



ACADEMY  
TRAVEL

TAILORED  
SMALL GROUP  
JOURNEYS

# SICILY & THE AEOLIAN ISLANDS

JEWELS OF THE MEDITERRANEAN

Temple of Concordia, Agrigento

## OVERVIEW

Encounter millennia of human history in a Mediterranean nutshell, on our popular and carefully thought-out tour of Sicily and the Aeolian Islands.

Discover why Goethe called Sicily 'the clue to everything', on this 17-day tour with Dr Eireann Marshall. A unique fusion of Mediterranean civilisations, Sicily's conquerors have included the Phoenicians, Greeks, Romans, Arabs, Normans and Spanish, and all have left their traces on an unmatched physical setting, from the towering volcano of Mount Etna to the rolling hillsides of the interior and the coast's rugged limestone cliffs.

Follow a broad historical sequence, commencing with the major Greek cities of Siracusa, Agrigento and Selinunte, before moving to the predominantly Arab and Norman world of Palermo and the north. Survey Montalbano's baroque world in Noto and Ragusa and the fascinating pre-history and majestic scenery of the Aeolian Islands, before three nights in spectacular Taormina. The experience is rounded out by the fine regional dining for which Sicily is internationally renowned.



## TOUR LEADER

**Dr Eireann Marshall** is an Honorary Research Associate and Associate Lecturer with the Open University, as well as an Honorary Research Fellow of the University of Roehampton. Eireann has in depth knowledge of Italy.

## TOUR DATES

**October 4-20, 2024**

## TOUR PRICE

**\$11,290** per person, twin share

**\$2,590** single supplement

## TOUR DEPOSIT

A **\$1,000** non-refundable deposit is required per person to confirm your booking on tour.

## GROUP SIZE

Maximum number of **16** in group

## ITINERARY

Siracusa (4 nights), Agrigento (2 nights), Palermo (4 nights), Lipari (3 nights), Taormina (3 nights)

## INCLUSIONS

**16** nights' accommodation in centrally located 4-star hotels. All breakfasts and 8 lunches or dinners. Services of an expert tour leader and an experienced tour manager throughout. All ground transport, entrance fees and tipping.

## DETAILED ITINERARY

### Start & Finish

The tour starts at 3.30pm on Friday 4 October, at Rome Fiumicino airport.

The tour ends at 6.30pm on Sunday 20 October, at Rome Fiumicino airport.

Included meals are indicated with B, L, D.

### Friday 4 October

#### Arrive Siracusa

Meet your tour leader at Rome Fiumicino airport to commence the tour. There is a group flight to Catania, then transfer by coach to our hotel in Siracusa. Passengers coming from the Malta pre-tour extension arrive in Catania a short while later. This evening meet for a light dinner at a local restaurant.

Overnight Siracusa (D)

### Saturday 5 October

#### Ancient Siracusa

After a talk in the hotel, we visit the main archaeological sites of the town. Highlights of our visit include the famed theatre of Siracusa, the altar of Hieron II, and the ancient quarries (where thousands of Greek prisoners were held during the Peloponnesian War). In the later afternoon we'll visit the Museo Aretuseo dei Pupi, housing a collection of traditional Sicilian puppets, followed by a performance of traditional puppetry at the adjoining theatre. This evening we have our welcome dinner at a local restaurant. Overnight Siracusa (B, D)

### Sunday 6 October

#### Paolo Orsi Archaeological Museum

This morning we make our way to the excellent Paolo Orsi Regional Archaeological Museum. Extensively renovated in recent years, the Paolo Orsi is one of the most important archaeological museums in southern Italy. Its artefacts, found throughout Sicily, survey the Greek, Roman, and early Christian epochs. In the afternoon we'll visit the Byzantine-era Jewish baths which are over 1,500 years old. Overnight Siracusa (B)

### Monday 7 October

#### Sicilian Baroque in Noto and Ragusa

Today we take a round trip of the south-east tip of Sicily, visiting the towns of Noto and Ragusa. These towns are famed for their exuberant 'Sicilian Baroque' architecture, created after a devastating earthquake of 1693 that destroyed the earlier towns. Overnight Siracusa (B)

## TOUR HIGHLIGHTS

### The world's best-preserved Greek temples

Discover Agrigento's Valley of the Temples, an enthralling archaeological site that is testament to the power and wealth of Greek Sicily in the ancient Mediterranean.

### UNESCO World Heritage-listed Byzantine mosaics

Admire medieval Sicily's glittering beauty, from the lavish gold-ground mosaics of Monreale and Cefalù cathedrals to the jewel-like Palatine Chapel of Palermo's Norman Palace.

### The splendour of Sicilian Baroque

Encounter Noto and Ragusa, twin baroque towns whose distinctive and exuberant architecture forms a backdrop in honey-coloured stone for the adventures of Inspector Montalbano.

### Islands of fire, wind and sea

Appreciate how Sicily's history is shaped by its landscape, from the fertile slopes of Mount Etna, Europe's largest volcano, to prehistoric trade in the Aeolian Islands.

