



Tour Information



Gardens and Palaces of Eastern Sicily





Travel

Passports

You may need to renew your British Passport if you are travelling to an EU country. **Please ensure your passport is less than 10 years old (even if it has 6 months or more left on it) and has at least 6 months validity remaining from the date of travel.**

For more information, please visit: [passport checker](#)

Visas

If you're a tourist, you do not need a visa for short trips to Italy. For all other passport holders please check the visa requirements with the appropriate embassy.

For further information, please check here: [travel to the EU](#)

Italian Consulate-General: "Harp House", 83/86 Farringdon Street, London EC4A 4BL.

Tel: (0)20 7936 5900. Fax: (0)20 7583 9425.

Email: consolato.londra@esteri.it

Website: <https://conslondra.esteri.it/en/>

Open Mon-Fri 0900-1200



Tickets

You will be sent an e-ticket, which shows your flight reference number, with your final departure documents. EasyJet have now replaced all of their airport check-in desks with EasyJet Baggage Drop desks. **Therefore, you must check-in online and print out your boarding passes before travelling.** Checking in online also provides the opportunity for you to pre-book seats, if you wish, at an additional cost.

Online check-in is available any time prior to travel using the reference number provided.

For more information, please visit: www.easyjet.com

Please check that the details on your documentation are accurate and that all names are spelt correctly and match the names on your passport. Your flight ticket is non-transferable and non-refundable. No refund can be given for non-used portions.



Baggage Allowance

We advise you to check the baggage allowances carefully as you are likely to be charged the excess if you exceed the weight limit. Maximum weights for single bags apply.

Your EasyJet ticket includes one hold bag of up to 23kg plus **one cabin bag that can fit under the seat in front of you**, (maximum size 45 x 36 x 20cm, including any handles or wheels). If you book an upfront or extra legroom seat you can also take an additional large cabin bag on board.

<http://www.easyjet.com/en/planning/baggage>

Transfers

On arrival in Catania, transfer to Acireale and to the Grande Hotel Maugeri (approx. 40 mins).

Special Requests

If you haven't already done so, please notify Travel Editions of any special requests as soon as possible to allow sufficient time to make the necessary arrangements. Please note that some airlines may charge for use of wheelchairs.

Border Control

At border control, you may need to show a return or onward ticket, show you have enough money for your stay, use separate lanes from EU, EEA and Swiss citizens when queuing.

Taking food into EU countries

You are not able to take meat, milk or any products containing them into EU countries.



Accommodation

Grand Hotel Maugeri, Acireale

The four-star Grand Hotel Maugeri is located in the historical centre of Acireale and located just a short five-minute walk from the Cathedral. The hotel provides a restaurant and American bar to get a drink after a day of sightseeing. Bedrooms are modern with parquet floors and with a private bathroom. Bedrooms have air-conditioning, wifi, TV, telephone, minibar, safe and hairdryer.

For more information, please visit the hotel's website:

<https://www.grandealbergomaugeri.com/en/index>



Food

Inspired by the many cultures that have settled on the island these past two millennia, Sicilian cuisine has a touch of Greek, Spanish, Arab, and of course Italian to it. The surrounding sea provides plenty of seafood, the rich, fertile soil of the island is perfect for growing olives, citrus fruit, aubergine, tomatoes, pistachios and almonds – the results are a varied, fresh, and mouth-watering combination.

Traditional dishes include *Caponata* (side dish of aubergine, capers and sweet balsamic vinegar), *Maccu* (Fava bean soup), *Arancini* (fried rice ball – a traditional snack), and *Sfincione* (Sicilian pizza, thick base with various delicious toppings).

Pasta dishes are also popular – try *Spaghetti ai ricci* (sea urchin pasta), the aubergine, tomato, basil and ricotta *Pasta alla norma* (originally from Catania), or *Manicotti* (similar to *cannelloni*, tubes of pasta filled and baked) – as is seafood, freshly caught, served simply grilled, boiled or fried. As for meat, the most frequently seen are lamb and goat. A result of the Arab control of the island in the 10th and 11th centuries, apricots, melons, raisins, saffron and couscous often feature in dishes – such as *Couscous al pesce*.

