



Tour Information



The Normans in 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:

http://www.conslondra.esteri.it/Consolato_Londra

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 Palermo, transfer to hotel for a five-night stay.

Special Requests

If you haven't already, please notify Travel Editions of any special requests as soon as possible to allow sufficient time to make the necessary arrangements.

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 and drink into EU countries

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



Accommodation

Mercure Hotel, Palermo

The four-star Mercure Palermo Centro is ideally located in the heart of Palermo, perfect for exploring this atmospheric city. The hotel's lobby bar offers an area to relax and unwind with a drink after a long day sightseeing. Free wi-fi is available in the public areas of the hotel. Rooms are modern and comfortable with private bathroom facilities, air conditioning, TV, telephone, and hairdryer.

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

<http://www.accorhotels.com/gb/hotel-5932-mercure-palermo-centro/index.shtml>



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

Dinner – Two dinners with wine at a local restaurant

Lunch – two lunches at a local restaurant



Destination

After decades of Mafia domination, Sicily's chief city is re-emerging as one of Europe's great capitals. This dazzling city presents intriguing contrasts, from elegant, middle-class shopping quarters to the ancient and enchanting old city, divided by winding alleys lined with noisy outdoor markets. Its incredible mixture of cultures, architectural styles and culinary flavours is now infused with an optimism that is expressing itself in a frenzy of restoration, nightlife and cultural creativity.

Details of places of interest included in your tour:

Chiesa di Santa Maria dell'Amiraglio

Domed Norman-era church with ornate baroque modelling known for its landmark Byzantine mosaics. Its official name is Santa Maria dell'Amiraglio but it is better known as La Martorana. The church was founded in 1143 by George of Antioch, the admiral of the Norman King Roger. Dedicated to the Virgin Mary, it became known as Santa Maria dell'Amiraglio, "St. Mary of the Admiral." The church's more common name comes from Eloisa Martorana, who founded a nearby Benedictine convent in 1194. The church has seen its share of history over the years: it was in La Martorana that Sicily's noblemen convened to offer the crown to Peter of Aragon. The facade and interior were altered considerably in 1588, during the baroque period, but thankfully the glorious mosaics survive intact and on full display.

Chiesa Capitolare di San Cataldo

This 12th-century church in Arab-Norman style is one of Palermo's most striking buildings. With its dusky-pink bijoux domes, solid square shape, blind arcading and delicate tracery, it illustrates perfectly the synthesis of Arab and Norman architectural styles. The interior, while more austere, is still beautiful, with its inlaid floor and lovely stone-and-brickwork in the arches and domes. The building was founded in the 1150s by Maio of Bari (William I's emir of emirs, or chancellor), but Maio's murder in 1160 meant it was never finished – hence the lack of additional adornment within.

Palazzo dei Normanni

On a plateau above the incessant traffic and hubbub of the modern city, the Norman Palace, Palermo's stronghold, rises skyward. This piece of

architecture offers a taste of the rich variety of art, the simplicity and the poised style of the Norman Sicilian kings' court. The fortress was rebuilt by the Arabs in the Ninth Century and was known by the Arabic name, Càsaro (which now refers to an area of Palermo). An ancient Punic-Roman stronghold on the site became foundations for the new castle. The Normans, under Roger II embellished it, rendering the then four towered castle the royal mansion. At the heart of this splendid residence, is the Aula Regia, or Royal Hall, reserved for hearings and banquets.

Castello della Zisa

Castello della Zisa is one of the only remaining monuments to the decadence of Moorish Palermo. With muqarnas vaults, latticework windows, fountains and even a wind chamber to protect the emir's family from the scirocco (the hot African wind), the villa deserves its name which comes from the Arabic al aziz, meaning 'magnificent'. Today it houses a museum of Arabic crafts, the main features of which are some superbly crafted screens and a gorgeous 12th-century bronze basin.

Duomo, Cefalu

Begun in 1131 by the Norman king Roger II and not completed until 1240, the Duomo of Cefalù was intended as the principal religious seat in Sicily. Though it failed to fulfill this function, it is still a magnificent building. The Duomo's splendid Norman-Byzantine mosaics (1148), which feature a huge image of Christ Pantocrator in the apse, are remarkable. Since this was a Norman church, Christ is depicted as a blond; but his nose and mouth look Greek, his brows and beard black like a Saracen's.