### Villa Romana del Casale, Piazza Armerina

Travel into Sicily's interior to explore the richest, largest and most complex collection of Roman mosaics in the world, at a staggering imperial Roman villa.





## **Tuesday 8 October**

### **The Villa Romana**

We depart Siracusa this morning, heading westward through the geographic centre of Sicily. Today's highlight is the Villa Romana del Casale at Piazza Armerina, featuring a series of intact floor mosaics from the 4th century AD, created by North African artisans. After lunch we continue to Agrigento, located on the south coast of Sicily, arriving in the late afternoon. Dinner tonight is in our hotel. Overnight Agrigento (B, D)

## **Wednesday 9 October**

### **Agrigento Temples and Museum**

Agrigento – ancient 'Akragas' — was founded in the 6th century BC and enjoyed a reputation as one of the wealthiest colonies of the Greek world. The extensive and well-preserved sacred area is testament to these riches, comprising four wonderfully preserved large temples as well as a number of smaller structures. Today we tour the temple site with a local guide and visit the nearby archaeological museum. The afternoon is free to relax. Tonight, we have dinner in a local restaurant. Overnight Agrigento (B, D)

## **Thursday 10 October**

### **Romanticism at Selinunte**

Our first stop is to see the larger than life-size Dancing Satyr of Mazara del Vallo, a Greek bronze statue that was found by a Sicilian fisherman in 1998 in the waters of the Mediterranean. We continue to Selinunte (ancient Selinus), the last of the important Greek cities on our itinerary. At its peak, Selinus had a population of 25,000 but it was comprehensively sacked and its ruins inspired generations of Romantic poets and artists, such as Goethe. Dinner tonight is in a local restaurant. Overnight Palermo (B, D)

## **Friday 11 October**

### **Palermo**

Palermo is a colourful city, with the atmosphere of North Africa or perhaps Asia rather than of Europe. Its heritage as a meeting point between European civilisation and the Arab and Byzantine worlds is borne out in the splendid medieval buildings of the Norman kingdoms. Today we tour some of the main historic sites of the old city, including the Norman Palace and Palatine Chapel, with its gold mosaics, and the Byzantine-influenced church of La Martorana. After lunch we visit the 12th-century retreat of La Zisa, inspired by Moorish pleasure palaces, and then stroll through some of the markets and characteristic back streets of the old city. Overnight Palermo (B)

## **Saturday 12 October**

### **Glittering Monreale**

The cathedral and abbey of Monreale, in the hills overlooking Palermo, were founded by the Norman King William II in the 12th century to demonstrate the power of the Norman Kingdom of Sicily. There are more than 6,000 square metres of mosaics here, using 2,200 kg of real gold. We spend the morning visiting the cathedral and enjoying the surrounding medieval hill town. After returning to Palermo, the afternoon is at leisure. Overnight Palermo (B)

## **Sunday 13 October**

### **Segesta and Mozia**

Today we take a ferry to Mozia where, among the salt pans, we explore the ruins of the former Carthaginian settlement. The island also houses a small museum with some unique pieces. We then continue to Segesta, an evocative ruin perched on a hill. The theatre and temple here are truly memorable, and have inspired artists and writers for centuries. In the late afternoon we head back to Palermo. Overnight Palermo (B, L)

## **Monday 14 October**

### **Cefalù and the Aeolian Islands**

We depart Palermo this morning, heading along the north coast. We spend the greater part of the day in Cefalù, a fishing town dominated by a splendid Norman cathedral, reputedly built after King Roger II survived a shipwreck near the town. There is also a Greek sanctuary above the town (a steep walk) and an idiosyncratic art gallery with some fine works. These include a wonderful portrait by Antonello da Messina. After lunch we travel to Milazzo where we take a ferry to the island of Lipari, our base on the Aeolian Islands for the next three nights. Dinner is served in our hotel. Overnight Lipari (B, D)

## **Tuesday 15 October**

### **Lipari**

This morning a local guide shows us the main archaeological site of Lipari, an island inhabited since at least 5,000 BC. The middle of the day is free to explore the town or relax in the hotel. Later in the afternoon we take a trip around the island by coach, enjoying the landscape and views to the other islands. Overnight Lipari (B)

## **Wednesday 16 October**

### **Boat Trip to Panarea and Stromboli**

Weather permitting, today we take an afternoon boat excursion to the islands of Panarea and Stromboli, 20km from Lipari, enjoying the natural beauty and unspoilt traditional lifestyle of these islands.

## HOTELS

Hotels have been selected principally for their central location. All hotels are a comfortable four-star standard.

### **Siracusa, Algilà Ortigia Charme**

(4 nights)

[www.algila.it](http://www.algila.it)

### **Agrigento, Hotel Costazzurra**

(2 nights)

[www.hotelcostazzurra.it](http://www.hotelcostazzurra.it)

### **Palermo, Eurostars Central Palace**

(4 nights)

[www.eurostarshotels.it](http://www.eurostarshotels.it)

### **Lipari, Hotel Tritone**

(3 nights)

[www.tritonelipari.it](http://www.tritonelipari.it)

### **Taormina, Hotel Monte Tauro**

(3 nights)

[www.eurostarshotels.co.uk](http://www.eurostarshotels.co.uk)

## WEATHER

Pleasant weather can be expected throughout the journey. Expect average maximum temperatures of 22 – 28C during the day and minimums of 14 – 18C at night. You should bring a light, waterproof jacket and an umbrella and be prepared for possible windy conditions in the appropriately named Aeolian (or windy) Islands.