Typical sweets include *Cannoli* (crusted tube filled with ricotta and sugar), *Cassata* (rich, creamy ricotta filled cake), *Gelato* (possibly invented in Sicily), and the lighter *Granita* (sweetened and flavoured crushed ice).

Table service is common in most restaurants and bars. Usually, a discretionary service charge is added to your bill in restaurants and bars, and no further tipping is required.



Drink

The world's largest wine producer, Italy is home to some of the oldest viticulture regions. Named according to their grape variety or after their village or area of origin, excellent wines are produced throughout Italy and Sicily, with local wines offering great value and quality. With an ideal climate and soil (thanks to Mount Etna) grapes have been grown in Sicily since the Greeks first colonised the island. The dry white and rosé wines are excellent accompaniments to the seafood dishes, whereas the Nero d'Avola produces sumptuous hearty reds.

The most famous Sicilian wine, the fortified *Marsala*, is similar to sherry and port and comes in *oro* (golden), *ambra* (amber), or *rubio* (ruby), in a range from sweet to dry varieties. The golden, sweet, sometimes sparkling dessert wine *Moscato* is very pleasing.

Sicily also produces excellent liqueurs, such as *Ala*, *Averna*, *Fichera*, and some that can also be found on the mainland – *Limoncello*, *Grappa*, *Anisette* and *Amaretto*.

Meals included in the price of your holiday are:

Breakfast - daily

Lunch – three lunches

Dinner – two dinners



Destination

This delightful tour, based just north of Catania in the picturesque Baroque town of Acireale, is the latest itinerary designed by local expert and enthusiast, Tullio Scurria, who has led tours in Sicily for Travel Editions for some two decades. This tour focusses on the gardens and palaces in a relatively small area of this lovely region as well as visiting some of the area's most beautiful towns and cities. Overlooked by the looming presence of Mount Etna, it is an area with a rich architectural, botanic and artistic heritage as well as stunning mountain and coastal scenery, explored in the company of your genial and knowledgeable host.

Places of interest included in your tour:

Acireale

Sitting at the base of Mount Etna, the city of Acireale is slightly off the beaten track and a great base for exploring the Eastern coast of Sicily. The city has an elegant historic centre and a buzzing local life. The city is named for the Acis River, along with a series of other 'Aci' towns in the area. It derives from the Greek legend surrounding Akis, the mortal that fell in love with the sea goddess Galatea. Mythology says that the river was created by Galatea's tears at the death of Akis. The city has a host of sights including the Cathedral dedicated to Santa Venera, the church of San Pietro e Paolo and the splendid Basilica of San Sebastiano. The city has a host of Sicilian Baroque style palaces including the Palazzo Fiorini, a hidden gem with magnificent interiors and stunning ceilings.

Parco Paterno del Toscano

The Parco Paterno del Toscano is situated on the slopes of Mount Etna and was designed by Ettore Paterno. On lava outcrops and flow residue the park stretches for three hectares as a terraced rock garden and consists of citrus groves and vineyards, typical of the Sicilian landscape, as well as Mediterranean and exotic plants from all over the world. Palms are the most abundant species in the park, which were a great passion for Ettore Paterno, made up of 42 different species including the rare *Phoenix rubicola* from India and *Trithrinax canegestrus* from Argentina. The Manor House on the property was built in the 1950's and is located on the highest point on the estate. The garden provides open spaces and hidden corners and has

been placed under protection by the Superintendency for Cultural and Environmental Heritage of the Sicilian Region.

For more information visit:

<https://www.parcopaternaldeltoscano.it/>

I Giardini del Biviere

I Giardini del Biviere has a rich history and steeped in mythology. Legend has it that Hercules, son of Zeus, wanted to bring the pelt of an invincible lion that he had defeated as a gift to Ceres, the goddess of agriculture. On arrival where the goddess lived, Hercules threw the lion's pelt on the ground and water gushed out creating a lake in his name: Lacus Herculeus. Over the centuries the lake and surrounding districts names changed to 'Biviere' which derives from the Arabic 'Vevere', meaning watering hold for cattle and fish farm. The garden became the residence of Scipione and Maria Carla Borghese in 1968 who have turned it from a desolate drained lake into the garden you see today. The garden is a member of the Italian Greatest Gardens Association and receives many visitors a year.

