed these natural "steps" to reach the top of the cliff and raid local villages. Later onto Agrigento.

This afternoon enjoy 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.



Day 5

## Agrigento > Ragusa Ibla and Modica > Syracuse

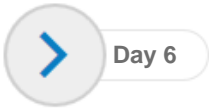
Private vehicle and English speaking driver disposal: full day from h 9AM

Today meet the driver at hotel and drive to Ragusa Ibla, one of the most picturesque towns in Sicily. The view from the upper town over Ragusa Ibla on its own separate hilltop is quite breathtaking. One of the UNESCO-listed Baroque towns of south-eastern Sicily, Ragusa is also one of the principal filming locations for the Sicilian Detective Saga Il Commissario Montalbano (Montalbano Inspector), a series which has done wonders for publicising the beauty of this area.

This afternoon departure for Modica. Like the other towns in the Val di Noto, was badly damaged in the

1693 earthquake and largely rebuilt in Sicilian Baroque style. Modica is custodian of a 400 year tradition of Sicilian chocolate-making. Being part of the Spanish kingdom for so many years meant that Sicily was often one of the first recipients of the new foodstuffs being brought back from South America. Cacao was one of these and today Modica still specialises in making granulous chocolate, often flavoured with chilli pepper, cinnamon or vanilla, that is based on Aztec methods and recipes. Chocolate shops abound and, for the real chocoholic, it is sometimes possible to watch the “chocolatiers” at work. Tasting of Modica chocolate is a must.

Later we drive back to Syracuse

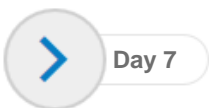


## Syracusa Half Day

Private taxi disposal: from Ortigia to the Archaeological Park and return  
English speaking guide disposal: half day from h 9AM

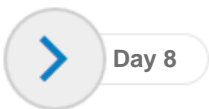
Today meet the local guide at hotel and catch on a taxi to move to the Archaeological Park (Admission fee: not included), highlights of which are the Greek Theatre, the Roman Amphitheatre and the Paradise Quarry. Then back to Ortigia, the heart of the city center. This delightful pedestrian small island, connected with Syracuse by the Umberto Bridge, is home to the wonderful Cathedral built on the site of an ancient Temple of Athena as can clearly be seen from the original Doric columns that were incorporated into the building's main structure. Also on this square is the beautifully symmetrical Baroque Palazzo Beneventano and the church of Santa Lucia, the town's patron saint. Later to the colourful daily Street Market, which sells a fantastic array of fruit, vegetables, fish and meat.

This afternoon is at leisure or Optional Service  
-Ortygia Island Boat



## Relax in Syracuse

Today is at leisure or Optional Day Tour  
-Cheese, Wine and Tuna Fishing Village  
-Time Machine Experience and Dine with Locals  
-Cooking Class and Ortygia Market



## Syracusa > Etna Volcano North Side and Winery > Taormina

Private vehicle and English speaking driver disposal: full day from h 8.30AM  
Dress Code: dress in layers, use sturdy shoes and do not forget your wind jacket –or coat--

Today departure for the Etna Natural Park to discover a beautiful Volcano rich in sounds, perfumes, and colors. Along the scenic drive we will stop at the the 2002 lava flow reachable through a winding curvy road surrounded by chestnut and oak forests. The 2002 eruption lasted from October 27th to January 29th 2003 and it is considered one of the most explosive eruptions of the past one hundred years. Continuing our excursion we will reach Piano Provenzana (1800 meters above sea level), a ski resort, theater of the great eruption of 2002. Here you will have free time to enjoy an excellent espresso and take a short walk to visit the Silvester Craters and the ruins of the hotel Le Betulle destroyed by a molten lava flow.

Then to a local winery to indulge our senses in the delicious lunch followed by wine tastings

This afternoon we then continue onto Taormina, teh world-famous resort town of Sicily.



Day 9

## Relax in Taormina

Today is at leisure for your independent walk in the Corso Umberto Street, the core of the town. From here you can join the Greek Theatre (Admission fee: not included), built for the most part of brick, and is therefore probably of Roman date, though the plan and arrangement are in accordance with those of Greek, rather than Roman, theatres; It is one of the world's most popular tourist attractions, so that Johann Wolfgang Goethe in his famous "Journey to Italy" wrote: "No theater audience has never had such a sight in front of him." The highlight of today walking tour is for sure go up using the old steps up to the top of the theatre to admire an amazing view of the Taormina Bay and the Etna volcano, the view from here is amazing and unforgettable.

The balance of the day is at leisure.



Day 10

## Taormina > Catania airport

Private vehicle and Italian speaking chauffeur disposal: transfer out only

Today transfer to the airport.

## TOUR MAP



## WHAT IS INCLUDED?

- ✓ Airport transfers
- ✓ Cooking class
- ✓ English speaking Driver
- ✓ Italian speaking Driver
- ✓ VAT
- ✓ Vehicle with air conditioning

## NOT INCLUDED

- ✗ Admission fees
- ✗ Beverages and meals
- ✗ City taxes
- ✗ Gratuities and tips
- ✗ Hotel accommodation
- ✗ Intercontinental/Local Flights
- ✗ Licensed Tourist Guide
- ✗ Travel Insurance