


INTRODUCING SICILY

**JUST WHEN YOU THINK YOU'VE
LEARNED EVERYTHING THERE IS
TO KNOW ABOUT ITALY, ALONG
COMES SICILY AND BLOWS AWAY
YOUR CERTAINITIES.**



 This truly is an island of contradictions. The land is arid, yet everywhere you go food markets showcase lush, locally grown fruits, freshly gathered nuts, sun-ripened vegetables and pungent mountain cheeses. The surrounding seas have been depleted over the centuries, but are still able to meet the insatiable local appetite for fresh seafood. Its people, subjected to wave upon wave of foreign invasion over the centuries, are still quick to offer a warm welcome to visitors.

And the contradictions don't stop there. Though Sicily's history is fantastically rich, its modern disrepair is infamous – nearly as infamous, in fact, as its enslavement to the Mafia. Like it or not (and most Sicilians are firmly in the latter camp), these realities throw a shadow over the island as foreboding as the smoke issuing from its famously active volcanoes. The miracle is that even they cannot take the lustre off this Mediterranean jewel – its Arab-influenced culture and cuisine, ancient archaeological sites, flamboyant baroque cities and stunning natural landscapes make sure of that.

TOP The postcard-perfect seafront of Cefalù (p110)
BOTTOM LEFT Palermo's Arab Norman-style cathedral (p45)
BOTTOM RIGHT The evocative salt pans and windmills of Saline di Trapani, on the road to Marsala (p86)

CHRISTIAN MOYER



CEFALÙ



OLIVER CHIRIACI

PALERMO



OLIVER CERBONI



SALINE DI TRAPANI



SYRACUSE



CACCAMO



JOHN LEE III
BETHUNE CAMMACHEL



SYRACUSE



DALLAS STIMBLEY

SALINA

TOP LEFT Syracuse's idyllic harbour (p200) **TOP RIGHT** The imposing Duomo in Ortigia, Syracuse (p202) **BOTTOM LEFT** The striking castle and cathedral atop the ancient town of Caccamo (p114) **BOTTOM CENTRE** Sunset aperitivi on Salina, Aeolian Islands (p147) **BOTTOM RIGHT** Spectacular views from Chiesa di San Giovanni in Erice (p79)

DOUG MONROE



ERICE

GETTING STARTED

SICILY

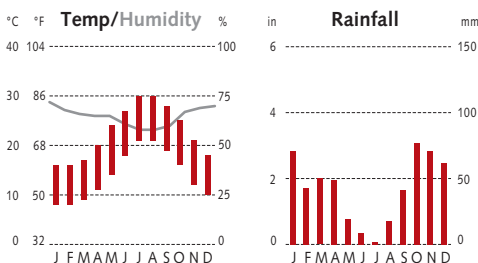
WHAT'S NEW?

- ★ Palermo's super-stylish Museum of Contemporary Art (p46)
- ★ A totally refurbished exhibition space at Mozia's Whitaker Museum (p86)
- ★ The opening of two new craters on the summit of Stromboli (p156)
- ★ Exciting archaeological finds at the ancient Greek city of Morgantina (p243)
- ★ An arty *agriturismo* (farm stay) in Butera (p319)



RUSSELL MOUNTFORD

CLIMATE: PALERMO

Average
Max/Min

PRICE GUIDE

	BUDGET	MIDRANGE	TOP END
SLEEPING	<€80	€80-200	>€200
EATING	<€20	€20-40	>€40
GLASS OF WINE	€2	€3	€4

BETHUNE CARINCIARIE



DIANA MANNFIELD

TOP The cloister at Cattedrale di Monreale, Monreale (p60) **BOTTOM LEFT** Ancient Greek ruins in Selinunte (p94) **BOTTOM RIGHT** A charming Ragusa street (p222) **FAR RIGHT** Views from Lipari to Vulcano (p143)

ACCOMMODATION

The style of accommodation you choose will often be dictated by the destination. In Palermo and the Aeolians, boutique options are gaining popularity, offering stylish decor and high levels of service. In other cities and towns, family-run *pensioni* (guesthouses), B&Bs and apartments reign supreme. Most options are in the midrange category. In rural areas, *agriturismi* (working farms or country houses offering rooms) are beginning to appear, bringing much-needed employment to local communities and allowing visitors to explore the countryside slowly and in great style. For more information, see p302.

MAIN POINTS OF ENTRY

FALCONE-BORSELLINO AIRPORT (PMO; ☎ 091 702 01 11; www.gesap.it) Aka Palermo airport or Punta Raisi. Flights from Tunisia, Spain, Pantelleria and other Italian cities.

FONTANAROSSA AIRPORT (CTA; ☎ 095 723 91 11; www.aeroporto.catania.it) Located in Catania, this is Sicily's major hub for both international and domestic flights.