For more information visit:

<https://www.biviere.it/it/la-storia-del-giardino/>

Catania

Sicily's second city, Catania boasts one of the greatest Roman ruins - the Amphitheatre in Piazza Stesicoro, and fabulous baroque architecture: Churches, Convents, Piazza del Duomo and the Cathedral of Santa Agatha, where the composer Bellini is buried. Catania also hosts the largest daily open market in Sicily "Fera o' luni". Catania is also home to the Palazzo Biscari, a monumental private palace with highly decorative interiors including frescoed halls full of charm and elegance in the Rococo style. The façade of the palace has playful decoration with balconies decorated with faces.

Nelson's Castle

Located in the town of Maniaci the Castello Nelson is a Sicilian mansion which was once a former Benedictine Abbey. Founded by the Normans in the 12th Century and located in the foothills of Mount Etna, the estate was gifted to Lord Nelson in 1799 by King Ferdinand IV of Naples, who at the time was

his ally in the war with France. Nelson was also given the title of the Duke of Bronte at the same time. Lord Nelson shipped Victorian furniture from England to the house and mixed it with the Sicilian majolicas, brocades, statues, paintings and archaeological wonders, many of which can still be seen today. A team of head gardeners built a greenhouse and designed a 5000-square metre English maze-like garden with herbs and exotic plants. Despite Lord Nelson's hard work and investment, he never actually set foot in his dream mansion as he was killed in the Battle of Trafalgar in 1805. The Castle has been passed down through Nelson's ancestors until it was sold to Bronte Council in 1981.

Le Stanze in Fiore

A private garden located just outside Catania City Centre; the garden surrounds a 19th century neoclassical country villa. The garden was created to be a romantic welcoming garden that is naturally divided into a series of connected 'rooms' creating a sensory progression that is revealed to the visitor a little bit at a time and all revolving around intense colours and fragrances of climbing plants, flowering shrubs and underlined by the constant rhythm of flowing water through streams and ponds packed with colourful waterlilies.

For more information visit:

<https://www.lestanzeinfiore.it/en/>

Toarmina

Toarmina boasts a superb position, perched on a series of high terraces, dating back to the Greeks and the Romans, and has been a popular tourist destination since the 19th century. One of the town's most remarkable sights is the ancient Greek-Roman theatre, one of the most celebrated ruins in Sicily. Other highlights include the 10th century *Palazzo Corvaja*, the *Church of San Domenico*, and the 17th century Baroque *fountain*. Toarmina is also home to the Casa Cuseni, built by Robert Hawthorn Kitson, a British painter who left England to settle in Sicily. The Casa Cuseni boasts one of the best examples of the Arts & Crafts Movement and was designed by Sir Franck Brangwyn. Over the years the Casa has hosted numerous celebrities from the world of literature and painting including Ernest Hemingway, who wrote his first short story here, Tennessee Williams, Pablo Picasso, Salvador Dali and Lord Bertrand Russell. The garden at the Casa is beautifully planted over 13 levels with fantastic

views over Naxos Bay and Mount Etna. It is now home to the Museum of Fine Arts.

Il Giardino di Casa Pennisi

Located in the heart of Acireale, the garden was created towards the end of the 19th century as the backdrop for the prestigious Grand Hotel des Bains. Designed by Mariano Falcini the garden was planned with high box hedges, large flowerbeds and to include plants of tropical origin. The focal point of the garden is a magnificent wrought-iron gazebo with climbing wisteria and its cobbled floor arranged in geometric shapes surrounded by blue agapanthus, rose bushes and geraniums. At the edge of the garden is a small 17th century church with a magnificent marble altar.

Reading & watching suggestions

Giovanni Verga

The great Sicilian writer immortalised the varied landscapes, towns, villages and sites of Sicily and its centuries of feuding. His best-known novella (and later opera) *Cavalleria Rusticana* and his collection of novels about his home, *Novelle Rusticane*, will give you a taste of Sicily.

