

A Grand Tour of Sicily

Monday, May 1 to Wednesday, May 10, 2023

Tour arrangements by Classical Excursions – This is the 2nd of two ICAA trips offered to Sicily for 2023.



ITINERARY

MONDAY – May 1 – Arrival to Palermo

Tour participants arrive and check in at the **Grand Hotel et des Palmes** (Via Roma 398, Palermo 90139 - Tel:+39 091 8048800 – images below), where you will enjoy a three-night stay in the city of Palermo, the capital of Sicily built along a bay at the foot of Mount Pellegrino. The city prospered under the Phoenicians, Romans, Arabic and later Norman rule. The golden age for Palermo was, however, during the Arabic domination when it rivaled even Cairo in beauty.

An optional walking tour in Palermo's historic center viewing such historic monuments as the **Quattro Canti**, **Fontana Pretoria**, **San Cataldo Chapel** and the Baroque church of **San Domenico**. Return to the hotel to freshen up for dinner

Welcome dinner at the privately owned **Palazzo Ajutamicristo**. Originally built in the 15th century for Guglielmo Ajutamicristo, it was erected in the Kalsa district of Palermo.



TUESDAY – May 2 - Palermo

Enjoy breakfast each morning at the hotel.

We visit **Ziza**, an Arabic palace in Palermo (image right).

A late morning tour and drinks at the privately owned and rarely seen **Palazzo Valguarnera-Gangi** located in the heart of the Kalsa district of Palermo. Dating from the 1750s. Most of the reconfiguration of the palace that took place is attributed to the renowned architect from Trapani, Andrea Gigante. Most notable is the Galleria degli Specchi (Gallery of Mirrors), the Chinoiserie rooms and the monumental staircase. We will be guests of the owner, **Princess Carine Vanni Calvello Mantegna di Gangi**

Lunch

An afternoon tour of the 18th century **Villa Palagonia**, commissioned in 1715 by Ferdinando Francesco Gravina, Prince of Palagonia, planned an sculptural extravaganza on his estate. Known for its grotesque sculptural frenzie, the Villa has attracted attention since the first day it was built and was written about by various travelers including Goethe.

Dinner at the privately owned **Palazzo Aliata**



WEDNESDAY – May 3 - Palermo



A visit to **Palazzo dei Normanni**, including the majestic **Capella Palatina** considered a masterpiece of Norman art with its Byzantine influenced mosaics. A tour of the **Cathedral of Palermo**, dating from 1184 and also in the Norman style.

Palazzo Cinese - The building was designed in 1799 by the architect Giuseppe Venanzio Marvuglia on commission by the King Ferdinand III of Sicily.

A private luncheon and tour of **Palazzo Lanza Tomasi** with owner, **Duchess of Palma, Nicoletta Lanza Tomasi**, a direct descendant of Giuseppe Tomasi di Lampedusa, author of “Il Gattopardo”- The Leopard.

Today we will tour the outskirts of Palermo including visits to **Monreale Cathedral** with its stunning gold mosaics, considered the pinnacle of achievement in Arab-Norman art. The cathedral was founded in 1172 by William II. (image left)

Dinner on your own tonight.

THURSDAY – May 4 - Segesta , Selinunte and Sciacca

We will check out from the hotel.

Depart to the southwest for a tour of the majestic Greek ruins at **Segesta**. At Segesta we will tour the great **Doric Temple** with its well preserved 36 colossal columns built in the 5th century BC and the renowned **Greek theatre** (image right).

Olive oil tasting and lunch at a **local olive oil producing farm** serving typical Sicilian dishes.

Our last stop of the day is Sciacca where we will check into the hotel **Rocco Forte Verdura Resort** for a two-night stay.

Dinner tonight at the hotel.



FRIDAY – May 5 - Agrigento

Breakfast at the hotel each morning.



Today we will explore the great **Valley of the Temples in Agrigento**. The Greek colony founded in 581 BC by Colonists from Gela. Was once considered the “fairest city inhabited by mortals.” Here we will see the **Temple of Olympian Zeus, Temple of Heracles** and the **Temples of Concord and Hera** (pictured).

Lunch on Agrigento.

We will also visit the **National Archaeological Museum** as well, containing a wealth of material from the excavations at Agrigento.

Dinner on your own tonight.

SATURDAY – May 6 - Piazza Armerina and Siracusa

Check out of the hotel and depart for **Piazza Armerina and the Imperial Roman Villa del Casale**, famous for mosaics. The remnants of this 3rd – 4th century Roman villa, contain some of the most well preserved and fantastic mosaics in the world (image right).

Lunch is at Piazza Armerina.

Late afternoon arrival at the **Grand Hotel Estrangers** for a three-night stay on the historic peninsula of **Ortygia**.

Early evening walk in Ortygia with a group.

Dinner on your own tonight.



SUNDAY – May 7 - Ancient Siracusa

Breakfast at the hotel each morning.

Visit the **Museo Archeologico**, **Ear of Dionysius** and **Greek Theatre**.
Then a visit to the **Duomo** and the **Temple Apollo**.

Afternoon free time, lunch on your own.

Optional boat tour around Ortygia.

Dinner at the privately owned **Palazzo Benevetano**, hosted by **Baron Benevetano**. Erected after the devastating earthquake of 1693, the palazzo stands as one of Siracusa's most complete Baroque achievements. (the palace is located on the main square, image right)



MONDAY – May 8 – Noto and Ragusa



Depart for a day touring two superb Baroque towns rebuilt after the devastating earthquakes of 1693. Noto and Ragusa are beautiful examples of small towns displaying the elaborate Sicilian Baroque architecture.

Our first stop of the day is **Noto** (town image left) to tour the newly restored **Palazzo Castelluccio**.

Lunch in **Ragusa Ibla** followed by a walk around the city with our guide.

Dinner on your own tonight in Siracusa.

TUESDAY – May 9 – Catania and Taormina

Check out. Depart for **Taormina** and our final hotel.

A tour of **Palazzo Biscari** in Catania with the owner, **Prince Ruggero Moncada**. One of the most important Rococo achievements in Sicily, Palazzo Biscari was rebuilt beginning in 1702 by the Prince of Biscari (ceiling image right). The richly carved façade and luxurious mid to late 18th century interiors rank among the finest in Sicily.

Arrive in Taormina in time for lunch on your own.

A walk to the **Roman Theatre** in Taormina with Lani or optional free time to explore on your own.

Check in to the Atlantis Bay Hotel in Taormina

Farewell group dinner at **Villa Britannia**.



WEDNESDAY - May 10 – DAY FOR DEPARTURES

Breakfast at the hotel. Independent departures from the Catania Airport or other touring.

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