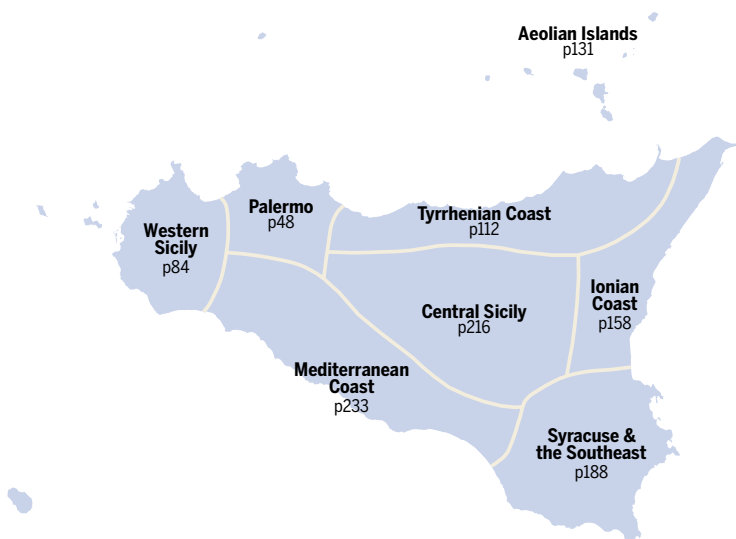




# Sicily



THIS EDITION WRITTEN AND RESEARCHED BY

**Gregor Clark,**  
**Vesna Maric**

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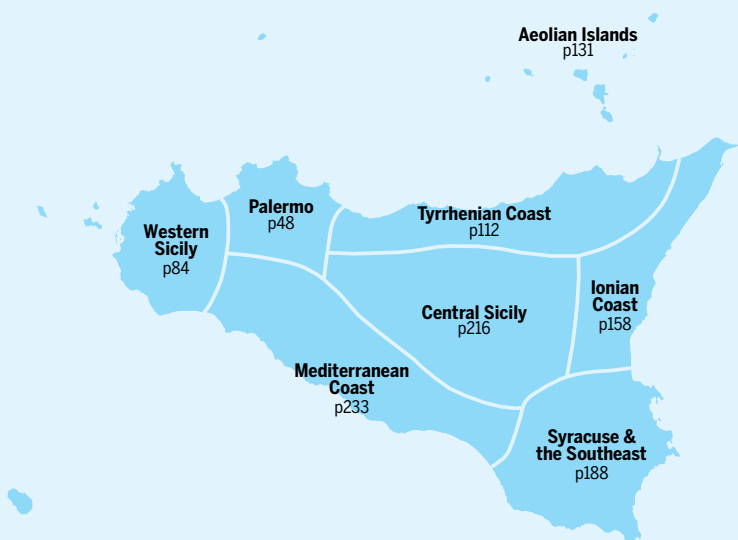
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# On the Road



# Sicily



37°N

MEDITERRANEAN SEA

Pantelleria  
Mt Grande (836m)

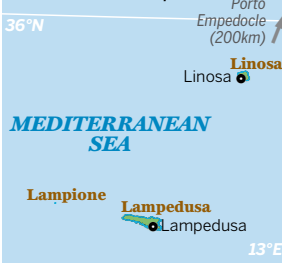
## ROAD DISTANCES (km)

Note: Distances are approximate

|           |     |     |     |     |     |     |
|-----------|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| Catania   | 165 |     |     |     |     |     |
| Enna      | 90  | 85  |     |     |     |     |
| Milazzo   | 270 | 130 | 215 |     |     |     |
| Palermo   | 130 | 210 | 140 | 200 |     |     |
| Syracuse  | 215 | 65  | 135 | 190 | 260 |     |
| Trapani   | 175 | 315 | 245 | 300 | 105 | 365 |
| Agrigento |     |     |     |     |     |     |
| Catania   |     |     |     |     |     |     |
| Enna      |     |     |     |     |     |     |
| Milazzo   |     |     |     |     |     |     |
| Palermo   |     |     |     |     |     |     |
| Syracuse  |     |     |     |     |     |     |

Pelagic Islands (see Inset; 150km)

### Pelagic Islands Same Scale as Main Map





**Cefalù**  
Medieval mosaics and gorgeous beaches (p116)

**Aeolian Islands**  
Dazzling seas and honey-sweet wine (p131)

**Taormina**  
Summer festivals in an ancient theatre (p165)

**Mt Etna**  
Climb Europe's largest active volcano (p183)

**Syracuse**  
Greatest city of Magna Graecia (p192)

**Parco Naturale Regionale delle Madonie**  
Splendid walks (p121)

**Noto**  
Graceful hill town of baroque domes (p205)



# Itineraries



## 2 WEEKS Only the Best

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, Selinunte, Segesta, the Val di Noto, Syracuse, Catania, Mt Etna, Taormina, the Aeolian Islands and Palermo. From **Palermo**, for instance, after exploring the capital's magnificent architectural monuments, you could head southwest to the temples at **Segesta**, **Selinunte** and **Agrigento**, then cut east across the island to the Unesco-listed Val di Noto, where the baroque beauties of **Ragusa**, **Modica** and **Noto** are all obligatory stops. Next it's on to **Syracuse**, a highlight of any trip to Sicily: split your time here between the pedestrian-friendly ancient island city of Ortygia and the vast classical ruins of the Parco Archeologico. Continue up the coast to bustling **Catania** and circle **Mt Etna** to reach **Taormina**, a town whose abundant attractions include its ancient Greek theatre and the gorgeous beaches just below. Finally, hop a ferry to the **Aeolian Islands** for some sun, swimming and beautiful coastal scenery.

