




# Sicily and the Aeolian Islands 2026

9 OCT – 23 OCT 2026

Code: 22542

Tour Leaders David Henderson, Dr Sophy Downes

Fitness Level 

**Level 2 - Intermediate**

For people with energetic lifestyles and very good mobility

Explore the rich and varied history of Sicily and the Aeolian Islands, discovering their wealth of archaeological treasures, magnificent medieval mosaics & the grandeur of the Baroque.

## Overview

Learn about the art, history and archaeology of Sicily from artist and art historian, [David Henderson](#) who has been leading ASA tours since 1996, and classical archaeologist [Dr Sophy Downes](#) who is currently a lecturer in Art History at John Cabot University in Rome. David and Sophy will be joined by a number of guest archaeologists during the program.

- By special appointment, visit Palazzo Conte Federico in Palermo. As guests of Contessa Alwine and Conte Federico we explore the fine medieval, Renaissance and Baroque rooms.
- By special appointment visit Palazzo Gangi in Palermo, especially noted for its Sicilian Baroque ballroom decorated with Murano chandeliers, gold fittings and glittering mirrors, where in 1963 Visconti filmed the magnificent ball scene of *The Leopard*.
- By special appointment visit Palazzo Alliata di Pietratagliata in Palermo. Built in 1473, this exquisite *palazzo* which encompasses five centuries of Sicilian art, is owned by Prince Biagio Licata Baucina and his wife Princess Signoretta Alliata di Pietratagliata.
- Visit Greek and Roman cities, villas, theatres and religious sites, and major museums with antique collections, including Syracuse, Agrigento, Selinunte and Taormina.
- Discover one of the world's greatest corpora of Roman mosaics in the UNESCO World Heritage-listed Villa del Casale at Piazza Armerina.
- Explore the distinctive Arabo-Norman monuments of Sicily, especially the glorious Monreale Cathedral and Palermo's Cappella Palatina and La Martorana.
- Trace the development of Baroque architecture and decoration in Syracuse, Palermo and Noto.
- Attend a traditional Sicilian puppet show in Palermo.
- View masterpieces by Caravaggio: *The Burial of St Lucy* in Syracuse, *Adoration of the Shepherds* and *Resurrection of Lazarus* in Messina.
- Encounter the delicate, soulful work of the Baroque sculptor Serpotta in the oratories of Palermo.
- Take a boat tour of the Aeolian islands Panarea and Stromboli; explore Lipari with a local expert.
- Visit [Casa Cuseni](#) in Taormina, a historic villa that hosted renowned guests like Picasso and Chanel, now serving as a Museum of Fine Arts and the Grand Tour.

Overnight Syracuse (3 nights) • Agrigento (2 nights) • Palermo (4 nights) • Lipari (3 nights) • Taormina (2 nights).

### About the Tour

Explore the fascinating multi-layered history, art and architecture of Sicily, the largest and most beautiful Mediterranean island, and its unforgettable companions, the atmospheric Aeolian Islands. Sicily and the Aeolians encapsulate 3000 years of Mediterranean history. We visit Greek temples and theatres in Syracuse, Agrigento, Selinunte and Segesta, and the Roman villa of Casale near Piazza Armerina, one of the world's greatest corpora of Roman mosaics. In Norman Palermo's exotic monuments, its pleasure palaces, courtly chapels, grand cathedrals and graceful tabernacles, you will find an inimitable mix of Arab stone inlay, fretted windows and intricate ceilings, Byzantine mosaics and Frankish sculpture. Sicily reached its zenith in this period. Its subsequent economic decline nevertheless produced Italy's greatest corpus of literature, and lovely cityscapes inflected by exquisite Baroque churches and opulent palaces. The current owners of two of these palaces – one of them the Palazzo Gangi, made famous in the ballroom scene of Visconti's film *The Leopard* – will host exclusive visits. After enjoying the medieval pleasure resort of Cefalù, with its ethereal cathedral, we cross to the Aeolian Islands. We cruise around the volcanic island of Stromboli, whose striking lava flows pour slowly down from its smoking summit, and make a stop on the pretty little island of Panarea. We explore Lipari itself, a Neolithic exporter of obsidian, Greek colony, victim of Arab and Turkish raids and Norman outpost that was later fortified by the Emperor Charles V. Lipari's quaint fishing villages bask in the

sun above the azure sea. We visit Messina to see two masterpieces by Caravaggio, and make an excursion to Reggio Calabria to see the Riace Bronzes, arguably the greatest surviving Greek bronzes. We end in Taormina, the lovely hilltop town looking across to Mt Etna, and view the spectacular ancient theatre.

### Testimonials

*The trip to Sicily with ASA was a long-intended visit originally fuelled by John Julius Norwich's history of the Norman kingdom of Sicily. The tour proved to be 'just right' in its mix of ancient sites, more recent historical eras, and modern culture, in its mix of organised activities and free time, and in the overall pace of the action. All hotels were excellent. ASA are to be commended for a balanced and well-organised tour. Greg & Penny, VIC.*

*An excellent introduction to Sicily and its history, well organised, with very beautiful and interesting places visited. Rose, QLD.*

*I wish I had known about ASA years ago! So different to even the best general tours. Patricia, VIC.*



## Leaders



### David Henderson

Award-winning artist & Royal Academy graduate who paints half the year in Italy, David brings an artist's eye & profound knowledge of European art to ASA tours. David has led tours to Sicily since 2005.