VINCENZO FLORIO AIRPORT (TPS; ☎ 0923 84 25 02; www.airgest.it) Located in Trapani and commonly referred to as Birgi airport. Flights from Pantelleria and other Italian and European cities.

THINGS TO TAKE

- ★ Picnic-friendly pocket knife with corkscrew
- ★ Sunglasses, a hat and something to cover shoulders when visiting churches
- ★ Sturdy walking shoes to combat cobbles and country paths
- ★ A detailed driving map
- ★ Mosquito repellent (they can be a pest in summer)



WAYNE MALTON

WEBLINKS

BEST OF SICILY (www.bestofsicily.com) Comprehensive coverage of the island.

PRESS SICILIA (www.press.sicilia.it, in Italian) Useful database of press articles.

SICILIA ONLINE (www.siciliaonline.it, in Italian) Info about events and tourism.

SICILY FOR TOURISTS (www.regione.sicilia.it/turismo) Sicily's official online tourism portal.

SICILY WEB (<http://sicilyweb.it>) Information about history and culture.

FESTIVALS & EVENTS

SICILY


WAVNE MALTON

JANUARY/FEBRUARY

CARNEVALE

During the week before Ash Wednesday, many towns stage carnivals. The most flamboyant festivities are in Sciacca (www.carnevaldisciacca.it, in Italian) and Acireale (www.carnevaleacireale.com).

FESTA DI SANT'AGATA

CATANIA

One million Catanians follow a silver reliquary of St Agata through the city's main streets during this festival, which takes place from 3 to 5 February and is accompanied by a spectacular fireworks display (<http://mediaonline.it/catania/agata.htm>; see p181).

SAGRA DEL MANDORLO IN FIORE

AGRIGENTO

Open-air performances of drama and music are held among the almond blossoms in the Valley of the Temples. The event takes place on the first Sunday in February (www.mandorloinfiore.net, in Italian).

MARCH/APRIL

PASQUA (EASTER)

Holy Week in Sicily is marked by solemn, slow-moving processions and passion plays. The most famous are in Trapani, Enna, Lipari and Erice.

MAY/JUNE

INFIORATA

NOTO

To celebrate the arrival of spring, Noto decorates its streets with colourful floral designs. Held around the third Sunday in May (www.infiolata.info).

LA MATTANZA

FAVIGNANA

Tourists flock to this Egadi island between 20 May and 10 June to witness its ritual slaughter of bluefin tuna (see p84).

TAORMINA FILM FEST

Hollywood big shots arrive in Taormina in mid-June for six days of film screenings and press conferences at the Teatro Greco (www.taorminafilmfest.it).

JULY/AUGUST

FESTINO DI SANTA ROSALIA

PALERMO

The capital celebrates its patron saint from 10 to 15 July with music, dancing and a parade of relics.

TAORMINA ARTE

Opera, dance and theatre performances are staged at the Teatro Greco during July and August (www.taormina-arte.com, in Italian).

PALIO DEI NORMANNI

PIAZZA ARMERINA

This medieval pageant, held between 13 and 14 August, commemorates Count Roger's taking of the town from the Moors in 1087 (p242).

SEPTEMBER

FESTIVAL INTERNAZIONALE DEL CUSCUS

SAN VITO LO CAPO

The island's heritage is showcased alongside one of its favourite dishes in this six-day festival (p72; www.couscousfest.it).

DECEMBER

FESTA DI SANTA LUCIA

SYRACUSE

The city's patron saint is commemorated with events such as a procession from the cathedral to Piazza Santa Lucia and fireworks. Held between 13 and 20 December.

NATALE

During the weeks preceding Christmas, many churches set up cribs or Nativity scenes known as *presepi*; these are particularly notable in Caltagirone and Erice.



CULTURE

SICILY

FILMS

KAOS (Paolo & Vittorio Taviani, 1984) Visually arresting film based on four stories by Luigi Pirandello.

LA TERRA TREMA (Luchino Visconti, 1948) Masterful adaptation of Giovanni Verga's 1881 novel *I Malavoglia*.

THE GODFATHER TRILOGY (Francis Ford Coppola, 1972–90) Saga of an American Mafia family that achieved box-office results nearly as big as those of *Ben Hur*.

CINEMA PARADISO (Giuseppe Tornatore, 1988) See it and weep (lots).

STROMBOLI (Roberto Rossellini, 1950) Neorealist drama mainly remembered for the affair between its director and leading lady.