Theresa Maggio, *The Stone Boudoir*

Travel writer Theresa Maggio journeys to her ancestor's land and beautifully describes the charm of Sicilian villages, the splendour of the landscapes and the complexity of the culture.

Goethe, *Italian Journey, 1817*.

The diary of his trip to Italy and Sicily in 1786-88, in which he mentions that "To have seen Italy without having seen Sicily is to not have seen Italy at all, for Sicily is the clue to everything."

Tour Manager

Your tour manager will be on hand throughout the tour to ensure that everything operated according to plan. If you have any problems or questions, please see him or her immediately – it is often possible to resolve complaints or problems very quickly on the spot and do everything to help you enjoy your holiday.

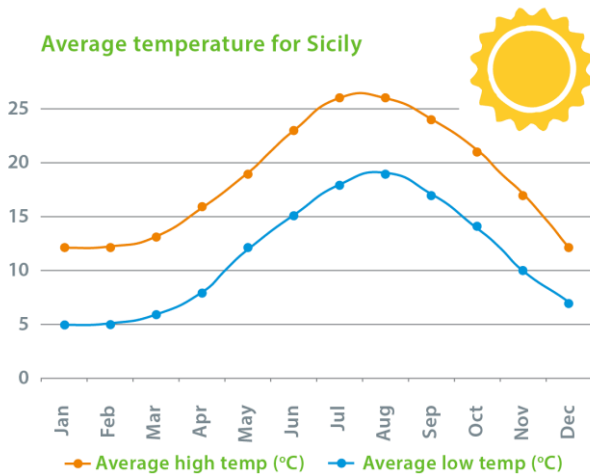
Grading

This tour has been graded as **Demanding**: On your feet all day, uneven terrain (eg, cobbles)



The Basics

Climate – The weather in Sicily at this time of year should be warm and pleasant, with temperatures higher than in the UK. But there is always the chance of the odd shower, so our best advice is to come prepared.



Time – GMT +2 hours (Summer time Apr-Oct);
GMT + 1 (Standard time Nov-Mar)

Language – Italian

Religion – predominantly Roman Catholic

National holidays – New Year's Day (01 Jan); Epiphany (06 Jan); Easter Monday; Liberation Day (25 Apr); Labour Day (01 May); Republic Day (02 Jun); Assumption of Mary (15 Aug); All Saints' Day (01 Nov); Immaculate Conception (08 Dec); Christmas Day (25 Dec); St Stephens Day (26 Dec).

Currency – Euro. €1 = 100 cents. Notes are in denominations of €500, 200, 100, 50, 20, 10 and 5. Coins are in denominations of €2 and 1, and 50, 20, 10, 5, 2 and 1 cents.

Banks – Cashpoints compatible with international banking networks are located in all towns and cities, as well as airports, major train stations and other spots. They usually offer an attractive exchange rate. Banks that still exchange foreign currencies into local money will always charge a transaction fee, so withdrawing money from an ATM usually represents the best means of obtaining euros.

Credit cards – American Express, Diners Club, MasterCard and Visa are widely accepted across the country. If you're eating at a restaurant, check prior to the meal that your card will be an acceptable form of payment. Even in cities, it's advisable to

carry a supply of cash with you at all times. Varying amounts of commission can be charged.

Electricity – 220 volt, two-pin continental plug.

Drinking water – Tap water is safe to drink. (You will find plenty of bottled water for sale too).

Shops – Department stores and supermarkets are open Mon-Sat 0830-1930. Most small shops close between 1230 and 1600. Please note that most shops close on Sundays.

Although very common in tourist towns in Italy, please note that street vendors selling all kinds of designer knockoffs are illegal and could land you with a hefty fine. Care should also be taken when buying antiques since Italy is renowned for skilled imitators.

Clothes & Shoes – You may like to bring a warm sweater for cool evenings. Light rain wear for the occasional storm and good grip/flat walking shoes are recommended.

Camera – Bring plenty of memory cards/film and any spare camera batteries as these are not always available. Please check with your guide before photographing people.