After initial studies in architecture, David Henderson spent four years at London's Royal Academy Schools where he was awarded the S.J. Solomon prize for figure painting and was twice selected for the Academy's annual summer exhibition. Since then, he has held over 30 solo exhibitions in London, Rome, Melbourne, Sydney and Brisbane. His work has been selected for a number of prestigious group exhibitions, including the New English Art Club, the Doug Moran National Portrait Prize and Tattersall's Landscape Prize. David has been the recipient of numerous awards including - on two occasions - Best of Show at the Brisbane Rotary art exhibition. In 2021, he was elected a Fellow of the Royal Queensland Art Society. David has lectured for the Queensland Art Gallery, Queensland University of Technology and the Brisbane Institute of Art. He has accompanied over 50 tours for ASA to Italy, France, the UK and the USA and now spends a part of each year living and working in Italy. David brings a trained artist's eye to an analysis of painting, sculpture and architecture and takes great pleasure in sharing his knowledge.



### Dr Sophy Downes

A classical archaeologist with degrees from Oxford, Cambridge, and the Institute of Archaeology, London, who writes on architecture and architectural sculpture in the Mediterranean and the Ancient Near East. She has lived and worked in Tehran, Athens, and now in Rome, where she teaches at John Cabot University. She has been working as a tour guide in Italy since 2016 and is delighted to join ASA for their Sicily tours.

Sophy Downes is a classical archaeologist, whose research interests have led her continuously further east, to Turkey and eventually Iran. She initially studied Classics at Oxford; she then did a MPhil at Cambridge, focusing on the funerary monuments of Western Anatolia in the Classical period. After living for a couple of years in Rome, she returned to the Institute of Archaeology in London, where she wrote her PhD thesis, a comparative study of the architecture and politics of Persepolis and the Athenian Akropolis.

She first visited Turkey in 2000 and Iran in 2002, and has returned numerous times to both, including to take

up a residential postdoctoral fellowship at the British Institute of Persian studies in Tehran. She has published on both Classical and Near Eastern archaeology, and her book *The Aesthetics of Empire in Athens and Persia* is forthcoming. Her current research is on spatial analysis of Persepolis, notably the way in which the current reconstruction of the site obscures its original architectural logic. She has taught at University College London and at Edinburgh and is currently delighted to be a Lecturer in Art History at John Cabot University, Rome, Italy.

Sophy co-led this tour with David Henderson in 2024. Fluent in Italian, and having recently returned to live in Rome, she cannot wait to introduce ASA travellers to the cuisine, culture, history, art, architecture and archaeology of Sicily.

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### *Combine this tour with*

#### **The Turquoise Coast: Southern Türkiye & Rhodes 2026**

22 SEP – 9 OCT 2026

#### **Cultural Landscapes of the Midi-Pyrénées & the Dordogne 2026**

22 SEP – 7 OCT 2026

#### **“Birthplace of the Novel”: A Literary tour of Spain 2026**

18 SEP – 8 OCT 2026

#### **An Adriatic Journey: from Trieste to Dubrovnik 2026**

20 SEP – 5 OCT 2026

#### **Tunisia: From Carthage to the Sahara 2026**

27 OCT – 13 NOV 2026



## Itinerary

The detailed itinerary provides an outline of the proposed daily program. Participants should note that the daily activities described in this itinerary may be rotated and/or modified in order to accommodate changes in museum opening hours, flight schedules etc. Participants will receive a final itinerary together with their tour documents. Meals included in the tour price are indicated in the detailed itinerary where: B =breakfast, L=lunch, and D=dinner.

### Syracuse - 3 nights

#### Day 1: Friday 9 October, Catania Airport – Syracuse

- Arrival transfer from Catania Airport to Syracuse for participants taking the ASA 'designated' flight
- Welcome Meeting and light supper at hotel

Participants travelling on the ASA 'designated' flight are scheduled to arrive at Catania's airport in the afternoon. Participants not travelling on this flight should discuss the meeting arrangements with their ASA consultant. After collecting your luggage, you will travel by private coach to Syracuse.

After the Welcome Meeting, we will have a light supper at the hotel restaurant. (Overnight Syracuse) D

#### Day 2: Saturday 10 October, Syracuse

- Temple of Apollo
- Cathedral (Temple of Athena)
- Arethusa Fountain
- Museo Bellomo – museum of medieval art (optional)
- Afternoon at leisure
- Welcome Dinner

This morning we explore the old town of Syracuse (Siracusa), where we will visit the solid Doric colonnades that survive of the Temple of Apollo and then the Cathedral.

Syracuse was the most prominent Greek city-state in Sicily and the heart of Sicilian-Greek civilisation. The ancient city was constructed on the island of Ortigia, still the centre of the old city. Syracuse was ruled successively by the Romans, Arabo-Muslims, Normans and Spanish Habsburgs. These layers of civilisation can all be found in its cathedral. Under its floor have been discovered the remains of pre-Greek huts (8th century BC). Greek colonists built an archaic temple on the site in the 6th century BC. This was replaced in the 5th century BC by the Temple of Athena, which was inaugurated to celebrate the victory of Himera. In the 7th century the Byzantine Bishop Zosimus converted the temple to a church which was dedicated to the city's patron saint, Santa Lucia (c.281-301 AD). This early martyr took on many of the attributes of her pagan predecessor, Athena. Openings were cut in the temple's *cella* to form an arcade to connect the nave to the aisles formed by filling the spaces between the columns of its *pteron*; we may still discern the massive Doric columns embedded in the medieval flanking walls of the building. Atop these are the remains of *triglyphs* and *metopes* surmounted by Norman crenellation. The temple had literally been turned inside out to become a church. Syracuse cathedral became a mosque under the Muslims. The Normans constructed a new façade that was later destroyed by an earthquake and replaced with a grandiose Baroque façade between 1728 and 1754.

We shall arrive at the extraordinary Arethusa Fountain, a natural freshwater spring that wells up just a metre or so from the saltwater of the harbour.