## FITNESS REQUIREMENTS

### **Grade Two**

This tour is physically demanding. To participate on this tour, you should be able to:

- keep up with the group at all times
- walk for 5-7 kilometres over the day at a moderate pace
- stand and slow walk for up to 90 minutes galleries and museums
- negotiate walking over uneven ground on dirt tracks
- walk up and down steps and slopes
- get on and off a coach with steps unassisted
- move your luggage unassisted

A highlight of the excursion is the chance to view the volcano of Stromboli. We have a light dinner on Stromboli before returning to Lipari in the early evening. (Alternative plans, such as a visit to the nearby island of Vulcano, or to Milazzo, will be made if the weather is too rough for the excursion) Overnight Lipari (B, D)

### **Thursday 17 October**

#### **Messina**

Returning to the mainland, we travel to the city of Messina to visit the fine Norman cathedral and the Regional Museum of Messina, home to masterpieces by Caravaggio and Antonello da Messina. We continue on to Taormina on the east coast of Sicily. After checking into our hotel, we have a welcome drink on the terrace. Overnight Taormina (B)

### **Friday 18 October**

#### **Taormina**

Sitting above the sea with superb views to Mount Etna, Taormina is a memorable final destination for our journey. We spend this morning visiting the Graeco-Roman theatre and other highlights of the town. This afternoon and evening are at leisure. Overnight Taormina (B)

### **Saturday 19 October**

#### **With the gods on Mount Etna**

Today we join our coach for an excursion to the summit of Mount Etna itself. Europe's largest and most spectacular volcano, Mt Etna is still very active. Assuming conditions are safe we will explore the south side of the volcano, travelling by coach, cable car and finally jeep to a height of 2,900 metres. The landscape and the views are unforgettable. (Please note that the last part of the excursion involves walking over uneven surfaces. It may not be possible for all passengers to undertake this segment.) Returning to Taormina there is time for a stroll around the town before we meet for our farewell dinner at a local restaurant. Overnight Taormina (B, D)

### **Sunday 20 October**

#### **Departure**

Our flight departs mid-afternoon for Rome, arriving in time to meet the late evening departing flight for Australia. (B)



## ENQUIRIES & BOOKINGS

For further information or to secure a place, please contact **Sharon Williams** on 9235 0023 (Sydney) or 1800 639 699 (outside Sydney) or email:

[sharon@academytravel.com.au](mailto:sharon@academytravel.com.au)

✉ [info@academytravel.com.au](mailto:info@academytravel.com.au)

🖱 [academytravel.com.au](http://academytravel.com.au)

# MALTA

## PRE-TOUR EXTENSION

### ITINERARY

Included meals are shown with the letters B, L and D.

#### **Monday 30 September | Arrive Valletta**

Flights from Australia via Dubai arrive mid-afternoon in Malta. An escort will meet the group on arrival and transfer to the Excelsior Hotel in Valletta. Evening at leisure. Overnight Valletta

#### **Tuesday 1 October | The Old City**

The day begins with a half-day tour of Valletta, Malta's fortified capital city with its bastion walls and gardens on top of the ancient fortifications. This afternoon visit the Hypogeum. Overnight Valletta (B)

#### **Wednesday 2 October | Mosta and Mdina**

The medieval walled town of Mdina is our destination today. The origins of the town date before Roman times and there are many sites to visit. Lunch is included. Overnight Valletta (B, L)

#### **Thursday 3 October | Gozo**

Today we take a full-day tour to the nearby island of Gozo with its stunning seascape and quiet rural life. Lunch included. Overnight Valletta (B, L)

#### **Friday 4 October | Depart for Sicily**

Much of today is at leisure. Mid-afternoon there is a transfer to the ferry terminal for the late afternoon ferry to Pozzallo. Upon arrival, there is a coach transfer to meet the group in Siracusa where the main tour program begins. (B)

### OVERVIEW

A trip to Sicily provides the ideal opportunity to enjoy a short pre-tour excursion to nearby Malta. This small island archipelago is often overlooked as a travel destination (much to the delight of those who know what it has to offer and like to keep it quiet).

### TOUR DATES

**September 30 - October 4, 2024**

### TOUR PRICE

**\$2,995** per person, twin share  
**\$1,095** single supplement

### GROUP SIZE

Maximum number of **16** in group

### ITINERARY

Valletta (4 nights)

### INCLUSIONS

**4** nights' accommodation in the 5-star Grand Hotel Excelsior Malta. All breakfasts and 2 lunches. All ground transport, entrance fees and tipping. Ferry and coach transfer to Siracusa.