RUSSELL MOUNTFORD

THE LEOPARD

Written by Giuseppe Tomasi di Lampedusa and published posthumously in 1958, *Il Gattopardo* (The Leopard) is generally considered to be the greatest Sicilian novel ever written. The story of an ageing aristocrat grappling with the political and sociological changes that are being brought to the island by the Risorgimento, it is set in an era and milieu that Lampedusa, the last of a long line of minor princes in Sicily, evokes magnificently. Faced with choosing between tradition and modernity, the book's central character takes the only honourable path (for him) and opts for tradition, thus signing the warrant for his family's loss of wealth, power and influence. Unusually, the 1963 cinematic version made by director Luchino Visconti – himself a member of the Italian aristocracy – is as critically acclaimed as the original. For more info, see p287 and p289.



RICCARDO LOMBARDI/CORBIS/GETTY IMAGES/SULALAMY

TOP Palermo's grand Teatro Massimo (p53) **BOTTOM** Exhibits at Museo Archeologico Regionale in Palermo (p47) **RIGHT** *Passeggiata* in Taormina (p168) **FAR RIGHT** Teatro Greco during Taormina's Film Fest (p169)

TOP MUSEUMS

MUSEO ARCHEOLOGICO REGIONALE, PALERMO The cream of Sicily's archaeological artefacts under one roof (p47).

MUSEO ARCHEOLOGICO, AGRIGENTO Amazing artefacts from Agrigento and Akragas (p257).

MUSEO ARCHEOLOGICO EOLIANO, LIPARI One of Europe's best collections of prehistoric and classical-era artefacts (p136).

MUSEO ARCHEOLOGICO PAOLO ORSI, SYRACUSE Sicily's largest archaeological collection (p206).



DON'T MISS EXPERIENCES

- ★ Literary pilgrimages – check out Pirandello's birthplace (p261), Camilleri's *Inspector Montalbano* settings (p198 and p217) and di Lampedusa's haunts (p52)
- ★ *Passeggiata* – join the locals on their evening promenade in Lipari (p136)
- ★ Hilltop towns – hop from one mountain eyrie to the next in the southeast (p212) and in the Madonie mountains (p120)
- ★ *Agriturismo* – stay in a rural getaway (p302)
- ★ Open-air concerts – spend summer nights watching film, music and theatre under the stars in Taormina (p172) and Palermo (p53)
- ★ Aperitivo – people-watch from a cafe (p202)
- ★ Film sets – see where *The Godfather* trilogy, *Cinema Paradiso* and other classic films were shot (p290)

BOOKS

- I MALAVOGLIA** (Giovanni Verga, 1881) An Italian literary masterpiece.
- MIDNIGHT IN SICILY** (Peter Robb, 1996) Disturbing but fascinating portrait of postwar Sicily.
- ON PERSEPHONE'S ISLAND** (Mary Taylor Simeti, 1986) Insightful personal memoir.
- THE DAY OF THE OWL** (Leonardo Sciascia, 1961) Social and political commentary disguised as crime fiction.
- THE SILENT DUCHESS** (Dacia Maraini, 1990) Feminist-flavoured historical novel set in 18th-century Palermo.

CULTURE

SICILY



JOHN ELK III

LIVE MUSIC

ESTATE CATANESE

(www.comune.catania.it/eventi/estate-catane-se, in Italian) Summer program of performances in Catania.

WOMAD SICILY

(www.womad.org/festivals/sicily) September sees world music showcased in Palermo.

GIUSEPPE SINOPOLI

FESTIVAL (www.sinopoli-festival.it) Classical music in Taormina's Teatro Greco and other venues in October.

SICILY JAZZ AND MORE

(www.brassgroup.com) Performers take the stage in Catania in November.

TOP ART GALLERIES

GALLERIA REGIONALE DELLA SICILIANA, PALERMO Home to works dating from the Middle Ages to the 18th century (p50).

GALLERIA D'ARTE MODERNA, PALERMO Sicilian paintings and sculptures from the 19th and 20th centuries (p51).

MUSEO REGIONALE D'ARTE MEDIO-EVALE E MODERNA Impressive collection of sculptures, paintings and applied arts (p205).

MUSEO REGIONALE, MESSINA Paintings by Caravaggio and home-town boy Antonello da Messina (p166).

MUSEO D'ARTE CONTEMPORANEA DELLA SICILIA (RISO), PALERMO A new contemporary art museum hosting temporary exhibitions (p46).

ANTONELLO DA MESSINA

The first – some would say only – great Sicilian painter was Antonello da Messina (1430–79). In *The Lives of the Artists* (1550), Vasari described da Messina as 'a man well skilled in his art' and claimed that he was the first Italian painter to use oil paint, a technique he had learned in Flanders. Only four of his luminous paintings are in Sicily: *Annunziata* (The Virgin Annunciate, 1474–77) in Palermo (p50); *Ritratto di un uomo ignoto* (Portrait of an Unknown Man, 1465) in Cefalù (p112); *L'Annunciazione* (Annunciation, 1474) in Syracuse (p205); and *San Gregorio* (St Gregory, 1473) in Messina (p166). For more on Sicilian art, see p97.