There will also be the option of visiting the Museo Bellomo, a small museum in a medieval palace with a medieval sculpture collection. Its greatest treasure is Antonello da Messina's *Annunciation*, a recently restored triptych that is a masterpiece of the Renaissance, executed by Italy's first painter to use oils. The rest of the afternoon will be at leisure to enjoy the historic heart of this beautiful city before we meet again in the evening to partake in a Welcome Dinner at a local restaurant. (Overnight Syracuse) BD

### Day 3: Sunday 11 October, Syracuse – Noto – Syracuse

- Greek Theatre, Syracuse
- Quarries – prisons, Syracuse
- 'Ideal City' of Noto: A spectacular 'Baroque stage set'
- Basilica Santuario di Santa Lucia al Sepolcro: Caravaggio's late masterpiece, *The Burial of Saint Lucy*, Syracuse

Syracuse was probably the richest city in the Hellenic world. Although it did not control the whole of Sicily, which was made up of independent city-states, it was the major Greek city in the Western Mediterranean and in many ways outshone the Greek and Ionian cities which had originally colonised the island. This morning we will delve into Syracuse's past by visiting the archaeological complex of the great theatre. We will also visit the quarries where the stone used to build Syracuse was dug, and where the prisoners from the unsuccessful Athenian attack on the city during the Peloponnesian War (431-404 BC) were incarcerated.

In 1693 the east of Sicily was devastated by a terrible earthquake which destroyed many of its towns. One of these was the old town of Noto (Noto Antico), which had been built by Muslims high on a crag above the great Val di Noto, which dominates the south-western third of the island. In the 18th century most of these towns were rebuilt, including Noto, which was moved away from its defensible but inaccessible medieval site down to a broad shelf near the Mediterranean. This relocation enabled a regular plan to be adopted with broad, straight avenues that could be used by aristocratic carriages. These avenues, lined with the impressive façades of palaces and monasteries, provided a setting for aristocratic life that would have been



impossible in the cramped old hilltop town. The relocation, however, involved difficulties. The peasant population did not want to move because they would have to walk much further each day to their fields. Also, the broad escarpment where the new city was positioned was exposed to pirates that regularly raided Sicily's shores. Moreover, the plans for the new city were grandiose and could never be funded completely. The project nevertheless proceeded, but because the ordinary people would not move and because of lack of funds, many of the projected buildings behind the façades flanking the avenues were not constructed, giving Noto the fascinating aura of an 18th-century stage set. We shall explore this 'ideal city', which is arguably the prettiest of all the 18th-century ideal towns built after the earthquake.

Upon returning to Syracuse, we shall see Caravaggio's late masterpiece, *The Burial of Saint Lucy*, one of the great artist's most powerful works. (Overnight Syracuse) B

### Agrigento - 2 nights

Day 4: Monday 12 October, Syracuse – Piazza Armerina – Agrigento

- UNESCO World Heritage-listed Roman Villa of Casale, Piazza Armerina
- Dinner at local restaurant

This morning we drive inland from Syracuse, through the region that the 19th-century writer, Giovanni Verga, made famous in his novels about the horrors of peasant life in Sicily. One of his short works became the libretto of *Cavalleria Rusticana*.

Outside Piazza Armerina we will visit the Roman villa of Casale, located at the centre of an imperial *latifundium*, or agricultural estate. The villa is decorated with an important series of floor mosaics depicting hunts, chariot races and the capture of animals for the Colosseum in Rome. These mosaics, one of the most extensive mosaic series extant, reflect the influence of Roman Africa upon Sicily. Their vivid style and depiction of exotic animals clearly connect them to the mosaic styles of Libya, Tunisia and East Algeria. In the afternoon we drive to Agrigento, where we are based for two nights. (Overnight Agrigento) BD

Day 5: Tuesday 13 October, Agrigento

- Archaeological Museum, Agrigento
- Lunch at a local restaurant
- UNESCO World Heritage-listed Valley of the Temples

Greek Akragas (Roman Agrigentum) on the south coast of the island was founded by the Sicilian city of Gela in 581 BC. It was ruled by tyrants in the 6th century BC, was sacked by Carthage (406 BC) and conquered by Timoleon (340 BC). It was taken by the Romans (261 and 210 BC) and then became a Muslim city in 827 AD. It was conquered by Count Roger of Normandy in 1087. We shall first visit the Archaeological Museum, which has a large collection and some excellent models of the temples to be seen in the Greek archaeological site. After lunch at a local restaurant, we visit the Valley of the Temples, spectacularly located above the Mediterranean. We shall view the temples of Zeus, Hercules, Concord, and Hera. The Temple of Concord is the best-preserved Greek temple after the Theseion in Athens. (Overnight Agrigento) BL

### Palermo - 4 nights

Day 6: Wednesday 14 October, Agrigento – Selinunte – Segesta – Palermo



- Temples and City site, Selinunte
- Temple and Theatre, Segesta

The Greek city of Selinus (Selinunte) is of great significance because, like Agrigento and Segesta, it preserves monuments from the Greek Archaic period; few temples of such antiquity remain in Greece. Unlike many other sites from antiquity, Selinus was never over-built in later eras and therefore affords a clearer understanding of the layout of Greek cities than many of its counterparts. Its isolation on the lonely shores of southern Sicily gives it a particularly evocative quality. We will visit the acropolis, the fortified citadel of the Greek polis, and also several temples, reconstructed during the 19th and 20th centuries.

In the afternoon we visit the Greek site of Segesta. This city, whose well-preserved temple and theatre have few parallels, was founded by the Elymni. Its temple, which remained unfinished, gives a fascinating insight into how Greek temples were built. Its present state probably resulted from Segesta's defeat by Selinus in 416 BC. High above the sacred area of the city stands a 3rd-century theatre, looking out over a vast panorama, a vivid indication of the importance of siting and orientation to Greek cities and shrines.

