
GEEO ITINERARY

Sicily 4/26/2023

Day 1: Palermo Arrive at any time. Tonight, meet your tour leader and fellow travelers at the welcome meeting, then opt to head out for dinner and enjoy a Sicilian meal.

Arrive in Palermo at any time. On Day 1, there are no planned activities until your Group Meeting that evening around 6:00 p.m. or 7:00 p.m., so check into the hotel – check-in time is approximately 3:00 p.m. – and enjoy the city. Check the notice boards or ask at reception for the exact time and location of the group meeting. After the meeting, you might like to take the option of heading out for a meal in a nearby local restaurant to further get to know your tour leader and traveling companions. Please make every effort to arrive on time for this important welcome meeting. If you are delayed and will arrive late, please inform us. Your tour leader will then leave you a message at the front desk informing you of where and when to meet up.

Day 2: Palermo/Cefalù (B) Enjoy an orientation walk in Palermo's historic city center. Drive to beautiful Cefalù and have another orientation walk. Your afternoon will be free for you to explore.

Head out for an orientation walk of Palermo's historic city center. The city has been the crossroad of many civilizations: Phoenicians, Byzantines, Arabs, Normans, and Spaniards. You will see baroque and gothic façades, neoclassical theaters such as Teatro Massimo (the biggest in Italy and one of the largest in Europe), unusual squares such as Quattro Canti, and the majestic Palermo Cathedral. Continue to Cefalù, often cited as one of Italy's most beautiful townships, and stroll through cobbled streets to a picturesque cove by the beach. Enjoy a brief walk with your tour leader. The squares, streets, and churches of this medieval town are so postcard-pretty that it's no wonder director Giuseppe Tornatore chose to set parts of his much-loved film Cinema Paradiso here. With free time, observe local fishermen working on their boats, or simply wander around town. Cefalù's crescent-shaped beach is one of the most popular along the whole Sicilian coast. The Salita Saraceni is an enormous staircase that winds up through three tiers of city walls. Opt to take 30 to 45 minutes climbing up to the summit of La Rocca – from here, you'll have wonderful views of the town below. Opt to end the day with an aperitivo in Piazza Duomo and visit the 12th-century Duomo di Cefalù, one of the jewels in Sicily's Arab-Norman crown. Climb the towers for great views of the area. Approximate travel time: 1.5 hrs by private vehicle.

Day 3: Cefalù/Lipari (B) Travel to the Aeolian Islands, a small archipelago of volcanic lands. Spend the next few days exploring pockets of this coastal paradise.

Travel to the Aeolian Islands, a small archipelago of volcanic lands known as "the pearls of Italy" for their intriguing natural formations and named after Aeolus, the god of the winds. Take a car and ferry to reach Lipari, the largest of the Aeolian Islands, and enjoy a free afternoon to explore. Opt to visit the island's most popular swimming spot, the long, pebbly strip at Canneto, or take another short ferry (12 euros) to the island of Vulcano to see its active crater. The word volcano, and its equivalent in several European languages, derives from the name of this island, which in turn derives from Vulcan, the Roman god of fire. Approximate travel time: 2 hrs by private vehicle, 1 hr by ferry

Day 4: Lipari (B) Enjoy a free morning in Lipari. Later, head out for an excursion to explore the beautiful islands of Panarea and Stromboli by boat. End the day on an unforgettable sunset cruise.

Take the morning to relax or leisurely wander through Lipari. Later, set sail for a journey through the stunning Aeolian Islands, stopping at Panarea and Stromboli. On Panarea, visit Cala Junco beach and wander through the village. Then see Basiluzzo, the smallest of the Aeolian Islands. Continue to

Stromboli and enjoy free time to explore local shops in town. As sunset approaches, cruise back to the islet of Strombolicchio and arrive just as it starts to get dark at the Scara del Fuoco, considered the best spot for viewing Mount Stromboli's eruptions. This is the last stop and, for many, the most awaited. (Please note: this activity begins at 2 p.m. and ends at 10 p.m. We recommend bringing a sweater, as the evening breeze gets chilly aboard the boat!) Approximate travel time: 8 hrs by boat

Day 5: Lipari/Catania (B) Say goodbye to the Aeolian Islands and ferry back to the mainland, then continue to Taormina, one of Sicily's most visited destinations.