TOP Magnificent mosaics adorn Palazzo dei Normanni's Cappella Palatina in Palermo (p43) **RIGHT** Ancient treasures on display at Museo Archeologico Regionale in Palermo (p47)

SICILIAN BAROQUE

After being devastated by an earthquake in 1693, Sicily was presented with an opportunity to redesign many of its cities and experiment with a new architectural style that was taking Europe by storm: the baroque. A backlash against the pared-down classical aesthetic of the Renaissance, this new style was dramatic, curvaceous and downright sexy – a perfect match for Sicily’s unorthodox and exuberant character. Aristocrats in towns such as Noto, Modica, Ragusa, Catania and Syracuse rushed to build baroque palazzi (palaces), many decorated with the grotesque masks and putti that had long been a hallmark of the island’s architecture. Even the church got into it, commissioning ostentatious churches and oratories aplenty. For more on Sicilian architecture, see p97.

DOS & DON'TS

- ★ Avoid discussing the *Lega Nord* (Northern League) or the Mafia, as these can be touchy subjects.
- ★ Take *dolcetti* (sweet biscuits or cakes) if you are invited into a local home.
- ★ Cover up when visiting a church – singlets, shorts, miniskirts and plunging necklines are forbidden.
- ★ Never intrude on a mass or service in a church.
- ★ Take official opening hours and timetables with a grain of salt – Sicilians are notoriously unpunctual.



FOOD & DRINK

SICILY

STREET FOOD

ARANCINE Rice balls stuffed with meat or cheese, coated with breadcrumbs and fried.

CALZONE A pocket of pizza-like dough baked with ham, cheese or other stuffings.

CROCCHÉ Fried potato dumplings made with cheese, parsley and eggs.

PANE CON LA MILZA A bread roll (bun) filled with calf's spleen, *caciocavallo* cheese, a drizzle of hot lard and a squeeze of lemon juice.

PANELLE Fried chickpea-flour fritters often served in a roll.

SFINCIONE A local form of pizza made with tomatoes, onions and (sometimes) anchovies.

STIGGHIOLA Seasoned and barbecued lamb or kid intestines served on a skewer.



RUSSELL MOUNTFORD

SICILIAN SWEET TREATS

Most traditional Sicilian dishes fall into the category of *cucina povera* (cooking of the poor), featuring cheap and plentiful ingredients such as pulses, vegetables and bread. Supplemented by fish (locally caught and still relatively inexpensive), this diet is still widely embraced today, but differs in one major respect to that of previous generations – the inclusion of decadent desserts. The two most beloved of these are *cassata siciliana* (a mix of ricotta, sugar, candied fruit and chocolate that is flavoured with vanilla and maraschino liqueur, encased by sponge cake and topped with green icing) and *cannoli* (crisp tubes of fried pastry dough filled with creamy ricotta and candied fruit and decorated with a maraschino cherry and grated chocolate). You'll find both on restaurant menus throughout the island. To discover more about these and other sweet treats, see p297.



ERIKHE GAMBACIATEL

TOP Fresh delights at Mercato del Capo, Palermo (p57) **BOTTOM** Barrels of dessert wine in Marsala (p87)
RIGHT Dusk dining in Piazza del Duomo, Cefalù (p110) **FAR RIGHT** Fish couscous, a speciality in Trapani (p76)

TOP RESTAURANTS

PICCOLO NAPOLI, PALERMO A traditional trattoria serving Palermo's best seafood (p57).

LA BETTOLA, MAZARA DEL VALLO Refined seafood dishes that are as fresh as they are delectable (p93).

RISTORANTE LA MADIA, LICATA Exciting modern Sicilian cuisine that showcases the best regional produce (p268).

RISTORANTE DUOMO, RAGUSA Faultlessly cooked and presented Sicilian classics (p226).



STEPHEN SAWS



OLIVER GARDNER

DON'T MISS EXPERIENCES

- ★ Dessert wines – skip straight to the dessert course so that you can order a glass of Marsala, Moscato or Malvasia
- ★ Honey tasting on Etna – sample mountain honey made from orange blossom, chestnuts and lemons (p192)
- ★ *Brioche con gelato* – where else is it acceptable to eat an ice-cream sandwich for breakfast?
- ★ *Seltz* – get a fizzy lift from a traditional Catanese soft drink (p183)
- ★ Porcini mushrooms – head to the Madonie mountains to feast on freshly gathered fruits of the forest (p115)
- ★ *Cuscus trapanese* – Trapani's North African-influenced fish dish is so good it has its own festival (p72)

LOOK OUT FOR

INTERDONATO LEMONS

Natural hybrid of lemon and citron with a slightly bitter taste.

ALMONDS FROM NOTO

Intense and aromatic nuts from ancient trees.

