

Welcome to Sicily

Eternal meeting point between East and West, Africa and Europe, the gorgeous island of Sicily is a linchpin of Mediterranean culture and one of Europe's most alluring destinations.

Classical Crossroads

Seductively beautiful and perfectly placed in the heart of the Mediterranean, Sicily has been luring passersby since the time of legends. The land of Scylla, Charybdis and the Cyclops has been praised by poets from Homer to Virgil and prized by the many ancient cultures – Phoenicians, Carthaginians, Romans and Greeks – whose bones lie buried here. Whether in the classical perfection of Agrigento's Concordia temple, the monumental rubble of Selinunte's columns or the rare grace of a dancing satyr statue rescued from Mazara del Vallo's watery depths, reminders of bygone civilisations are everywhere.

Sparkling Sea, Restless Mountains

Sicily's varied landscape makes a dramatic first impression. Fly into Catania and the smoking hulk of Etna greets you; arrive in Palermo and it'll be the sparkling mountain fringed Golfo di Castellammare. This juxtaposition of sea, volcano and mountain scenery makes a stunning backdrop for outdoors activities. Sicily and its dozen-plus offshore islands offer enough swimming, diving, hiking and climbing to build an entire vacation around.

Mediterranean Flavours

A crazy layer-cake of culinary influences, Sicily's ancient cuisine continues to rely on a few key island-grown ingredients: shellfish and citrus, tuna and swordfish, pistachios, hazelnuts and almonds, ricotta and wild herbs. Traditional ties to the land run deep here. Talk to the septuagenarian chef at a Catania restaurant and she'll not only confide that she still uses her grandmother's recipe for *pasta alla Norma*, but will also share the poetic imagery that links it to Mt Etna: the tomatoes are lava, the aubergines cinders, the basil leafy greenery, the ricotta snow. Modern chefs may play with the details, but Sicily's timeless recipes – from the simplest *cannolo* to the most exquisitely spiced fish couscous – live on.

Byzantine to Baroque

As if its classical heritage weren't formidable enough, Sicily is bursting at the seams with later artistic and architectural gems. In a short walk around Palermo you'll see Arab domes and arches, Byzantine mosaics, baroque stuccowork and Norman palace walls. This embarrassment of artistic riches remains one of the island's most distinctive attractions.



Why I Love Sicily

By Gregor Clark, Author

Decades after my first visit, I still find Sicily one of the world's most mesmerisingly beautiful places. Among the island's innumerable charms, here are a few personal favourites: the ever-present scent of lemon trees, the purity of dawn light on terracotta walls, the colourful decrepitude of Palermo's markets, the drama of Stromboli erupting against a darkening sky, the sense that history lurks always just around the next corner, the reflective marble glow of late-night Ortygia and Marsala streets, the lonely majesty of Segesta, the exotic flavours of Sicilian food and the kindness of its people.

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