Bath plugs – The hotel has plugs for basins, but it is useful to carry a 'universal' one with you.

Telephones/mobiles – The guarantee of free mobile phone roaming throughout the EU, Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway has ended. Check with your phone operator to find out about any roaming charges that might be applied after 1st January 2021. A new law means that you are protected from getting mobile data charges above £45 without you knowing. Once you reach £45, you need to opt in to spend more so that you can continue using the internet while you are abroad. Your phone operator will tell how you can do this.

Tipping – To keep our tours affordable, we do not increase the tour price by adding in tips. However, in the tourism industry, there is a certain level of expectation that when receiving a good service, one awards with a tip. Tour Managers, Representatives, Guides and Drivers appreciate a tip at the end of their involvement with the tour, but this is entirely at your discretion. We believe in allowing you to tip according to your level of satisfaction with their services, but for your guidance about £2-3 per person per day for the tour manager is the norm.



Health

Doctor/Dentist/Chemist

Please talk to your tour manager if you are feeling unwell and they will organise for you to see a doctor.

Keep receipts for insurance claims.



Hospital

Your tour manager/hotel reception will arrange hospital transport.

Keep receipts for insurance claims.

General Health Advice

We suggest you take a good supply of your own individual medicines with you and always keep some in your hand luggage in case you get delayed, or your luggage goes astray. General-purpose supplies for bites, stings, or scratches, and your usual medication for headaches, or stomach upsets are always recommended. Oral re-hydration sachets are excellent for topping up salt and glucose levels.

Visit the NHS Fit For Travel website for more generally information specific to the country you are visiting – www.fitfortravel.nhs.uk

Sun Protection

Always ensure you take sufficient sun protection and moisturiser. A sun hat and sunglasses are also advisable.

Mosquitos

Like most Mediterranean islands, you might get a few mosquitos about in the evenings, so it is worth taking some repellent.

Inoculations

You should check with your own doctor and take their advice as to which inoculations are required

for the country you are visiting, as only they know your medical history and recommendations are liable to change at short notice.



Insurance

We strongly recommend that you take out an appropriate travel insurance policy when you travel abroad.

To be covered under your Travel Insurance Policy, if you become ill, it is essential that you contact a local doctor and telephone the emergency number of your insurance company. You will **NOT** be covered for any claim unless this procedure is carried out. Your insurance company will then decide on the best course of medical attention.

Global Health Insurance Card (GHIC)

Before you travel, make sure you've got a valid European Health Insurance Card (EHIC) or UK Global Health Insurance Card (GHIC) or travel insurance with health cover.

You may not have access to free emergency medical treatment and could be charged for your healthcare if you do not have an EHIC or GHIC when visiting an EU country, or travel insurance with full healthcare cover when visiting Switzerland, Norway, Iceland or Liechtenstein. If you have an EHIC it will still be valid while it remains in date. Your European Health Insurance Card (EHIC) or Global Health Insurance Card (GHIC) will be valid if you are travelling to an EU country.

For further information about the GHIC please visit:

<https://www.nhs.uk/using-the-nhs/healthcare-abroad/apply-for-a-free-uk-global-health-insurance-card-ghic/>



Emergencies

Should an emergency arise, please call our offices on:

00 44 20 7251 0045

Outside office hours (Mon-Fri 0900 - 1700), telephone our emergency staff on:

00 44 7841 023807 or 00 44 7831 133079

PLEASE USE THESE NUMBERS ONLY IN THE EVENT OF A GENUINE EMERGENCY.

If you find that you are in need of consular assistance during your holiday:

British Consulate Rome

Via XX Settembre 80/a

00187 Rome

Italy

Email: italy.consulate@fco.gov.uk

Tel: +39 06 4220 2431

Fax: +39 06 4220 2334

Open Mon-Fri 0900-1700.

Outside these hours, emergency consular assistance is available on +44 (0) 207 008 1500.

Travel Editions

3 Young's Buildings, London EC1V 9DB

Tel: 02072510045

Email: tours@traveleditions.co.uk www.traveleditions.co.uk

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