PISTACHIOS FROM

BRONTE Emerald-green nuts with an unctuous texture and intense flavour.

BLACK PORK FROM THE NEBRODI MOUNTAINS

Can be enjoyed in succulent ham, sausages and bacon.

CAPERS FROM SALINA

Known for their firmness, perfume and uniform size.

FOOD & DRINK

SICILY



DANNY CUBRANAKES/SHUTTERSTOCK

FOOD GUIDES

OSTERIE D'ITALIA (Slow Food Editore; in Italian) Lists eateries that use regional products and are influenced by local food traditions.

ALBERGHI & RISTORANTI ITALIA (Michelin) The one that gets all the press.

RISTORANTI D'ITALIA (Gambero Rosso; in Italian) Italy's version of the Michelin guide.

BAR D'ITALIA (Gambero Rosso; in Italian) Rates bars and cafes according to their atmosphere and quality of coffee.

COFFEE, SICILIAN STYLE

Sicilians take their coffee seriously, and order it in the following ways.

ESPRESSO A tiny cup of very strong black coffee; usually called a *caffè* or *caffè normale*.

CAFFÈ MACCHIATO An espresso with a dash of milk.

CAPPUCCINO Espresso topped with hot foaming milk; only drunk at breakfast or in the mid-morning.

CAFFÈ LATTE Coffee with milk that is steamed but not frothed; an extremely milky version is called a *latte macchiato* (stained milk). Again, only drunk in the morning.

CAFFÈ FREDDO The local version of an iced coffee.

CERASUOLO DI VITTORIA

The prestigious appellation DOCG (*Denominazione di Origine Controllata e Garantita*) is awarded to Italian wines that meet strict requirements regarding production area, grape varieties, viticultural and bottling techniques and quality. There are currently around 40 DOCGs in Italy, but only one from Sicily: Cerasuolo di Vittoria. Produced in Caltanissetta, Catania and Ragusa, this wine is a medium-bodied blend of plummy Nero d'Avola and aromatic Frappato grapes and is equally at home accompanying fish, meat or cheese. Among the best-known producers are COS, Planeta, Valle dell'Acate, Terre di Giurfo, Gulfi and Fuedo di Santa Tresa. For more on Sicilian wine, see p298.

TOP Sicily is famous for its delicious *cannoli* (p297) **RIGHT** La Pescheria, Catania's bustling fish market (p177)

THE ARK OF TASTE

The Ark of Taste is an international catalogue of endangered food products drawn up by the Slow Food Foundation for Biodiversity. It aims to protect indigenous edibles threatened with extinction by industrialisation, globalisation, hygiene laws and environmental dangers, and actively encourages their cultivation for consumption. Foods included in the list must be culturally or historically linked to a specific region, locality, ethnicity or traditional production practice, and must also be rare. There are 47 Sicilian foods on the list, ranging from the Ustica lentil to Trapani artisan sea salt and the Monreale white plum. For a full list, go to www.fondazione Slow Food.com/eng/arca/lista.lasso. For more on Slow Food, see p293.

SICILIAN FAVOURITES

- ★ *Pasta alla Norma* – pasta with tomato, eggplant, basil and salty ricotta cheese
- ★ *Caponata* – cooked vegetable salad made with tomatoes, eggplant, celery, capers, olives and onions
- ★ *Frutta di Martorana* – marzipan pastries coloured and shaped to resemble real fruit; also called *pasta reale*
- ★ *Pasta con le sarde* – pasta with sardines, fennel, pine nuts and raisins
- ★ *Involcini di pesce spada* – swordfish rolls stuffed with breadcrumbs, currants and pine nuts



OUTDOORS

SICILY

TOP TREKS

PIANO BATTAGLIA Walk among the wildflowers in the Parco Naturale Regionale delle Madonie (p119).

MT ETNA Hike the picturesque northern slopes of the famous volcano (p192).

VULCANO Climb the short but steep path to the steaming rim of an active volcano's crater (p143).

RISERVA NATURALE DELLO ZINGARO Hike the coastal path between Scopello and San Vito lo Capo (p71).

STROMBOLI Complete the demanding six-hour guided walk up to the summit (p155).

VALLE DELL'ANAPO Take a gentle walk through an unspoiled valley (p214).

RISERVA NATURALE TORRE SALSA Admire sweeping panoramic views of the surrounding mountains and coast (p261).



DANA MAYER/ELD

REGIONAL PARKS

There are no national parks in Sicily, but there are many protected natural landscapes. The largest and most significant of these are the Parco Naturale Regionale delle Madonie (p115), Parco Fluviale dell'Alcantara (p162), Parco Regionale dei Nebrodi (p122) and Parco dell'Etna (p189). Each offers the visitor a very different experience. In the Parco dell'Etna, for instance, you can taste home-grown wine and honey on the volcano's slopes as well as trekking to the crater; in the Parco Fluviale dell'Alcantara, you can swim, picnic, ride quad bikes, hike or canyon. The parks are large, and each deserve a few days of exploration; fortunately, all offer plenty of places to sleep and eat.

