

Simply Sicily: The Sun and Sea of Southern Italy

Taormina, Castelmola, Siracusa, Castelbuono, Savoca, Cefalu', Palermo, Monreale, Agrigento, Piazza Armerina, Ragusa and Modica



A TWELVE DAY ITALIAN JOURNEY

June 13th – June 24th, 2019

KEYROW TOURS

60 Georgia Road Trumansburg, New York 14886 Tel: 315.491.3711

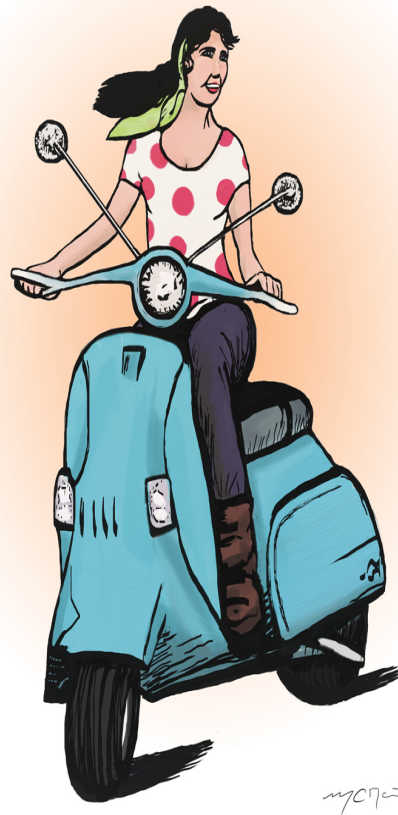
Day#1: Departure for Sicily

Thursday: June 13th, 2019

In conjunction with AAA Travel (Ithaca, NY), Keyrow Tours is pleased to make all flight arrangements, including primary flights originating anywhere in the United States and international flights.

We we will depart from a major international airport located on the east coast of the United States [usually JFK (NY) or Philadelphia (PA)] and fly into Catania, Sicily with one international layover.

Transportation to and from your primary airport of departure is each person's responsibility.



“What is the fatal charm of Italy? What do we find there that can be found nowhere else? I believe it is a certain permission to be human, which other places, other countries, lost long ago.”
~ Erica Jong

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Day #2: “Welcome to Taormina”

Friday: June 14th, 2019

Arrival at Catania’s Fontanrossa International Airport

After collecting our luggage, private minivans will carry us to our first fabulous Sicilian destination: Taormina! The 40-minute drive is a scenic orientation to the North East coast of Sicily.

Taormina

Taormina is a charming town on the east coast of Sicily in the Province of Messina, about midway between Messina and Catania. This breathtaking destination overlooks the turquoise blue waters of the Ionian Sea. The area around Taormina was inhabited by a group of people called the “Siculi” even before the Greeks arrived on the Sicilian coast in 734 BC. Many centuries later after the fall of the Western Roman Empire, Taormina was under Muslim rule from 902 AD-1078 AD. It was subsequently captured by the Normans, and then later by the French. Mama mia, what a complex history! During the early 20th century the town became a colony of expatriate artists, writers, and intellectuals including D. H. Lawrence who stayed here from 1920 to 1922, and Truman Capote from 1950-1951.

A.) The Corso Umberto I

B.) The Church of San Domenico

C.) The Ancient Theatre of Taormina

The "Teatro antico di Taormina" is an ancient Greek theatre that was built in the seventh century BC. One of the most celebrated ruins in Sicily, it has a diameter of 120 metres and therefore stands as the second largest of its kind in Sicily after that of Syracuse. Today the theatre is still frequently used for operatic and theatrical performances, and for concerts.

Back to hotel

Day’s recap

Cena! (dinner... Sicilian style!)

*“For us to go to Italy
and to penetrate into Italy
is like a most fascinating act of self-discovery—
back, back down the old ways of time.
Strange and wonderful chords awake in us,
and vibrate again after many hundreds of years
of complete forgetfulness.”*

~ D.H. Lawrence

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Day #3: “Pulling your strings Siracusa!”

Saturday: June 15th, 2019

European breakfast on the hotel’s terrace with view of Mount Etna!

Morning Departure for Siracusa

A.) The Duomo Cathedral

The cathedral (Italian: *Duomo*) was built by bishop Zosimo in the 7th century over the great *Temple of Athena* (5th century BC), on Ortygia island.

B.) The Church of Saint Lucy

Santa Lucia alla Badia, has a Baroque edifice and was built after the earthquake of 1693. It houses the famous painting of “The Burial of St. Lucy” by Caravaggio.

C.) Outdoor market and Temple of Apollo with lunch

The **market** in Ortigia is a small, relaxed farm and fish market with a sense of humor as vendors compete for customers by calling out their wares. Via Benedictus comes to life every morning except Sunday. Different types of fish, all freshly caught that morning, are featured. Lemons and tomatoes are arranged amongst the mussels... tuna is expertly cut into steaks... and sea urchins make a colorful display. There are local fruits and vegetables, fabulous cheeses, meats, bread and wine. Next to the market is the **Temple of Apollo**, a Greek Temple dating back to the 6th century BC.