In the early evening we will arrive in the Sicilian capital Palermo, where we will be based for four nights. (Overnight Palermo) B

#### Day 7: Thursday 15 October, Palermo

- Church San Francesco d'Assisi
- La Martorana (Santa Maria dell'Ammiraglio)
- Church San Cataldo
- Private lunch and tour of Palazzo Alliata di Pietratagliata, by special appointment
- Museo Archeologico Regionale 'Antonino Salinas'
- Church Santa Cita

Our morning's program commences with a visit to the Church of St Francis of Assisi, which contains works by the Baroque master, Serpotta. The renowned Baroque sculptor and architect left an indelible mark on art history with his intricate stucco decorations adorning churches and buildings. His masterful work in the 17th century epitomizes the exuberance and dynamism of the Baroque style in Sicilian architecture.

We then walk to 'La Martorana' (Santa Maria dell'Ammiraglio), which is a centrally-planned Byzantine church decorated with, arguably, the finest mosaics in Sicily (1140). It was built by Roger I's admiral, George of Antioch, and in 1433 was presented to a monastery founded by Eloisa Martorana, after whom it was later named. In 1588 it gained a Baroque façade. The companion to the Martorana is San Cataldo, a small, fascinating church. This cuboid building was never completed because, when the patron died, work on it ceased. Although San Cataldo never gained its mosaics, there is the hidden benefit of being able to clearly discern the structure of an Arabo-Norman church. Nearby is the Bellini restaurant, where Lampedusa wrote much of his great novel, *The Leopard*.

The highlight of the day is a visit to Palazzo Alliata di Pietragliata, where the Princess Signoretta Alliata Licata di Baucina will welcome the group and show us her historic home, where we will enjoy an exclusive buffet lunch. The crenellated tower, the tallest in the Palermo at the end of the 15th century, stands out imperiously, making the main façade, embellished with mullioned windows, unique and distinctive. The interiors, splendidly maintained, preserve some of the most significant and exquisite testimonies of Sicilian Rococo.

After lunch, we visit the city's archaeological museum, Museo Archeologico Regionale 'Antonio Salinas'.

This museum is newly reopened after a long period of renovation. The collection includes the metopes from the temples at Selinunte and treasures from other archaeological sites in Sicily.

We then walk to one of Serpotta's last commissions, the Santa Cita oratory. Here, in the elaborate High Baroque style, we find scenes representing the twelve feasts from the life of Christ, presented in the same stage-like boxes that we encountered earlier at San Lorenzo. A highlight of the decorative scheme is the representation of the important Battle of Lepanto that covers the rear wall of the room. (Overnight Palermo) BL

#### Day 8: Friday 16 October, Palermo – Monreale – Palermo

- La Zisa, 12th-century palace in the Arabo-Norman style
- Cathedral and Cloister, Monreale
- The Palermo of Giuseppe Tomasi di Lampedusa's novel, *The Leopard*: Private tour of the Palazzo Gangi, by special appointment

Outside Palermo's city walls, in the Conca d'Oro, the Normans laid out a royal park in the Islamic style, with palaces and hunting lodges. The Zisa Palace was built here by William II (1166-1189). This cuboid structure takes the form of an Islamic hall with a central cruciform reception chamber flanked by smaller rooms. The roof has *muqarnas* or stalactite decoration, corbels, and walls decorated with blind arcades. Water runs in a narrow channel through the palace. The building evokes the poetry of Islamic palatial life.

The Normans built a number of cathedrals in Sicily; the counterparts of their great shrines in Normandy, England and southern Italy. The most interesting of these are Monreale and Cefalù, in which naves of western inspiration are appended to apses that echo those of centrally planned Byzantine churches like Hosios Lukas in Greece. Between each apse and nave is a strange gabled crossing which provides a fluid spatial transition between these two heterogeneous spaces. This gable replaces the central dome in a Byzantine shrine which invariably possesses an image of 'Christ Pantocrator'. The absence of such a dome at Monreale and Cefalù necessitated that the 'Christ Pantocrator' image inhabit the conch of the apse.

We ascend the hills which surround the Conca d'Oro to Monreale, where we visit the cathedral and its cloister. Whereas Cefalù's apsidal area resembles those of tall, narrow, centrally planned Byzantine churches, Monreale's is wide and airy. Its nave resembles those of Early Christian basilicas in Rome. The apsidal 'Christ Pantocrator' is less ethereal at Monreale than at Cefalù, and the wall mosaics which celebrate the lives of Christ, the Virgin and Saints Peter and Paul, are more lively than those in the Martorana or Cappella Palatina. This reflects the influence of the western narrative tradition upon Monreale, the last of the Sicilian churches to be constructed.

The exterior walls of the cathedral's apse are enlivened by splendid blind arcades. These are articulated by sophisticated geometrical patterns of coloured stone inlay. Their forms are thought to derive from Arab sacred geometry and astrology. To the south of the cathedral is its cloister – a masterful fusion of Islamic form and Norman decoration. The arches of the cloister, like Monreale's apse, are patterned with inlay. In one corner, a fountain shaped like a palm tree is surrounded by a small arcade; an architectural representation of an oasis. The columns of the cloister, in contrast, are topped with storiated capitals like those of Cluniac monasteries and churches on the pilgrim route to Santiago de Compostela.

Upon returning to Palermo the highlight of today, and perhaps of your whole tour, is a visit to the exquisite, untouched 18th-century Gangi palace. It was in the ballroom of Palazzo Gangi that Luchino Visconti filmed the famous ball scene for his cinematic adaptation of Giuseppe Tomasi di Lampedusa's melancholic, ironic novel, *The Leopard*. You will be shown around this private palace, which is almost exactly as it was in the

age when the novel was set. (Overnight Palermo) B

Day 9: Saturday 17 October, Palermo

- Oratorio San Lorenzo
- Private tour of Palazzo Conte Federico, by special appointment
- Palazzo dei Normanni: Cappella Palatina and Royal Apartments
- 'Teatro dei Pupi' – traditional Sicilian puppet show

In the morning we pay a visit to San Lorenzo, a neighbouring oratory decorated with the cycles of the life of St Laurence and the Passion of Christ. Also by Serpotta, each scene in the narrative is presented in a small stage-like box that enclosed the space and allowed the master sculptor to convey an illusionary sense of depth, with the main figures in each scene dramatically interacting. The viewer is given the impression that he or she is looking through a window into the lives of Christ and St Laurence.

