

Sicily

In Sicily it seems like the sun shines brighter and life is simultaneously full of intense pleasures. Sicilians are heir to an impressive cultural legacy: once a Greek colony, a Roman province, an Arab emirate and a Norman kingdom, Sicily boasts a fascinating history. A reflection of its unique background, Sicily's art, archeology, architecture, folklore and, of course, its food are an irresistible draw for visitors. Sicily is surrounded by three archipelagos: the Aeolian, the Aegadian and the Pelagie Islands. One of the most agreeable climates in Europe means that every season holds its own particular attractions here.

SUGGESTED ITINERARY

Sicily : 7 days

This itinerary takes you around the largest island in the Mediterranean – from Palermo's historic bay, along Sicily's dramatic northern coastline to the remote islands in the northeast and back to the mainland's chic ports of Portofino, Taormina and Messina.

DAY 1: {PALERMO}

Embark in Palermo, Sicily's capital and the largest city on the island. The city is stupendously located in its own wide bay. Explore some of Sicily's legendary sites, such as the ornate Piazza Bellini, the cathedral and the Arab-Norman Palatine Chapel in the Royal Palace. A trip up to Monreale gives a panoramic view of the Conca d'Oro – the spectacular and evocative valley beyond Palermo.



DAY 2: {USTICA}

The next morning, set sail to the tiny volcanic island of Ustica, which measures just 3.3 square miles. Unspoiled by tourism, Ustica's magnificent seabeds are protected as a natural marine reserve. Sail leisurely around the island, visiting the numerous grottos along the coast. Then pay a visit to the little town which houses quaint restaurants and cafes and an underwater archaeological museum. The area around Ustica is a paradise for scuba divers and snorkelers. Some diving highlights include the delicate fan-like red gorgonias and the rainbow-colored sponges at Grotta dei Gamberi and at Secca di Colombara, and the archaeological artifacts at Punta Gavazzi

DAY 3: {THE AEOLIAN ISLANDS}

From lunar-like Vulcano, to the quiet beaches of Salina to the lush, cliff-top meadows of Lipari, the Aeolian Islands are a fascinating, diverse mix of unusual topography. Sail on to Panarea, the smallest island of the archipelago, which thanks to its natural springs, can offer a relaxing mud. From the island of Lipari you can take a dive expeditions to such famous Aeolian Island dive spots as Punta Castagna, Capo Grosso, Capo Grillo and Pietra Menalda. During the evening hours, sail over to Stromboli, the "Black Giant," which is one of the few constantly active volcanoes in the world; the view from the sea is unforgettable! You may be lucky enough to glimpse the volcanic eruptions lighting up the night sky.



DAY 4: {THE AEOLIAN ISLANDS}

Spend the day cruising the solitude of the Aeolian Islands. Choose to spend the afternoon anchored in a remote bay near the island of Lipari, relax and sunbathe. This is a good time to break out all the water toys or go for a fishing expedition. You could also explore Lipari and enjoy an afternoon meandering through the narrow streets.



DAY 5: {PORTOROSA}

After breakfast, depart for a two-hour cruise back to the Sicilian coast, where Sicily's most modern and efficient marina, Marina di Portorosa, awaits. Besides a splendid swimming pool surrounded by green vegetation, a wide beach and an efficient shopping center, the fashionable tourist harbor of Portorosa offers a great base for getting out and exploring the surrounding areas. There is also the possibility for a small fishing or diving expedition.

DAY 6: {HISTORIC TAORMINA}

Depart Portorosa early in the morning towards Taormina. Take a trip up the hill to picturesque Taormina, which is built on terraces cascading down to the sea. Take a walk past cobblestone piazzas, elegant shops and outdoor cafes en route to the Greek theatre. The spectacular theatre was built under the beautiful backdrop of Mount Etna in the distance. Alternatively, take an excursion to Mount Etna. In the evening, savour authentic Sicilian cuisine in one of Taormina's many restaurants.



DAY 7: {MESSINA/CANTANIA}

In the morning, head towards Messina. The Strait of Messina offers opportunities for fishing and hosts many different types of fish with a good gastronomical reputation. Near the Torre Faro, a small fishing village overlooked by a lighthouse, you can find the "Fossa dei sugarelli," a dark blue, cylindrical shaped fish only found off the Sicilian coast. For drop-off the next morning, Catania is the ideal spot, a four-hour cruise from Messina. The airport is quite close to the port.