Pranzo! (Lunch included)

D.) Traditional puppet show: late afternoon

Have you ever noticed how the logo for Francis Ford Coppola’s 1972 movie “The Godfather” has a hand holding puppet strings? Some say that it symbolizes the Godfather’s power, like that of a puppeteer controlling his minion of puppets. Puppet plays in Sicily date back to the 15th century as a popular form of entertainment for all classes of people. The subject matter of the “Opera dei Pupi” is derived from Sicilian history, literature, folklore and comedy. Opera dei Pupi features: swordfights, jousts and battles with monsters or sorceresses. When a hero slashes with his sword, limbs may fall from the villain. In some performances the wounds actually bleed (blood is traditionally made from beet juice). Sicily’s history has been turbulent and over the centuries the ferocity has imprinted itself in this most traditional form of entertainment. Popcorn not included...

Evening return to Taormina

Day’s recap

Cena! (dinner on your own)

“Traveling is almost like talking with men of other centuries.”

~ Rene Descartes

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Day#4: “Timelessness in Taormina”

Sunday: June 16th, 2019

European Breakfast

Morning departure for Castelmola

Castelmola is a beautiful village perched high above Taormina. This lovely hamlet is considered one of the most beautiful villages in all of Sicily. Warm, friendly people and spectacular panoramas characterize the village. Castelmola is a kind of “balcony” over Taormina and the bay of Giardini Naxos, framed by the mysterious and beautiful active volcano, Mount Etna. Its narrow winding streets and old world charm make Castelmola a destination for anyone wishing to experience the enchanting beauty of Sicily. Don't forget to enjoy a glass of Vino di Mandorla (sweet almond wine) at Bar Turrisi and be delighted by this bar's unique décor and friendly staff.

Free Day from 11:00

Option #1: Life is a Beach!

Take Taormina's cable car down its beautiful panoramic seaside cliff to Mazzarò and Isola Bella.

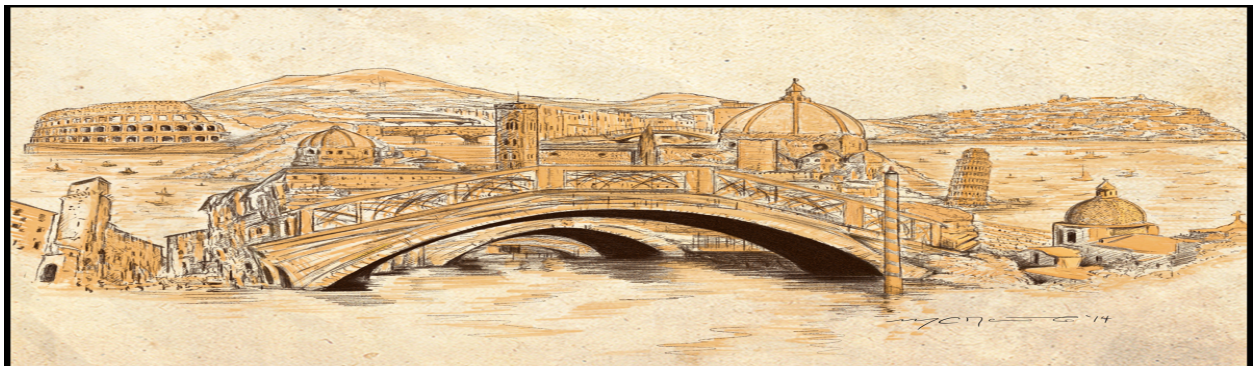
The small beach of Mazzarò is set in a bay to the north of Isola Bella, and is one of the most popular in the area. Its pebble shore is dotted by sun umbrellas and beach beds available for rent. There are also free beach areas. Within walking distance is the Isola Bella... perhaps Taormina's most beautiful beach. It is also a pebble beach, set at the foot of the town, and linked to the mainland by a narrow strip of beach that is covered by water at high tide.

Option #2: Enjoy the shops, hike and explore. Take a trip to a winery!

Price for optional trip to a winery is dependent on how many people wish to go. Paolo can arrange everything... transportation and reservations!

Pranzo! (Lunch on your own!)

Day's recap and Cena! (Dinner!)



“Sicily is an island lying outside time, where past events endure in an external present, a beach on which the tides of successive civilizations have heaped in disorder their assorted treasure.” ~ Vincent Cronin, The Golden Honeycomb

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Day #5: “Treasures of Cefalù”

Monday: June 17th, 2019

Breakfast on the terrace

Morning departure for Cefalù

The village of Savoca and Bar Vitelli

Shall we have a drink at Bar Vitelli, where scenes of Francis Ford Coppola’s “The Godfather” were filmed?