We will be then invited by Contessa Alwine and Conte Federico to visit Palazzo Conte Federico, their private residence, by special appointment. This is the private home of Count Federico, whose line can be traced back directly to the Emperor Friedrich II. Palazzo Conte Federico is, in fact, the oldest continuously inhabited palace in Palermo. It was built into the Punic-Roman city walls which originally surrounded ancient Panormus. One of its rooms is part of a tower of Arabo-Norman origin and is one of the few standing sections of the old city wall. Above its double-arched Norman windows are the coats of arms of the imperial Hohenstaufen family of the kingdom of Aragon and the city of Palermo. The palace also has medieval, Renaissance and Baroque rooms and, therefore, encapsulates the history of the city in its layout, decoration and furniture. High painted ceilings from the 14th century, Baroque ceiling frescoes by Vito D'Anna and Gaspare Serenario, various sculptures, Marabitti's lion fountain (17th century) and the grand stairway with the interior walls by Marvuglia, are features of Conte Federico's fine home.

Palermo, founded by the Phoenicians, eclipsed Greek Syracuse under the Muslims, who made it capital of Sicily. The Normans also made it their royal capital and many of the most beautiful monuments of the city and its surroundings come from this period. We spend the remainder of today in Palermo, exploring the town with its combination of Byzantine, Arabo-Muslim and Norman styles. We will visit Palazzo dei Normanni (Palazzo Reale) and the Cappella Palatina (Palatine Chapel), which show this fusion of elements. The Palatine Chapel takes the form of a western basilica but its nave has one of the finest Muslim wooden ceilings extant. Below this are Byzantine mosaics and Muslim inlaid stone dados.

In the late afternoon, we attend a special puppet show performance, enacting the wars of Charlemagne and his knights against the Arabs at one of Palermo's few remaining traditional puppet theatres. This lively performance, in which there is much fighting and spilling of puppet entrails (in the form of streamers), draws upon theatre traditions of the 19th century which romanticised Sicily's past; it was at this time that literature began to emphasise the island's 'exotic' heritage. The epic cycles told in the puppet shows, however, draw upon more ancient sources. When the art of puppetry was introduced to Sicily in the early 19th century, it fused with the craft of the Sicilian storyteller who entertained people in the streets of the cities, towns and villages. This form of entertainment is thought by some to have its roots in the Norman period. (Overnight Palermo) B

### Lipari - 3 nights

Day 10: Sunday 18 October, Palermo – Cefalù – Milazzo – Lipari (Aeolian Islands)

- Cefalù Cathedral

- Hydrofoil from Milazzo to the Aeolian island of Lipari

This morning we check out of our Palermo hotel and drive to Cefalù, where Roger II built an Arabo-Norman pleasure-palace and his cathedral. The west end of Cefalù Cathedral is a particularly noteworthy fusion of Arab and Norman architectural elements. Whilst its general massing could be called Norman, the twin bell towers which dominate it may be based upon North African minarets. Cefalù's *Christ Pantocrator* is more ethereal than those of the Cappella Palatina and Monreale. Cefalù's mystical image is probably of purely Byzantine provenance, whereas the more vivacious and worldly Monreale *Christ Pantocrator* was made by Byzantine-trained Sicilian craftsmen. From Cefalù we drive east along the north coast of Sicily to Milazzo. From here we take a hydrofoil to the Aeolian island of Lipari. (Overnight Lipari) BD

#### Day 11: Monday 19 October, Aeolian Islands: Lipari – Panarea – Stromboli – Lipari

- Morning at leisure in the town of Lipari
- Cruise to the islands of Panarea and Stromboli

Our morning is at leisure to relax and enjoy the town of Lipari. We then spend this afternoon and evening on a cruise to the islands of Stromboli and Panarea, some 20 kilometres away. We shall disembark on Panarea, where there will be time to explore the village or simply relax and enjoy the view. We then continue on to Stromboli. After time to stroll about this charming island we return to our boat to enjoy the sunset spectacle of the regular spurts of lava and sparks that erupt from the summit to illuminate the night sky. (Overnight Lipari) BD

#### Day 12: Tuesday 20 October, Lipari

- Lipari Archaeological Museum
- Lipari Island Tour

Lipari has known human habitation since at least the 6th millennium BC. With Sardinia, it was one of the earliest (Neolithic) exporters of obsidian, which found its way all across Europe. It was colonised by the Greeks, then raided by the Arabs from Sicily, who depopulated the island and then used it as a base to attack the coasts of the Tyrrhenian Sea (Italy, Sardinia, Corsica and the south of France). The Normans eventually drove them from the island and the Pisans forced them from the Tyrrhenian. The Turks later raided Lipari and enslaved its population. The Emperor Charles V repopulated Lipari, and caused massive defensive fortifications to be built.

This morning we shall visit Lipari's major archaeological museum, and then, after lunchtime at leisure to explore the quaint old town, we will board our coach for an afternoon tour of the island. Lipari's landscape is very beautiful, and its coasts afford spectacular views of its fellow islands. (Overnight Lipari) BD

### Taormina - 2 nights

#### Day 13: Wednesday 21 October, Lipari – Milazzo – Messina – Reggio Calabria – Taormina

- Hydrofoil from Lipari to Milazzo
- Museo Regionale Interdisciplinare incl. works by Carravaggio: *Adoration of the Shepherds* and *Resurrection of Lazarus*
- Lunch at a local restaurant, Reggio Calabria
- 'Riace Bronzes', Reggio Calabria



Early this morning we take the hydrofoil back from Lipari to Milazzo. We drive to Messina, where we will visit the city's regional museum to view two of Caravaggio's last works, the *Adoration of the Shepherds* and *Resurrection of Lazarus*. We also view works saved from churches after the disastrous tidal wave of 1908. Among these is a beautiful figurative *San Gregoria* polyptych by Antonello da Messina, who is often credited as the first (Renaissance) Italian to work in oils. There are also Byzantine mosaics a fine small medieval sculpture collection and the ram bow of an ancient Roman warship.