7  
DAYS

## World Heritage Sites

Begin your tour of Unesco World Heritage Sites in **Syracuse**, one of the ancient world's great cities, where traces of Magna Graecia are omnipresent – from papyrus-fringed Fontana Aretusa to the amphitheatres, altars and caves of the Parco Archeologico. Next head west to the **Necropoli di Pantalica** – an eerie array of several thousand Bronze Age tombs built into limestone cliffs – before continuing to the captivating Val di Noto. The devastating earthquake of 1693 may have wrought havoc on this corner of the island, but it also led to the creation of some of Sicily's greatest treasures. The late-baroque towns of **Noto**, **Modica** and **Ragusa** are the stars, but it's also worth seeking out the small villages of **Scicli** and **Palazzolo Acreide** and the famed ceramics centre of **Caltagirone**, with its grand staircase of 142 distinctively tiled steps. Continue west to dazzling **Villa Romana del Casale**, whose newly restored Roman mosaic floors depict bikini-clad gymnasts and African beasts prancing side by side. The trail ends at the most magnificent archaeological site in Sicily: **Agrigento's** Valley of the Temples, with its five Doric structures perched on a ridge near the coast.

7  
DAYS

## Wining & Dining from West to East

Start off in elegant **Marsala**, taste-testing the town's famous sweet wine on a cellar tour at Cantine Florio, then lingering late into the night at the many *enoteche* and restaurants in the pedestrian-friendly centre. Then follow the Strada del Vino Erice DOC wine route towards **Trapani**, where you can lunch on fabulous fish couscous, followed by dessert with a breathtaking view in **Erice**, renowned for its marzipan fruit, nougat and other nut-based sweets. Next, park your car for a day or two in **Palermo**, whose supremely colourful markets, delicious street food, irresistible bakeries and countless fine eateries are highlights of any Sicilian food trip. Take a cooking course, either at Palermo's Butera 28 or down the road at the 400-hectare **Regaleali estate** near Vallelunga, one of Sicily's leading wine producers. Meander east along the southern edge of the Madonie and Nebrodi mountains, refuelling frequently with local black pork, ricotta, pecorino, mushrooms and hazelnuts in pretty hill towns like **Petralia Sottana** and **Nicosia**. Last, circumnavigate spectacular **Mt Etna**, stopping for tastings of local honey, pistachios and Etna DOC wine before enjoying a final evening in cosmopolitan **Catania**.



4  
DAYS

## Mountain Retreats

Relax into your journey in postcard-perfect **Cefalù**, where you can lounge on the beach, visit the splendid medieval cathedral and enjoy panoramic coastal views from the ruins of the hilltop Norman citadel. Follow the coast to **Castel di Tusa**, breaking for lunch on the waterfront before exploring the town's unique open-air sculpture garden. Next climb through the lost-in-time mountain town of **Mistretta** into the Nebrodi mountains, where grand views of Mt Etna begin to unfold. After brief detours to explore the medieval village of **Nicosia**, continue south to **Enna**, a handsome hill town that marks the geographic centre of Sicily – a fact best appreciated from atop the heavily fortified walls of the Castello di Lombardia. Snake back north through Gangi into the heart of the **Parco Naturale Regionale delle Madonie**, a magnificent natural landscape dotted with hazelnut orchards, ash forests and photogenic hilltop towns. Linger a couple of days along the mountains' western edge in beautiful **Petralia Soprana**, **Petralia Sottana**, **Collesano** and **Castelbuono**, each of which boasts fine regional restaurants and makes a good base for hikes into the mountains. From Castelbuono an easy downhill jaunt takes you back to Cefalù.

7  
DAYS

## Smoke & Fire: Volcanic Sicily

Start in **Catania**, a city built of lava from the devastating volcanic eruption of 1669. Your first logical step is to climb the volcano that did all the damage, **Mt Etna**, nowadays one of Sicily's leading tourist attractions. As legend would have it, it was from Etna's lofty heights that the Cyclops hurled his stones at the fleeing Odysseus – you can still see their jagged forms along the dramatic **Riviera dei Ciclopi** coastline, where traditional fishing villages have been reinvented as summer resorts. Next follow our **driving tour** of Etna's western flank and continue north to **Milazzo**, where you can catch a ferry to **Lipari**, the largest of the Aeolian Islands. Read up on the archipelago's fiery past at Lipari's Museo Archeologico, then go tour a few volcanoes for yourself. Nature lovers can explore the verdant island of **Salina**, whose twin extinct cones are one of Sicily's most harmonious sights. Those looking for something a little more 'active' can climb smoking **Fossa di Vulcano**, with its sulphur-belching crater and gloopy mudbaths, or scale the 'lighthouse of the Mediterranean', **Stromboli**, an eternal lava-lamp whose eruptions continually light up the night sky.