This morning, travel from Lipari to Milazzo by ferry and then finish the journey to Taormina by private vehicle. Once in Taormina, join your tour leader for a brief introduction to this beautifully situated hilltop town, once part of the "Grand Tour" many affluent Europeans took in the 18th and 19th centuries. After the orientation walk, enjoy free time when you may opt to visit the stunning Teatro Greco, an ancient Roman amphitheater with commanding views of Mount Etna. You could also visit the Corso Umberto I, Taormina's pedestrian-friendly, boutique-lined thoroughfare, or the Villa Comunale Gardens, beautiful public gardens that offer breathtaking views of the coast and Mt. Etna. Travel to Catania and opt to join your tour leader for another short walk around this elegant and lively city. Approximate travel time: 1 hr by ferry, 2.5 hrs by private vehicle (1.5 hrs Milazzo-Taormina, 1 hr Taormina-Catania)

Day 6: Catania (B) Enjoy an orientation walk with your tour leader to get your bearings in Catania. Then spend the rest of the day exploring Catania and its nearby attractions. Opt to book a full-day excursion with naturalist guides on Mount Etna, or stay in town and visit La Pescheria market or walk the Via Etnea.

In the morning, your tour leader will take you around Catania so you can get your bearings and see some of the city's main sites. If something catches your eye, there will be plenty of opportunity for you to return during your free time after the walk. The rest of the day is yours to explore. Catania's central piazza is a set piece of contrasting lava and limestone, surrounded by buildings in the unique local baroque style and crowned by the grand Cattedrale di Sant'Agata. La Pescheria, Catania's raucous fish market, takes over the streets behind Piazza del Duomo every weekday morning and is pure street theatre (open from 7 a.m. - 2 p.m.). Shoppers will enjoy a stroll through Catania's main shopping street, Via Etnea, which runs straight from Piazza del Duomo to the foothills below Etna. Visit the Giardino Bellini gardens and watch local life unfold.

Day 7: Catania (B) Spend another whole free day in Catania. Choose to visit the Cathedral of Catania located in the center of the old town, or the Piazza Del Duomo just near the port area in the heart of the city. Later in the day, opt to head out with the group for a delicious Sicilian meal.

Spend a free day in the second-largest city on the Italian island of Sicily. Catania also happens to be an important economic hub for the country. The city proudly displays its heritage and culture within its museums, like the Basilica Sant'Agata and the Museo Civici. There are also plenty of opportunities for day trips and outdoor excursions. Opt to take a guided tour of Mount Etna and learn about the legendary history of this ancient volcano from local naturalist guides. Walk through old-growth forests, unique lava formations, and a volcanic cave (weather permitting). Continue to a vineyard and enjoy a late lunch of cheeses, salami, olives, and bread, paired with excellent local wines.

Day 8: Catania/Syracuse (B, L) Travel to Syracuse. Take a cooking class on arrival and learn how to make Arancini, an iconic Sicilian specialty, to enjoy as a light lunch. After, go on an orientation walk with your tour leader.

This morning, we travel to Syracuse, an enchanting city by the Ionian Sea that was once at the center of the ancient Greek and Roman worlds. After you arrive, learn how to prepare a delicious snack enjoyed

beyond the borders of Sicily: deep-fried arancini, a ball of creamy risotto rice typically filled with a savory cheese or meat filling. Later, explore the old town's baroque piazzas and medieval side streets on an orientation walk with your tour leader. Approximate travel time: 1 hr by private vehicle

Day 9: Syracuse (B) Enjoy a full free day in Syracuse. Opt to visit the impressive Parco Archeologico della Neapolis, or travel to nearby Noto, a UNESCO World Heritage-listed city renowned for its baroque architecture built with unique golden limestone.

During a free day in Syracuse, opt to uncover the city's ancient past at the Parco Archeologico della Neapoli, home to Syracuse's sprawling Teatro Greco. First constructed in the 5th century BC, today visitors can wander the grounds and imagine what 2nd-century gladiator combats and horse races at the Anfiteatro Romano may have looked like. You may also take a local bus to Noto, about an hour southwest of Syracuse, home to one of Sicily's most beautiful historic centers. Stroll through the Arco di Trionfo to reach Corso Vittorio Emanuele and visit the majestic 18th-century Noto Cathedral.