Our coach takes us onto a ferry to cross the Strait of Messina to Reggio Calabria on the Italian mainland. Here, after lunching together at a local restaurant, we view the famous 'Riace Bronzes', the monumental Greek bronze figures found in the sea off Riace in 1972. These are some of the most significant works of Greek antiquity to be seen anywhere. We then take the ferry back to Messina and continue south to Taormina, where the evening will be at leisure. (Overnight Taormina) BL

#### Day 14: Thursday 22 October, Taormina

- Graeco-Roman Theatre, Taormina
- Casa Cuseni, Taormina (*to be confirmed in 2026*)
- Afternoon at leisure
- Farewell Dinner

Mount Etna dominates Taormina's southern horizon, acting as a backdrop to its ancient theatre. When the Romans incorporated Greek and Carthaginian Sicily into their empire they transformed Taormina and its theatre. The theatre, which was once a simple conch carved out of the mountainside looking out at Etna, gained a monumental backdrop like Roman theatres elsewhere. Taormina was fortified during the Middle Ages and small palaces were built by its major families.

We shall spend this morning exploring Taormina and its ancient theatre. We then visit Casa Cuseni where Pablo Picasso, Greta Garbo, Coco Chanel, Bertrand Russell and Roald Dahl all stayed in this villa, built in 1905 by British painter Robert Hawthorn Kitson, the son of a rich industrialist in Leeds. It was then Daphne Phelps, Kitson's niece, who studied with Anna Freud and was a friend of Albert Einstein, who devoted the greater part of her life to the preservation of the house, which she inherited from her uncle in 1948. Daphne Phelps loved to surround herself with artists and thinkers and turned the villa into a hotel for artists and researchers.

The remainder of the day will be at leisure before we meet up again for a Farewell Dinner at a local restaurant. (Overnight Taormina) BD

#### Day 15: Friday 23 October, Depart Taormina. Tour Ends

- Airport transfer from Taormina to Catania Airport for those taking the ASA 'designated' flight

Participants travelling on the ASA 'designated' flight will transfer to Catania airport in the early morning. Alternatively, you may wish to extend your stay in Italy. Please contact ASA if you require further assistance.  
B

## Accommodation

A special feature of this tour is our stay in several heritage hotels. All rooms have en suite bathroom.

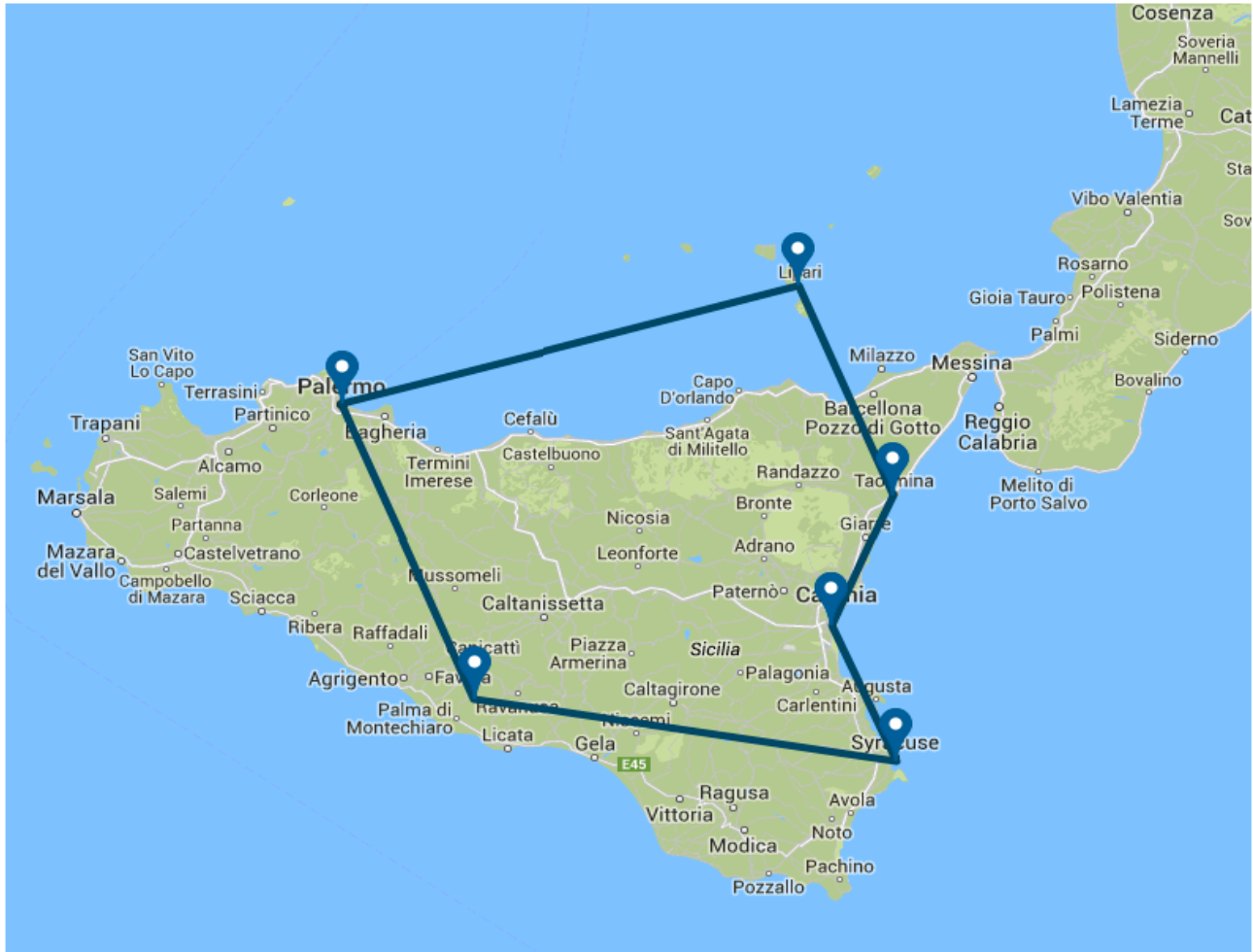
- Syracuse (3 nights): 3-star [Hotel Gutkowski](#) – a charming boutique hotel housed in a historic building, located on the island of Ortigia.
- Agrigento (2 nights): 4-star [Colleverde Park Hotel](#) – a modern hotel located near the Valley of the Temples.
- Palermo (4 nights): 4-star [Grand Hotel Piazza Borsa](#) – located in the heart of the historic centre, the hotel incorporates 3 adjacent buildings that once formed a grand monastery; it retains a number of historic features including a beautiful interior cloister.
- Lipari (3 nights): 4-star [Hotel Tritone](#) – located close to the town centre, set within a lush garden.
- Taormina (2 nights): 4-star [Hotel Excelsior Palace](#) – perched on a promontory that juts out over the western coastline, offering unbeatable views of the Ionian Sea and Mount Etna.

