

EXPLORE!

BEST SELLER

Classical Sicily
8 days

Italy, Sicily - Trip code CS



Classical Sicily

This all-encompassing trip takes in the highlights of Sicily as we travel to some of the most impressive and best preserved Greco-Roman sites in the Mediterranean. Along the way, we enjoy spectacular scenery, experience the relaxed island lifestyle and sample delicious Sicilian food and wine.

Trip highlights

- ★ **Syracusa** - Discover the ancient sites of a city that once rivalled Athens in size
- ★ **Agrigento** - Visit the Valley of the Temples, with its remarkable Doric architecture
- ★ **Palermo** - Explore the cultural melting pot of Sicily's capital and visit the majestic Norman cathedral at Monreale
- ★ **Taormina** - Soak up the atmosphere of this popular coastal resort and visit its famed Greek theatre, with its postcard views of Mount Etna

ACCOMMODATION GRADE:

Standard

Our standard, mid-range accommodation offers a good level of service, often with other amenities such as a restaurant, bar, garden or swimming pool. Generally rooms will be comfortable with en suite facilities.

TRIP PACE:

Full on

Full on paced trips are for travellers who like their holidays packed with activities and experiences, moving on quickly from place to place with lots of early starts and long, busy days. Some may find them tiring, but others get a buzz from packing their precious holiday-time as chock-a-block full of new experiences as possible!

GROUP SIZE:

12 - 18

Maximum group size ranges from between 6 to 20 people, depending on the type of trip, the transport and accommodation used and activities included. We rarely have groups that are smaller than five or six people and the average is 12 people plus an Explore leader.

Itinerary

Itineraries on some departure dates may differ, please select the itinerary that you wish to explore.

DAY 1 - Join trip in Syracuse

Starting our trip in Syracuse, we will meet up with the rest of the group in our hotel this evening. During the Greek Classical Period, this east coast city was the largest in the ancient world - even bigger than Athens. Now a UNESCO World Heritage Site, it is also notable as being the birthplace of antiquity's greatest mathematician, Archimedes.



Accommodation: Jolly Aretusa Palace Hotel (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: None

DAY 2 - See Syracuse's historic Neapolis and Ortygia Island

This morning we will visit the city's Neapolis Archaeological Park, with its famous Greek theatre hewn out of the hillside and the fine Roman amphitheatre where gladiators once fought. We then continue to Ortygia Island - a small island in the centre of the city which is home to many more historical landmarks. Leaving Syracuse, we drive for a couple of hours inland to Piazza Amerina, a charming market town set amid rolling countryside, which will be our base for the night.



Accommodation: Park Hotel Paradiso (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

DAY 3 - Villa Romana and Agrigento's Valley of the Temples

Just a short hop from our hotel, we will start our day by visiting the Villa Romana del Casale with a local guide. It's the ruins of a magnificent country mansion containing some incredibly well-preserved and beautiful Roman mosaics. Continuing to the west coast, we reach Agrigento - once one of the most prosperous cities in Sicily. The ancient acropolis, now the modern city, overlooks a southern ridge, misleadingly named the 'Valley of the Temples'. Visiting these temples, we walk around the ruins of the largest Doric temple ever constructed - the Temple of Zeus. We will also explore the perfectly-proportioned Doric columns of the Temple of Concord, as well as the oldest temple in the complex, honouring Hercules. Later this afternoon, a two-hour drive takes us north along the spectacular coastline to tonight's hotel in Marsala.



Accommodation: Hotel President (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Swimming pool available



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

DAY 4 - Visit Erice and the Greek ruins of Segesta en route to Palermo

This morning we drive to Erice, where we can enjoy the ambiance of this beautiful walled Medieval town. At 750 metres above sea level, we hope to have impressive views of the valley and sea below. It is also worth noting that Erice is home to Sicily's most famous cake shop - Maria Grammatic. Early afternoon will see us travelling on to Segesta - one of the best-preserved ancient Greek sites in existence. Here, the Doric temple and the amphitheatre sit on the slopes of Mount Barbar in a stunning natural setting. No modern day structures mar our appreciation of the site. On leaving magnificent Segesta, we drive an hour along the north coast to our hotel in Sicily's capital, Palermo.



Accommodation: Hotel Politeama (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

DAY 5 - Palatine Chapel and Monreale Cathedral; free time in Palermo

Before departing Palermo this morning, we will visit the Palatine Chapel - the royal chapel of the Norman kings of Sicily, packed with spectacular Byzantine mosaics. Driving into the hills just a short distance out of the capital, we go on to visit the majestic Norman Cathedral of Monreale. Founded in 1174 by William the Good, the cathedral is also famous for its extensive mosaics, as well as its beautiful cloisters showing both Romanesque and Islamic influences. Returning to Sicily's capital, our afternoon is free to enjoy Palermo at our own pace. The city stands at the foot of Monte Pellegrino, with the fertile valley of Concha d'Oro behind. It was one of the richest cities in Europe from the 9th to the 12th centuries AD when Islamic culture, Byzantine magnificence and the vigorous world of medieval Europe were merging into a fascinating civilisation. Today, the city maintains a sense of cultural diversity and is famous for its art, music and food.



