

# Welcome to Sicily

*Eternal crossroads of the Mediterranean, the gorgeous island of Sicily continues to seduce travellers with its dazzling diversity of landscapes and cultural treasures.*

## Classical Crossroads

Seductively beautiful and perfectly placed in the Mediterranean, Sicily has been luring passersby since the time of legends. The land of the Cyclops has been praised by poets from Homer to Virgil and prized by the many ancient cultures – Phoenicians, Carthaginians, Elymians, 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.

## Mediterranean Flavours

A delectable 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, almonds and ricotta. Talk to the septuagenarian chef at a Catania restaurant and she'll confide that she still uses her grandmother's recipe for *pasta alla Norma*, joyfully sharing 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 exquisite fish couscous – live on.

## Sparkling Seas, 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's the sparkling Golfo di Castellammare. This juxtaposition of sea, volcano and mountain scenery makes a stunning backdrop for outdoor activities. Hikers can wind along precipitous coastlines, climb erupting volcanoes and traipse through flowery mountain meadows; birders benefit from the plethora of species on the Africa-Europe migration route; and divers and swimmers enjoy some of the Mediterranean's most pristine waters.

## 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 and Norman palace walls. Circle around to southeast Sicily and you'll find a stunning array of baroque architectural masterpieces, from the golden-hued domes and palaces of Noto to the multi-tiered cathedral facades of Ragusa and Modica. This embarrassment of cultural riches remains one of the island's most distinctive attractions.



## Why I Love Sicily

By Gregor Clark, Writer

Decades after my first visit, I still find Sicily one of the world's most captivating 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 island's endless cultural complexities.

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