*Note: Hotels are subject to change, in which case a hotel of similar standard will be provided.*

### Single Supplement

Payment of this supplement will ensure accommodation in a single-occupancy room throughout the tour. In all hotels on the tour, this will be a double/twin room for single occupancy. The number of rooms available for single occupancy is extremely limited. People wishing to take this supplement are therefore advised to book well in advance.

## Tour Map



## Tour Price & Inclusions

AUD \$TBA Land Content Only – Early-Bird Special: Book before 30 September 2025

AUD \$TBA Land Content Only

AUD \$TBA Single Supplement

Tour Price (Land Content Only) includes:

- Accommodation in twin-share rooms with private facilities in 3- and 4-star hotels
- Breakfast daily, lunches & evening meals indicated in the itinerary where: B=breakfast, L=Lunch & D=dinner.
- Drinks at welcome and farewell meals. Other meals may not have drinks included.
- Transportation by air-conditioned coach.
- Transportation by boat between Sicily and the Aeolian Islands; Sicily and Calabria as detailed in the itinerary.
- Excursion by public boat from Lipari to Panarea and Stromboli (please note: the itinerary may be altered in the event of bad weather or volcanic activity).
- Airport-hotel transfers if travelling on the ASA 'designated' flights.
- Porterage of one piece of luggage per person at hotels (not at airports or ferry terminals).
- Lecture and site visit program.
- Tour handbook.
- Entrance fees to museums, monuments & puppet show.
- Use of audio headsets during site visits.
- Tips for the coach driver, local guides and restaurants for included meals.

Tour Price (Land Content Only) does not include:

- Airfare: Australia-Catania, Catania-Australia
- Personal spending money
- Luggage in excess of 20kg (44lbs)
- Travel insurance





## Fitness Criteria & Practical Information

Fitness Level



### Level 2 - Intermediate

For people with energetic lifestyles and very good mobility

RATING: 2.5

You must be able to:

- manage at least five to six hours of physical activity per day with ease.
- walk at a regular to moderate pace up to 5-7kms per day. Many walks include uneven terrain, cobbled streets and steep ascents/descents. Visits to hilltop towns are on foot and involve walks uphill from the coach parking area to the town centre.
- keep up with the group at all times.
- negotiate challenging historic & archaeological sites which may include several flights of stairs and/or rocky terrain. Lifts are not always available at museums.
- stand for one to two hours during visits to galleries and museums without the need to sit.
- board/alight coaches, ferries, hydrofoils and smaller boats with steep steps unassisted.
- cope with extensive coach travel that includes winding mountainous and coastal roads.
- contend with a shower over a bath; walk-in showers may not be available at all hotels
- manage your own luggage at some hotels and on/off the ferry to Lipari.

### Fitness Levels

Please also view the fitness criteria required for our tours, graded from Level 1 to Level 3, at [www.asatours.com.au/fitness-level/](http://www.asatours.com.au/fitness-level/)

All ASA tours are active programs suitable for people with a good level of mental and physical fitness and good mobility. They are not suitable for people who lack stamina, have difficulty walking at the group's

pace or who have mobility issues. An unavoidable aspect of every tour is the need to manage walking, stair-climbing and standing for long periods of time.

It is a condition of travel that all participants agree to accept ASA's directions in relation to their suitability to participate in activities undertaken on the tour, and that ASA retains the sole discretion to direct a tour participant to refrain from a particular activity on part of the tour. Before enrolling on an ASA tour please read the fitness requirements carefully.

## Booking Conditions

### ASA INTENTION TO TRAVEL APPLICATION FORM

Some ASA tours fill almost immediately. Don't miss out! You can register your 'Intention to Travel' by completing this application and returning this to ASA with a AUD \$200.00 per person deposit. Once the tour price has been published, the itinerary and ASA Reservation Application Form will be sent to you. From the time you receive the itinerary you will have two weeks to either:

- Send us a completed ASA Reservation Application Form together with an additional deposit of AUD \$800.00 per person. On receipt of this Reservation Application and deposit, ASA will process your booking and if approved, send you a tour confirmation. At this time your deposit of AUD \$1000.00 is subject to the tour's Booking Conditions.