Accommodation: Hotel Politeama (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

DAY 6 - Cefalu and coastal scenery en route to Giardini Naxos

Leaving Palermo, we drive along the spectacular northern coastline to the picturesque fishing village of Cefalu. Here we stop to visit the Norman Cathedral, with its stupendous mosaic of Christ Pantocrator. We take a scenic drive along the coast via Messina, stopping briefly for an optional visit to the Archaeological Museum. Our base for the next two nights is the small beach resort of Giardini Naxos, just outside Taormina on the north east coast. Please note, on our 12 May, 15 September and 06 October 2018 departures we will be staying in Taormina instead of Giardini Naxos on days 6 and 7 of your holiday. The towns are only a short distance apart along the coast. The itinerary inclusions will remain the same and you'll still have the opportunity to visit Mount Etna, the only difference is that you won't be visiting Giardini Naxos and your free time on day 7 will be spent in Taormina instead. If you still want to visit Giardini Naxos then it's easily accessible on the hop-on public bus from Taormina.



Accommodation: Hotel la Riva (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

DAY 7 - Chance to travel to Mount Etna; afternoon in Taormina

This morning, you have the opportunity to join a tour to explore the lunar landscape, craters and lava fields of Mount Etna - one of the most active volcanoes in Europe. Alternatively, you might prefer to enjoy a more sedate morning enjoying the coastal location of Giardini Naxos. This afternoon, we travel the short distance to Taormina, Sicily's most famous resort. Once a favourite haven for the likes of D. H Lawrence and Oscar Wilde, Taormina is still today a tourist honeypot. After a walk around this chic and beautiful town, with its pretty medieval churches and charming streets, it's easy to understand why. We'll visit the Greek Theatre in Taormina. Here, snow-capped Mount Etna acts as a spectacular backdrop to the remarkably preserved columned stage. It's easy to see why this is possibly the most famous view in Sicily, it makes for a superb photograph.



Accommodation: Hotel la Riva (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

DAY 8 - Trip ends in Giardini Naxos

Our trip ends at our hotel in Giardini Naxos.



Meals Provided: Breakfast



What's included?



Included meals

Breakfast: 7



Transport

Bus



Trip staff

Explore Tour Leader
Driver(s)
Local Guide(s)



Accommodation

7 nights standard hotel

Trip information

Country information

Italy Holidays & Tours

Climate

April/May and October/November are pleasantly warm. June/September are the hottest months. Showers are common in Autumn.

Time difference to GMT

+1

Plugs

2 Pin Round

Religion

Roman Catholic

Language

Italian

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Optional activities

Giardini Naxos - Mount Etna tour - Bus to 1,900 metres €32; Bus to 1,900 metres and cable car to 2,500 metres €64.00; Bus to 1,900 metres, cable car and then four-wheel drive coach up to 2,900 metres to view the craters €96.00 Due to the volcanic dust and sulphur fumes on Mount Etna, we ask asthma sufferers or customers with heart conditions of any kind to take these factors into consideration when deciding if this optional excursion is right for you. Regional Museum at Messina - €8.00

Clothing

Women should avoid bare arms and shoulders in churches (scarf or stole recommended). Dress for hot conditions although light rainwear and warm fleece/jacket for nights when temperatures can drop (especially in March and Oct/Nov). Anyone intending to visit Mount Etna should bring warm clothing as snow is a common occurrence (even in June). Wind and waterproof garments are strongly recommended for those wishing to visit the volcano.

Footwear

Comfortable walking shoes and sandals.

Luggage

20kg

Luggage: On tour

One main piece of baggage and daypack. Remember you are expected to carry your own luggage so don't overload yourself.

Equipment

Sunhat and sunscreen are recommended. You should bring a 2 litre water bottle, torch, as well as insect repellent. You may wish to bring swimming costume.

Tipping

Explore leader

At your discretion you might also consider tipping your Tour Leader in appreciation of the efficiency and service you receive.

Local crew

Although entirely voluntary, tipping is a recognised part of life in this region of the world. Some local staff will look to members of the group for personal recognition of particular services provided. Accordingly, you should allow £20.00 for tipping. In order to make things easier for you, the Tour Leaders may organise a group's tips kitty and if this is the case, they will account for it throughout the tour.

Country Information

Italy Holidays & Tours

Food and drink

The costs for meals may vary depending upon location, type of restaurant and number of courses eaten and so the prices given are an average guide. Local restaurants located off the beaten track may be less expensive, whereas an upmarket restaurant located in the centre of a major city may charge more.

