

Discover Eastern Sicily

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Day 1 – DEPART - Today we depart JFK on our overnight flight to Catania (via Rome) aboard a wide bodied jet. We will be served complimentary beverages, in-flight movies, dinner and breakfast aloft.

Day 2 – ARRIVE CATANIA – Transfer to the hotel in Giardini Naxos. The rest of the afternoon is free. Dinner and overnight at the hotel.

Day 3 – TAORMINA- Taormina, known in the ancient times as Tauromenion, is a spot of infinite loveliness, the land of “Dolce far niente” - of sweet do nothing. The town lies in an elevated position of amazing, almost unique beauty, affording magnificent views of the sea and clear sky with miles of a curving coastline and picturesque mountain scenery, while the majestic pyramid of Mt. Etna on the other side constitutes a scene of indescribable beauty. Upon arrival, we will visit the most impressive monument of the city: the Greco-Roman Theatre. It has the finest location of any theatre in the world and is one of the most striking monuments of antiquity. Afternoon at leisure.

Day 4 – SIRACUSA- We will visit Siracusa, built on an ancient Greek settlement founded by Corinthians in 734 BC. It became the most important city in Magna Graecia and for a time competed with Athens as the most important city in the Greek world. Siracusa expresses all the variety and cultural complexity of Sicily, spanning from the ancient times to today. The visit includes: the Archaeological Park with the Greek Theatre (V century AC), where during the season the ancient Greek tragedies are performed; the Ara of Ierone; the Roman Anfiteatro, where the gladiator competitions occurred; the Latomie of the Paradise, ancient hollow stones known for their different shapes, the most famous being the Orecchio of Dionisio. Some of the ancient sights to see in Syracuse are located in Ortigia, the most important being: the Cathedral – a Doric Temple built on a Sicilian settlement, Byzantine basilica, a Norman church, with late Renaissance and then Baroque elements - and the Arethusa Fountain, which is a place linked to Greek mythology. Return to Taormina for dinner and overnight.

Day 5 –MESSINA/RIACE'S BRONZES- The tour starts with a visit to "The Gate of Sicily," just five kilometers separating Messina from mainland Italy. In the ancient times, it was given the name “Zancle” by the Greeks for its sickle-shaped harbor. Seeing the beauty of the town, it is hard to imagine that in 1908 a devastating earthquake leveled Messina and that during World War II the town was subjected to several intensive bombing raids. The tour will continue, passing the City Hall, the Church of the Annunziata dei Catalani, and the Piazza Duomo. Important to note is the astronomical clock, the most interesting component of the 60 meter high bell-tower located to the left of the Cathedral. After lunch a short ferry ride to Italy's main land to visit a splendid museum featuring the famous bronzes from Riace.

Day 6 – RAGUSA/ MODICA - Ragusa is really two separate towns, both of whom were combined to form one municipality in 1926. Lower Ragusa, known as Ragusa Ibla, or simply “Ibla,” is the ancient part of the city, rebuilt after suffering heavy damage due to the infamous 1693 earthquake that devastated south-eastern Sicily. Upper Ragusa, or Ragusa Superiore, is the main part of the new city, which was built on the ridge across from Ibla after the earthquake. Due to the fact that upper Ragusa was built in the early 1700s, most of its churches and main buildings were thus constructed in the Baroque

and New-Classical styles. Most of the city's history deals with the old city of Ibla. Populated by the indigenous Siculi in ancient times, the town was called “Hybla Heraea,” from which the name Ibla was derived. Ibla's best-known church is the Basilica of St. George, whose entrance is reached by climbing a spacious set of elegantly decorated curving stairs. The majestic dome of the church towers above the town and dominates the Piazza del Duomo and its neat rows of palm trees beneath it. Next we will travel to the town of Modica. What makes Modica so unique and charming is undoubtedly the baroque look that dominates the old town center, as well as the maze of narrow streets bordered by old shops, houses and buildings, which characterize both Modica Alta and Modica Bassa.

Day 7 – ETNA- Mt. Etna is Sicily's tallest peak and one of Europe's most famous active volcanoes. The most violent eruption to take place in the XX century was in 1910, which led to twenty-three additional craters being formed. In 1928, a lava flow destroyed the village of Mascali. Other eruptions have followed, the most recent being in 1981, 1983, 1985, 1991-92, 2001, 2002, 2004, and 2005. Upon arrival we will visit the area 2.000 meters (6.000 ft) above sea level, where the Crateri Silvestri are located. Opportunity to go up to the main crater on 4x4 or free time to enjoy the mountain. Return to the hotel for dinner and overnight. Afternoon free for the last shopping. Dinner and overnight at the hotel.

Day 8 – CATANIA – Catania was built in 729 BC with the name “Katane,” which means “grater” in Sicilian. It was conquered by the Romans in 263 BC. The Roman influence can still be felt, as some architectural ruins of the Augustan period still remain. After the Byzantine domination there was the Arabic and then the Norman supremacy, which brought many changes and innovations to the town, the building of the Cathedral, and the many monasteries. With the Aragonese, Catania had a period of economic recovery and cultural revolution; in fact, it was during this period that the first university of the island was born. The following Spanish domination and the earthquake in 1693 plunged the land into a serious economic crisis. This period was then followed by an important rebuilding campaign that continued after the unity of Italy. The XIX century saw a flourishing period of cultural splendor for Catania, involving expansion and growth in worldly, literary, musical, and theatrical expressions. We will visit Catania's most significant monuments: the Elephant Fountain, the Cathedral (XI century), and the beautiful baroque city centre. Afternoon at leisure for shopping.

Day 9 – USA - After breakfast, departure for Catania Airport for your return to New York, JFK (via Rome).