7  
DAYS

## Beach Hopping

Unpack your beach towel for the first time at **Mondello**, Palermo's summer playground. Then head west to the stunning Golfo di Castellammare, where the popular beaches of **Castellammare del Golfo** and **San Vito lo Capo** offer an urban counterpoint to the pristine **Riserva Naturale dello Zingaro**, home to a series of sparkling coves spread out along a 7km walking trail. Next stop is Sicily's west coast. Beach aficionados will love the untrammelled **Riserva Naturale Torre Salsa**, the town of **Eraclea Minoa**, whose fabulous beach is complemented by an archaeological site, and the blindingly chalk-white **Scala dei Turchi**. Continue your beach-hop along Sicily's Ionian Coast, with visits to the isolated shores of the **Riserva Naturale Oasi Faunistica di Vendicari** and the blue waters at **Acì Castello**, where a Norman castle broods over the beach scene. Wrap it all up with stops at bustling **Lido Mazzarò** just below Taormina, **Piscina di Venere** at the tip of Capo Milazzo, and the long sandy beach in **Cefalù**. From here it's a quick trip back to Palermo.

10  
DAYS

## Offshore Islands

Your island-hopping adventure begins with a half-hour hydrofoil trip from Marsala or Trapani to **Favignana**, gateway to the Egadi Islands. Tour the old Florio tuna factory and cycle through Favignana's landscape of abandoned tufa quarries and beaches, then ferry across to see prehistoric cave art at **Levanzo** and hike the trails of **Marettimo**. Next stop is the offshore diving paradise of **Ustica**, whose pristine waters and easygoing pace will make you forget you're only 90 minutes from downtown Palermo. When you're ready for a culture shock, boomerang back to the Sicilian 'mainland' for the train from Palermo to Milazzo, then hydrofoil out to the **Aeolian Islands**, seven volcanic beauties with seven personalities. Start on the biggest, **Lipari**, where you can tour the superb archaeological museum, linger over drinks in the pleasant town centre or explore the island's outlying beaches and walking trails. From Lipari, frequent hydrofoils allow easy day trips to all the remaining islands: smoky **Vulcano**, chic **Panarea**, lush green **Salina**, remote **Alicudi**, off-the-beaten-track **Filicudi** and the most spectacular of all, actively erupting **Stromboli**.



## OUR STORY

A beat-up old car, a few dollars in the pocket and a sense of adventure. In 1972 that's all Tony and Maureen Wheeler needed for the trip of a lifetime – across Europe and Asia overland to Australia. It took several months, and at the end – broke but inspired – they sat at their kitchen table writing and stapling together their first travel guide, *Across Asia on the Cheap*. Within a week they'd sold 1500 copies. Lonely Planet was born.

Today, Lonely Planet has offices in Melbourne, London, Oakland and Delhi, with more than 600 staff and writers. We share Tony's belief that 'a great guidebook should do three things: inform, educate and amuse'.

## OUR WRITERS



### Gregor Clark

**Coordinating Author, Palermo, Western Sicily, Tyrrhenian Coast, Aeolian Islands**

Gregor caught the Italy bug at age 14 during a year in Florence, in which his professor dad trundled the family off to see every fresco, mosaic and museum within a 1000km radius. He's lived in Venice and Le Marche, led Italian bike tours, and huffed and puffed across the Dolomites while researching Lonely Planet's *Cycling Italy*, but his abiding passion is for Sicily, an island he's explored extensively in multiple research trips over the past several years. Highlights of his latest visit include celebrating his birthday atop an erupting Stromboli. A lifelong polyglot with a degree in Romance languages, Gregor writes frequently about Europe and South America for Lonely Planet. He lives with his wife and two daughters in Vermont, USA. Gregor also wrote the Plan Your Trip section (except for Outdoor Activities and Travel with Children), the Sicily Today, History, The Sicilian Table and The Sicilian Way of Life Understand features and the Survival Guide.

Read more about Gregor at:  
[lonelyplanet.com/members/gregorclark](http://lonelyplanet.com/members/gregorclark)



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Vesna has been working for Lonely Planet for nearly a decade and loves writing about the Mediterranean islands. She cherished working on the Sicily guidebook for the second time, and loved revisiting old favourites such as Catania's fish market and the Piazza Duomo at Syracuse. She returned with her three-year-old daughter this time. Vesna also wrote the Outdoor Activities, Travel with Children, Sicily on Page & Screen, The Mafia, and Art & Architecture chapters.

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