Or

- CANCEL your Intention to Travel in writing. ASA will refund your AUD \$200.00 per person deposit, less a \$66.00 service fee (including GST).



# Intention to Travel Application

TOUR NAME \_\_\_\_\_

TOUR DATES \_\_\_\_\_

## Booking before the tour price is available

Some ASA tours fill almost immediately. Don't miss out! You can register your 'Intention to Travel' by completing this application and returning this to ASA with a AUD\$200.00 per person deposit. Once the tour price has been published, the itinerary and ASA Reservation Application Form will be sent to you. From the time you receive the itinerary you will have two weeks to either:

- Send us a completed ASA Reservation Application Form together with an additional deposit of AUD\$800.00 per person applicable for International tours OR AUD\$300.00 per person applicable for Australian tours. On receipt of this Reservation Application and deposit, ASA will process your booking and if approved, send you a tour confirmation. At this time your full deposit is subject to the tour's Booking Conditions.

### OR

- Cancel your Intention to Travel in writing. ASA will refund your AUD\$200.00 per person deposit, less a \$66.00 service fee (including GST).

## Applicant Details (as in passport)

TITLE Mr ☐ Mrs ☐ Ms ☐ Miss ☐ Dr ☐ Other \_\_\_\_\_

FIRST NAME \_\_\_\_\_ Preferred FIRST NAME \_\_\_\_\_

MIDDLE NAME \_\_\_\_\_ SURNAME \_\_\_\_\_

POSTAL ADDRESS \_\_\_\_\_

CITY \_\_\_\_\_ STATE \_\_\_\_\_ COUNTRY \_\_\_\_\_ POSTCODE \_\_\_\_\_

TEL. (AH) ( ) \_\_\_\_\_ TEL. (BH) ( ) \_\_\_\_\_ Mobile Tel: \_\_\_\_\_

EMAIL address \_\_\_\_\_

Date of birth \_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_ GENDER Male ☐ Female ☐

## Tour Accommodation (rooming preferences)

I/we would like: ☐ a twin-bedded room ☐ a double-bedded room ☐ a room for sole occupancy

I am travelling: ☐ on my own ☐ with a friend/family member Travel Companion \_\_\_\_\_

## Meals

☐ I do not have any specific dietary requests

Please **X** the box if you **CAN NOT** eat any of the following:

☐ fish ☐ poultry ☐ red meat ☐ dairy products

☐ eggs ☐ pork ☐ nuts

☐ Other \_\_\_\_\_

## Correspondence

Your preferred method of correspondence ☐ Postal Mail ☐ Email Address \_\_\_\_\_

## Participation Criteria

To participate in an ASA tour, you must be reasonably fit, in good health and able to participate in all activities without assistance from Tour Leaders or other tour members. If you require assistance, a fit and able travel companion must undertake to accompany and assist you with all tasks for the duration of the whole tour.

ASA's ability to make reasonable adjustments to accommodate your specific needs, your health and safety and the health and safety of other tour members, is of paramount importance to us. For this reason the ASA Reservation Application includes a Medical Information section. As a general guideline, you must be able to accomplish each of these activities *without assistance or support*:-

- walk & stand unassisted for at least 2-3 hours a day in hot, humid conditions
- walk confidently on and over uneven surfaces
- climb at least 3 flights of stairs
- embark and disembark from ferries, buses and trains
- walk up and down steep slopes
- walk at a steady pace and no less than 1 km every 15 - 20 minutes
- organise, manage and carry your own luggage
- follow and remember tour instructions
- meet punctually at designated times and places
- administer your own medication.

Applicant's Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Dated \_\_\_\_\_

## Tour / Course Name

Name of Traveller 1 \_\_\_\_\_

Name of Traveller 2 \_\_\_\_\_

I have enclosed a payment to the value of \$ \_\_\_\_\_ (including CC or bank fee if applicable) for this tour

Payment by (please indicate): ☐ Cheque ☐ Direct Debit (see below) ☐ Credit Card (see below)

## International Payments

Welcome to our international travellers! If you are making a payment and do not have an Australian bank account/credit card, we can only accept payment as follows:

- via credit card with the applicable fee - the credit card company/bank will set the exchange rate
- via bank transfer; please give your surname and tour code (eg. Smith 21705) as a reference and ask your bank to allow for all charges.

Bank cheques or personal cheques will not be accepted.

### By Cheque (accept Australian cheques only)

Please make cheques payable to *Australians Studying Abroad*

### Direct Deposit or Internet Banking

You will need to:

1. Provide your bank with ASA's bank details (see below) and the amount you wish to transfer OR make a direct deposit through any ANZ branch
2. Include any fees levied by the banks
3. Provide a reference number (Mobile or last name recommended).
4. Complete section below, including confirmation no. (given when transaction completed).

### Australians Studying Abroad bank details

Bank ANZ  
Branch 420 St Kilda Road, Melbourne Vic  
Swift Code ANZBAU3M  
BSB 013-423  
Account No 3472-32759

Bank confirmation No. \_\_\_\_\_

Reference used: Mobile or last name recommended \_\_\_\_\_

Date Money Transferred \_\_\_\_\_

### Credit Card Payment

Credit card fees apply: Mastercard, Visa & American Express 2%

Please debit my: ☐ Mastercard ☐ Visa ☐ American Express

I authorise ASA to debit my credit card for the amount due plus the applicable fee as above

Credit Card Number \_\_\_\_\_

Expiry Date \_\_\_\_\_

Security Code (CVC) \_\_\_\_\_

Bank the Card is linked to (eg. NAB or ANZ) \_\_\_\_\_

Cardholders Name \_\_\_\_\_

Cardholders Billing Address \_\_\_\_\_

Postcode \_\_\_\_\_

State \_\_\_\_\_

Country \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Email \_\_\_\_\_

Cardholders Signature \_\_\_\_\_

### AUSTRALIANS STUDYING ABROAD

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