Day 10: Syracuse/Agrigento (B) Travel to the baroque city of Ragusa before heading to the medieval hilltop town of Piazza Armerina. Continue to Agrigento.

This morning, we drive to Ragusa and enjoy some free time to explore the alleyways and the squares of this hilltop city, rich with baroque architecture. Later, we visit the world's most varied collection of Roman mosaics at Villa Romana del Casale, a UNESCO World Heritage Site in Piazza Armerina. Dating back to the 4th century and known for their incredibly well-preserved state *in situ*, or in their original location, the mosaic tiles beautifully depict ancient scenes of hunting, fishing, and athletics. Afterward, continue to Agrigento on Sicily's southwestern coast. Approximate travel time: 5-5.5 hrs by private vehicle (1.75 hrs Syracuse-Ragusa, 1.75 hrs Ragusa-Piazza Armerina, 1.75 hrs Piazza Armerina-Agrigento)

Day 11: Agrigento/Trapani Take a guided tour of the Valley of the Temples, one of Sicily's best-known attractions. Continue to Trapani, stopping en route in Marsala to see some of Europe's oldest salt marshes.

Visit the Valley of the Temples, where you will learn the history of this magnificent site and explore the ruins of its seven temples nestled on a ridge below Agrigento. Regarded as the best example of ancient Hellenic architecture in Sicily, the archaeological site's oldest structures date back to the 5th century. Explore the ruins of the Temple of Concordia, with its majestic columns, and learn about the site's history from a local guide. While en route to Trapani, stop in Marsala to visit some of Europe's oldest traditional salt marshes, where sea salt is still harvested in the same way it has been for hundreds of years. Approximate travel time: 3-3.5 hrs by private vehicle (2.5 hrs Agrigento-Marsala, 45 mins Marsala-Trapani)

Day 12: Trapani Enjoy a free day to explore the charms of Trapani and its nearby towns. Opt to cruise the idyllic Egadi Islands, spend the day hiking at a nature reserve filled with local flora and fauna, or hop on a funicular to explore the walled town of Erice.

Spend a full day exploring Trapani on your own, or opt to participate in one of the excursions below. Full-day Egadi Islands excursion (50-75 euros per person): The crystal-clear seas off western Sicily are home to the idyllic Aegadian islands of Favignana and Levanzo. Cruise through the coastal waters and drop anchor in beautiful spots around the islands. Half-day Erice excursion (9 euros per person): Head to the medieval hilltop town of Erice, a walled 12th-century village perched high above the sea. Take a cable car from Trapani's city center to reach Erice and spend a few hours wandering its picturesque streets. Full-day Riserva Naturale dello Zingaro excursion (50-70 euros per person): Visit Sicily's first nature reserve, Zingaro Nature Reserve, located about an hour from Trapani. Perfect for nature lovers and outdoor enthusiasts, you can spend the day hiking on spectacular trails that overlook the Mediterranean

Sea.

Day 13: Trapani/Palermo Travel to Monreale to visit the 11th-century Monreale Cathedral, intricately decorated with thousands of gold mosaic tiles. Continue to Palermo.

On the last full day of our tour, we drive to Monreale to visit the World Heritage-listed Cattedrale di Monreale, considered one of Europe's greatest examples of Norman architecture with a heavy Moorish and Byzantine influence. Continue on to Palermo and admire panoramic views of the Conca d'Oro (Golden Valley) and the Tyrrhennian Sea. Upon arrival, enjoy free time in Palermo or join your tour leader on another orientation walk around the city center's squares and streets. Approximate travel time: 2 hrs by private vehicle (1.5 hrs Trapani-Monreale, 15-30 mins Monreale-Palermo)

Day 14: Palermo Depart at any time.

The program ends today, and you can depart Palermo at any time. Want more adventure? Book two or more GEEO trips in the same year and receive a discount! GEEO will give you 10% off of the lesser value program(s) (up to 3 programs). If you don't see a program that interests you that pairs with this trip, but still would like to extend your time abroad, let us know. We will work with you to find a non-teacher trip from our tour operator's much larger catalog. Even better, if you are an educator, we can still offer you a discounted price on the trip you choose!