Dinner price

£10.00 - 14.00

Beer price

£2.00 - 4.00

Water price

£1.00 - 2.00

Foreign Exchange

Local currency

Euro.

Recommended Currency For Exchange

GBP.

Where To Exchange

We recommend that you change any currency into Euros prior to arrival. Bureau de Change are generally only found in major cities and large airports.

ATM Availability

Major towns.

Credit Card Acceptance

Larger hotels and restaurants.

Travellers Cheques

Only in major towns. Please note, the exchange rate for cash and Travellers Cheques is poor.

Sicily Holidays & Tours

Food and drink

The costs for meals may vary depending upon location, type of restaurant and number of courses eaten and so the prices given are an average guide. Local restaurants located off the beaten track may be less expensive, whereas an upmarket restaurant located in the centre of a major city may charge more.

Foreign Exchange

Transport, Accommodation & Meals

Transport Information

Bus

Essential information

FCO Advice

We strongly recommend that you check your government's travel advisory for up-to-date information and advice about your destination: safety and security, entry requirements, health, local laws and customs. For UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office advice [click here](#).

For more information from Explore about travel advice, [click here](#)

Under 18 immigration guidance

Please note that some countries require proof of parental consent when travelling overseas with under 18s. Please check requirements with the relevant embassy or consular office well in advance of travel if this applies to your party.

Essential Information

Once your booking has been confirmed we guarantee the price will not increase, whatever the circumstances. Before booking please ensure you have read our important tour pricing information. [Booking Conditions](#)

Visa Information

Italy: Visas are not required by UK, E.U Nationals, Australian, New Zealand, US and Canadian citizens. Other nationalities should consult their local embassy or consular office.

If you do require assistance in obtaining a visa then you may consider applying through Explore's recommended visa service in the UK, Travcour. See www.travcour.com to download the relevant visa application for your trip, if applicable (UK citizens only), along with details of how to apply for your visa through Travcour. The Team at Travcour will be happy to answer specific questions relating to visa applications, please call them directly on 0208 5431846.

Booking conditions

Before booking your Explore trip, please ensure that you read both our Essential Information and Booking Conditions.

Transfers

[Find out more about Trip Transfer Terms and Conditions before you book.](#)

Booking a land only package with Explore

Customers who have chosen to book on the 'Land Only' arrangements of our tour, please ensure that you have checked your tour specific 'Joining Instructions' prior to booking your own travel arrangements. Your joining instructions can be found below in the dates and prices information.

You may also be eligible for the Free Explore Transfer.

Joining Tour Abroad

Customers booked on the 'Land Only' arrangements will now receive a Free Transfer, provided you arrive and depart on the tour only itinerary start and end dates. The transfers will be from the Explore designated airport or train station to the joining point of your tour, and then back from the ending point to the designated airport or train station. The exception to this rule is customers who are booked on a tour where the joining and ending point is at the designated airport or train station.

Free transfers are not available for Self-Guided, Tailormade or Tours for Churches customers.

If you are not eligible for the Free Transfer then you will need to make your own way through to the joining and ending point. On a majority of our tours Explore will be able to provide a private transfer at an additional cost. Please ask for a quote at the time of booking.

For more information regarding the Explore Free Transfer click [here](#)

Insurance

It is a condition of booking with Explore that you have adequate valid travel insurance. It is your responsibility to arrange appropriate travel insurance and ensure you have read and understood the full terms and conditions of your travel insurance policy to ensure that you are covered for all activities you intend to undertake whilst on the tour, including all optional activities. Your Insurance Policy must fully cover you for medical expenses and emergency repatriation to your home country. Please ensure your policy includes medical emergency helicopter evacuation in the event of illness or injury and covers the entire duration of your holiday. If you are trekking at altitude please ensure that there is no upper altitude limit which may limit or exclude cover for your trip. Medical and repatriation insurance cover is not mandatory for UK residents who are travelling on trips within the United Kingdom.

Read more information about what travel insurance is required.

Flight information

Explore offers a wide range of flexible flying options to make joining and leaving our trips easy. Read more about them [here](#).

Flight Information

You are able to book this tour on a 'land only' basis or as a 'flight inclusive' package. Your flight inclusive package will be fully protected by the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) ATOL protection scheme.

Booking a flight inclusive package with Explore

We have a good selection of flights not only from London but from many regional airports around the UK allowing us to compare fares between scheduled carriers as well as low cost and charter airlines. Our dedicated flights team will match the best flight options to your arrival and departure airport.

On our website we display a UK flight inclusive package guide price which is generally based on a London departure. To avoid paying supplements or to secure your preferred flight option, we recommend booking as early as possible, especially for peak travel dates.

Non refundable permits

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Vaccinations

Nothing required. Tetanus recommended. The above is not an exhaustive list. Further information regarding vaccinations and travel health advice can be found by following the NHS and NaTHNaC links at <http://www.explore.co.uk/Travelhealth/> and from your local healthcare provider.

