Sicily

Western Sicily
- Palermo
  - p48

Mediterranean Coast
- p233

Central Sicily
- p216

Tyrrenian Coast
- p112

Ionian Coast
- p158

Syracuse & the Southeast
- p188

Aeolian Islands
- p131

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Gregor Clark,
Vesna Maric
The Noto Coast

Palazzolo Acreide & Around

Around Syracuse

Caltanissetta

Morgantina

Aidone

Villa Romana del Casale

Aidone

Morgantina

Caltagirone

South of Enna

Piazza Armerina

Villa Romana del Casale

Eraclea Minoa

Sciacca

Caltabellotta

East of Agrigento

Licata

Falconara

Gela

Hilltop Towns

ACCOMMODATION

Palermo

Western Sicily

Tyrhenian Coast

Aeolian Islands

Ionian Coast

Syracuse & the Southeast

Central Sicily

Mediterranean Coast

Sicily Today

History

The Sicilian Table

The Sicilian Way of Life

Sicily on Page

& Screen

The Mafia

Art & Architecture

ACCOMMODATION

Palermo

Western Sicily

Tyrhenian Coast

Aeolian Islands

Ionian Coast

Syracuse & the Southeast

Central Sicily

Mediterranean Coast

Sicily Today

History

The Sicilian Table

The Sicilian Way of Life

Sicily on Page

& Screen

The Mafia

Art & Architecture

SPECIAL FEATURES

Eat & Drink

Like a Local

Outdoor Activities

Sicilian

Architecture

Accommodation

7372
On the Road

Western Sicily
- Palermo (p84)

Syracuse & the Southeast
- Aeolian Islands (p131)

Mediterranean Coast
- Tyrrhenian Coast (p112)
- Central Sicily (p216)

Aeolian Islands (p131)

Aeolian Islands (p131)

Tyrrhenian Coast (p112)

Central Sicily (p216)

Ionian Coast (p158)

Syracuse & the Southeast (p188)

Central Sicily (p216)

Tyrrhenian Coast (p112)

Mediterranean Coast (p233)

Western Sicily (p84)
Sicily

**Erice**
Western Sicily's prettiest hilltop village (p97)

**Saline di Trapani**
Salt ponds and Phoenician ruins (p102)

**Agrigento**
Sicily's finest collection of temples (p235)

**Palermo**
Architectural masterpieces and amazing food (p51)

**Caccamo**
A picturesquely perched Norman castle (p120)

**ROAD DISTANCES (km)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>City</th>
<th>Catania</th>
<th>Enna</th>
<th>Milazzo</th>
<th>Palermo</th>
<th>Syracuse</th>
<th>Trapani</th>
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Note: Distances are approximate

**Pelagic Islands**
Same Scale as Main Map

- **Porto Empedocle**
- **Lampedusa**
- **Linosa**

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

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)

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

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**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.
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 Aci 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.

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.
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