Sicily also has 79 regional nature reserves, six marine protected areas and one protected wetland. For information about visiting these protected natural landscapes, go to www.parks.it.



DANAS STREIBER

TOP Barren and brooding Mt Etna (p189) **BOTTOM** Bathers relax in Vulcano's muddy waters (p144) **RIGHT** A glorious cove in Riserva Naturale dello Zingaro (p71) **FAR RIGHT** Hikers approach Mt Etna's summit (p189)

TOP BEACHES

FORGIA VECCHIA, STROMBOLI Relax on this black volcanic beach (p157).

CAMPOBIANCO, LIPARI Slide down natural pumice chutes into crystalline azure waters (p139).

SAN VITO LO CAPO Join the sun-worshippers on this crescent-shaped sandy beach (p72).

SPIAGGIA DEI CONIGLI, LAMPEDUSA Visit one of the Mediterranean's finest beaches (p262).



ROBERTO GERONIMETTA



MICHAEL GARCIA

DON'T MISS EXPERIENCES

- ★ Diving and snorkelling – explore the underwater worlds of Lipari (p140), Ustica (p63) or Isola Bella (p171)
- ★ Volcano viewing – watch Stromboli's nocturnal fireworks from the summit or on a boat (p155)
- ★ Cycling – use peddle power to explore the Mt Etna area (p193)
- ★ Guided nature walks – join local naturalists on a walk around the Syracusan countryside (p208) or on the slopes of Etna (p193)
- ★ Mud baths – wallow in the mud at Vulcano (p144) or Eraclea Minoa (p262)
- ★ Sailing trips – explore the coastlines and hidden coves of Lipari, Alicudi and Filicudi by boat (p128)

DRIVING TOURS

Tour striking landscapes, sampling great regional food and wine as you go.

- ★ **THE MONTI MADONIE**
Admire medieval villages and majestic mountain scenery (p120).
- ★ **ETNA'S WESTERN FLANK** Pass Norman castles and pistachio groves (p190).
- ★ **BAROQUE TOWNS** Discover Unesco-listed hilltop towns (p212).
- ★ **ENNA TO ETNA** Traverse an undulating landscape of sun-baked hills (p232).

OUTDOORS

SICILY



URBAN ESCAPES

ORTO BOTANICO, PALERMO A tranquil botanical garden in the midst of the city's chaos (p53).

VILLA COMUNALE, TAORMINA Superb views, shady paths and botanical species galore (p171).

VILLA BELLINI, CATANIA This charming retreat in the centre of the city is named after the great composer (p177).

LATOMIA DEL PARADISO, SYRACUSE An ancient limestone quarry pitted with caves and full of orange and olive trees (p206).

MARINE RESERVES

Sicily has six *area marina protetta* (protected marine reserves).

ISOLE PELAGIE (www.isole-pelagie.it, in Italian) Includes the three islands of the Pelagic archipelago: Lampedusa, Lampione and Linosa.

ISOLE CICLOPI (www.isoleciclopi.it, in Italian) On the Riviera dei Ciclopi outside Catania.

CAPO GALLO (www.ampcapogallo-isola.org, in Italian) In the Tyrrhenian Sea.

ISOLA DI USTICA (www.ampustica.it, in Italian) Around the island of Ustica.

PLEMMIRIO (www.plemmirio.it) The waters off Syracuse.

ISOLE EGADI (www.ampisoleegadi.net, in Italian) Includes the islands of the Egadi archipelago: Favignana, Levanzo, Marittimo and Formica.

WORLD HERITAGE LANDSCAPE

The Aeolian Islands (*Isole Eolie*) is one of only two Italian natural landscapes included on the World Heritage list (the other is the Dolomites). Unesco's citation describes the Aeolians as providing an outstanding record of volcanic island building and destruction, and ongoing volcanic phenomena. It also notes that the islands have played a vitally important role in the education of volcanologists for more than 200 years.

It's not only volcanologists who are fascinated by these volcanic islands, though. Tourists from around the world flock here in summer to take advantage of the great hiking, swimming, snorkelling, diving and boating on offer. For more info, see p128.

TOP Stromboli's Sciara del Fuoco steams with fresh lava flow (p156) **RIGHT** Snorkelling in the azure shallows off Lido Burrone, Favignana, in the Egadi Islands (p83)

WHEN TO GO?

If you're keen to go hiking while you're in Sicily, the best time is spring, when the wildflowers are in bloom and the landscape retains the rich, green flush it has acquired over winter. Try to avoid the busy Easter week if possible.