Caronia, Norman Castle

This fortress is one of the most remarkable examples of Norman architecture in Sicily. The present castle was built in the years when Roger I (1031-1101) and Roger II (1095-1154) ruled. The building, placed in the walls of the fortified complex, was probably used by the court as a summer residence, and equipped with all amenities.

Abbey of San Filippo di Fragala

San Filippo di Fragalà is one of the first Basilian-Norman centres, which has undergone considerable

transformations over time. The Abbey was founded in 1090 by Queen Adelaide, the wife of Roger I, Count of Sicily.

Duomo di Monreale

Famed for its glorious golden mosaics, Monreale Cathedral is perhaps the finest Norman building in Sicily. It was built in the 12th century as part of a grand royal complex a few miles outside of Palermo. Monreale Cathedral was built from 1174 to 1185. It was commissioned by William II (1154-89), the Norman ruler of Sicily, who wished to demonstrate the magnificence of his kingdom and outdo the splendid Palatine Chapel built by his grandfather, Roger II. The project employed both Sicilian and Byzantine craftsmen, resulting in a magnificent fusion of eastern and western influences.

Oratory SS. Rosario Santa Cita

The Compagnia del SS. Rosario in S. Cita was founded in 1570 by Father Maiano Lo Vecchio to take part in the annual processions in honour of the Madonna of the Rosary. The building of the present Oratory was probably finished around 1680, but Garstang suggests that building must have been protracted over most the seventeenth century. Serpotta started working on the stuccoes in 1685. In 1707-08 Serpotta was paid for 'constatura di stucco', which is believed to mean restoration, repair or the last touches given to a decoration. In 1707 Michele Rosciano was paid for having gilded the devices of the allegorical figures.

Oratory SS. Rosario San Domenico

The company of the SS. Rosario in San Domenico was founded in 1568 and the oratory built in the rooms adjacent to the apse of the Church of San Domenico around 1574. An austere late-eighteenth-century classical facade leads to the anti-oratory, a large passage hall that leads into the rectangular oratorial hall with quadrangular domed presbytery and checkered majolica floor. In this oratory, painting and sculpture, executed by Giacomo Serpotta, come together in harmonious balance, determining a perfect integration of figurative languages in their iconographic and aesthetic function.

Cattedrale di Palermo

The Duomo (Cathedral) of Palermo, Sicily, is an impressive 12th-century cathedral encompassing a wide variety of architectural styles. In 1184, during Sicily's Norman period, Archbishop of Palermo Gualtiero Offamiglio founded the cathedral on the site of a Muslim Mosque, which had itself been built over an early Christian basilica. The archbishop's main aim was to surpass the glory of the magnificent cathedral of nearby Monreale, and the Palermo Duomo became an architectural battleground for "The Battle of the Two Cathedrals." For most visitors, Monreale Duomo remains the winner, but Palermo's cathedral is still well worth a visit.

Your Guide

Dr Peter Higginson will be your expert guide for the duration of this tour. He specialises in the art and culture of early modern Europe, and the modern period. He has taught numerous university courses abroad and has wide experience in leading cultural tours to different parts of the UK and Europe including Sicily, Rome, Venice, Florence, Paris and further afield to Cuba.

Peter will give the following lectures during the tour:

'The Art of Mosaics'

'Sicily, The other Norman Conquest'

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 (e.g. 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. Those banks that still exchange foreign currencies into local money will always charge a transaction fee, so withdrawing money from an ATM usually represents the most logical 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. (Although you'll 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 – You should be able to use your mobile phone in Italy, depending on your operator and contract. 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 you might get from 1 January 2021. A new law means that you're 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're 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 does award 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. We would like to reiterate that tipping is an entirely optional payment and this information is given purely to answer any questions you may have about it.



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

To be covered under your Travel Insurance Policy, if you become ill, it is essential that you contact a local doctor and also 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 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're travelling to an EU country.

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

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 (Mon-Fri 0900-1700)

Outside office hours, please 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.

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