If you're planning to walk in mountain areas, the most pleasant time to do so is during summer. Remember, though, that August is the month when most Italians take their holidays and the trails can get very busy.

All beach and underwater activity kicks off at Easter and goes until September. Try to go in June – in July and August the coastline and smaller islands are unpleasantly busy.

BIRD-WATCHING DESTINATIONS

- ★ Riserva Naturale dello Zingaro – has over 40 species, including the rare Bonelli eagle (p71)
- ★ Parco Regionale dei Nebrodi – the park is home to golden eagles, griffin vultures and falcons (p122)
- ★ Island of Mozia – this tiny island is a haven for many species (p86)
- ★ Riserva Naturale Oasi Faunistica di Vendicari – wetlands where flamingos, herons, spoonbills, ducks and collared pratincoles are found (p219)
- ★ Lingua – Salina's lagoon attracts huge numbers of migrating birds in April (p148)



FAMILY TRAVEL

SICILY



PETER HOBRELL/ANW

TOP ACTIVITIES

FOSSA DI VULCANO Follow the pongy path to the steaming crater of this volcano (p143).

CABLE CAR TO ERICE Take the kids on a steep ride to the hilltop town of Erice (p79).

GROTTA DEL BUE MARINO Visit Filicudi's spectacular sea cave by boat (p153).

DON'T MISS EXPERIENCES

★ Farm stays – enjoy animals, swimming pools and lots of space while staying in an *agriturismo* (p302)

★ *Passeggiata* – search out carousels, cafes and convivial company of every age

★ Gelato – kids love the local ice cream, especially for breakfast!

★ Puppet theatre – watch brave knights defeat evil monsters in a traditional puppet play in Palermo (p52) and Acireale (p186)

★ *Granita* – there's nothing more refreshing (and yummy) than a crushed-ice drink on a hot day

★ Castles – storm the ramparts of Norman castles across the island (p104)

TRAVEL WITH CHILDREN

Families are welcomed with open arms in Sicily. Restaurants, cafes and hotels are extremely family friendly, as are museums, galleries and archaeological parks. Admission to many cultural sites is free for under 10s or under 18s (particularly EU citizens). In restaurants, high chairs are usually available and it's perfectly acceptable to order a *mezza porzione* (half-serve) for little ones. On trains, the *offerte famiglia* allows a discount of 50% for children under 12 and 20% for other family members if you are travelling in a group of three to five people (see www.trenitalia.com for conditions). For tips on travelling with kids, grab a copy of Lonely Planet's *Travelling with Children*.

TOP Local boys play football in the alleyways of Palermo, which are great places to stroll (p40)

THE AUTHORS



VIRGINIA MAXWELL

Coordinating Author, Palermo, Western Sicily, Tyrrhenian Coast

While working as a publishing manager at Lonely Planet, Virginia decided that she'd be happier writing guidebooks rather than commissioning them. Since then, she's contributed to six of Lonely Planet's Italy titles, as well as to a host of magazines and websites. For this edition of *Sicily* she travelled across the island with her partner Peter and son Max, both of whom were supportive of her quest to find Sicily's best *cannolo*.



DUNCAN GARWOOD

Art & Architecture, Aeolian Islands, Ionian Coast, Syracuse & the Southeast, Central Sicily, Mediterranean Coast

Since moving to Italy more than 10 years ago, Duncan has travelled the length and breadth of the country numerous times, contributing to a raft of Lonely Planet Italy titles as well as several newspapers and magazines. This was his second research trip to Sicily, a region whose beauty, drama and complexity he finds endlessly fascinating. He currently lives in the Alban hills just outside Rome with his Italian wife and two bilingual kids.

LONELY PLANET AUTHORS

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ITINERARIES

ONLY THE BEST

TWO WEEKS // AROUND THE ISLAND // 968KM

Fly into Palermo, Trapani or Catania and pick up a hire car to begin your circumnavigation of the island. Your destinations should be the same regardless of where you start: Agrigento, the Val di Noto, Syracuse, the Aeolian Islands, Palermo and Marsala. From



Catania, for instance, you could head south to **Syracuse** (p200) and follow our driving tour of **baroque towns** (p212) such as Noto, Modica and Ragusa in the Unesco-listed Val di Noto, an enchanting area in the island's southeast. Continue west to explore the evocative temples at **Agrigento** (p254) and then follow the coastline to **Marsala** (p87). From there, take the autostrada to **Palermo** (p33), where you can explore the crumbling but magnificent streets and indulge in the city's inviting cafe culture before taking a ferry to the **Aeolian Islands** (p128) for some sun, swimming and volcano climbing.

WORLD HERITAGE SITES

SEVEN TO 10 DAYS // CATANIA TO AGRIGENTO // 502KM

The devastating earthquake of 1693 may have wrought havoc on the island, but it also led to the creation of some of its greatest treasures: the late-baroque towns of the Val di Noto. Start your exploration of these Unesco-listed urban landscapes in **Catania**



(p176) and then follow the trail to **Caltagirone** (p243), **Palazzolo Acreide** (p214), **Ragusa** (p223), **Modica** (p220), **Scicli** (p222) and **Noto** (p216). After this overdose of ostentation, the austere **Necropoli di Pantalica** (p214) outside Ferla and **Parco Archeologico della Neapolis** (p205) in Syracuse will provide the perfect antidote. The trail ends at the most magnificent archaeological site in Sicily: Agrigento's **Valley of the Temples** (p254), with its five Doric structures spectacularly perched on a ridge near the Mediterranean coast.

WILD ABOUT THE WEST

10 DAYS // PALERMO TO SELINUNTE // 197KM

Wend your way west from Palermo, heading along the A29 autostrada (motorway) to the splendidly sited temple and amphitheatre at **Segesta** (p78) and continuing on to the foodie mecca of **Trapani** (p73) to sample its unique Arabian-influenced cuisine.



From here, take the funicular to medieval **Erice** (p79) and visit the Phoenician site of **Mozia** (p86) before continuing along the Via del Sale (Salt Road) to elegant Marsala, where you should taste-test some of the town's famous sweet wine at **Cantine Florio** (p90). Continue south via the Arab-accented town of **Mazara del Vallo** (p91) and finish your trip at the ruins of the Greek city of **Selinunte** (p94) before taking the A29 back to Palermo or moving on to Agrigento.

VILLAS & VIEWS

ONE WEEK // CEFALÙ TO PIAZZA ARMERINA // 167KM

Kick off in postcard-perfect **Cefalù** (p110), where you can visit its splendid cathedral and climb to the ruins of a Norman citadel, before heading into the heart of the **Parco Naturale Regionale delle Madonie** (p115), a magnificent natural landscape dotted



with medieval hilltop towns and restaurants serving tasty regional cuisine. Follow our **driving tour** (p120) as far as **Petralia Sottana** (p118), and then head to the sun-scorched centre at **Enna** (p232) to admire the views from the heavily fortified walls of the **Castello di Lombardia** (p235). Your final destination will be the 4th-century **Villa Romana del Casale** (p238) near Piazza Armerina, a lavish Roman villa decorated with the finest Roman floor mosaics in existence.

ISLANDS & VOLCANOES

ONE WEEK TO 10 DAYS // CATANIA TO THE AEOLIANS // 221KM

Start in **Catania** (p176), a city built of lava. From here, make the ascent up Sicily's most famous sight, **Mt Etna** (p189), from whose lofty heights the Cyclops hurled his stones at the fleeing Odysseus – you can still see their jagged forms along the dramatic



Riviera dei Ciclopi (p186), a stretch of coastline where traditional fishing villages have been reinvented as summer resorts in recent years. Follow our **driving tour** (p190) of the volcano's western flank and then head to **Milazzo** (p125), from where you can take a ferry to **Lipari** (p129), the largest of the Aeolian Islands. From here, nature lovers can island-hop to **Salina** (p147), while volcano enthusiasts can climb **Fossa di Vulcano** (p143) and **Stromboli** (p155).

BEACH HOPPING

10 DAYS // PALERMO TO ACI CASTELLO // 666KM

Unpack your beach towel for the first time at **Mondello** (p60), Palermo's summer playground, before heading to the stunning **Golfo di Castellammare** (p70), where you'll find the popular beaches of **Castellammare del Golfo** (p70) and **San Vito lo**



Capo (p72). Continuing down the west coast, you'll eventually reach **Eraclea Minoa** (p262), with its twin attractions of a fabulous beach and an archaeological site. Next, make your way to the east coast. You'll encounter plenty of swimming possibilities along the way, including the stunning **Scala dei Turchi** (p262), the isolated beaches of the **Riserva Naturale Oasi Faunistica di Vendicari** (p219) and the blue waters at **Aci Castello** (p188), where a Norman castle broods over the beach scene.

GASTRONOMIC GALLIVANT

10 DAYS // TRAPANI TO TAORMINA // 445KM

Take your appetite for top food and wine to **Trapani** (p73), where you can feast on *cuscus trapanese* and *busiate con pesto* before following the **Strada del Vino e dei Sapori Erice DOC** wine route (p79), sampling pastries from Erice's **Maria Grammatico** (p82) and sipping **Marsala wine** (p91) along the way. Next, make a pilgrimage to Licata's **La Madia** (p268), often described as Sicily's best restaurant, and to romantic Ragusa, where you can eat at Michelin-starred establishments such as **Ristorante Duomo** (p226) and **Locanda Don Serafino** (p226). Finish up in trendy **Taormina** (p168), which is another centre of fine dining on the island.



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