Pranzo!

Our first stop en route to Cefalu' is the town of Castelbuono, located in the province of Palermo. Here we will dine at the rustic Hostaria Nangalarruni, where Michelin rated chef Giuseppe Carollo has made it his mission to use local, seasonal ingredients, creating dishes that honor his childhood and his people. Nangalarruni is truly off the beaten path and an absolute treat.

Cefalù

Dating back to the 5th century BC, the town of Cefalu' contains elements of Arab, Norman, Roman and Greek civilizations. Cefalù is located on the northern coast of Sicily, on the Tyrrhenian Sea. The name “Cefalù” first appears in historical accounts from 396 BC. In 858 it was conquered by the Arabs, and for centuries it was part of the Emirate of Sicily. In 1063 the Normans captured the town and built a beautiful cathedral.

A.) The Cathedral

Construction of the Cathedral was begun in 1131, in the style of Norman Architecture. The exterior is well preserved, and is largely decorated with interlacing pointed arches. On each side of the façade is a massive tower. The interior of the cathedral includes fine specimens of the Byzantine art (1148). Most noteworthy is the figure of the Pantocrator (“Christ the Teacher”): like a Norman Viking, Christ appears with blond hair and blue eyes... Hmmm!

B.) The “Lavatoio” Wash House

The Saracen wash-house, called the Lavatoio, is a sight worth seeing. Located in the center of town, this is a precursor to the modern public laundromat. Far below the city, a little river called the Cefalino runs beneath the town’s houses and buildings and empties into the sea. An ancient Greek myth says that the water is actually the tears of a river nymph who is still crying for the death of her beloved husband. An elegant lava staircase leads to basins carved in the rocks where the water flows through 22 vents, 15 of which have the form of lion heads. The Lavatoio was used by women until recent times, who knelt to wash their clothes by hand on the stone scrubbers. Need to do your laundry? This is an economical way to go!

C.) Free time in Cefalu’

Cefalu’s is a scenic fishing village that is perfect for easy walking, shopping, and people watching....

Day’s recap

Dinner on your own

“Thou paradise of exiles, Italy!” ~ Percy Shelley

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Day #6: “Inspired by Cefalù”

Tuesday: June 18th, 2019

Continental breakfast

A.) Optional morning hike to “La Rocca”

La Rocca is a real mix of natural and ancient history. “The Rock” was known by the ancient Phoenicians as the Fortress of Hercules. It is a massive 900 foot high crag of stone, and the ancient Greek inhabitants thought it resembled a gigantic head: In the local dialect, “Cefalù” means “head” ... hence the town's name.

The remains of the Cefalù Castle, dating back to the 13th-14th centuries, sit atop La Rocca. Near the ruins are the remnants of the Temple of Diana, a megalithic building which dates back to the 9th century BC. It is believed to have originally had a sacred function connected with local water worship; there is a cistern well which also dates back to the 9th Century BC.

B.) Personal time for beach, shopping and exploring

Day’s recap

Cena! (Group dinner)



“Travel does what good novelists also do to the life of the everyday, placing it like a picture in a frame or a gem in its setting, so that the intrinsic qualities are made more clear. Travel does this with the very stuff that everyday life is made of, giving to it the sharp contour and meaning of art.”

~ Freya Stark

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Day#7: “Promises in Palermo”

Wednesday: June 19th, 2019

Continental breakfast

Morning departure for Palermo

A.) The Ballaro’ Street Market

Wake up your senses with the smells of Africa, and beyond! Palermo’s street market is an absolute treat as sellers yell their wares to each passerby, hoping for a new customer. With beautiful displays of fresh seafood, meats, cheese, vegetables and traditional foods such as flour and chickpea fritters... the market is an authentic experience of Sicily, and a memory maker!

B.) Palermo’s Cathedral

Dedicated to the Assumption of Mary, this church was built in the year 1185. It was turned into a Muslim mosque for a time period, and then back to a Catholic church. As the final resting places of the Emperor Henry VI, his son Frederick II and wife Constance of Aragon... this is a real architectural treat!

C.) Time to personally explore

Pranzo! (Group lunch)

D.) Departure for Monreale

Monreale is a historic hill town, just outside of Palermo. This picturesque place is most famous for its fine gold mosaics in the town's great Norman cathedral. The cathedral and cloisters at Monreale are frequently cited as the island's greatest Norman buildings, and date to the twelfth century. Monreale is a great place to get views of the Conca d'Oro, the fertile valley in which Palermo grew. On a clear day you can see the Aeolian Islands...

E.) Tour of Monreale’s Arab-flavored cathedral

Back to Cefalu’

Day’s recap

Cena! (Dinner on you own)

“Her gaze dims as her nostalgia for Palermo overcomes her. Those smells of seaweed dried by the sun, of capers, of ripe figs, she will never find them anywhere else; those burnt and scented shores, those waves slowly breaking, jasmine petals flaking in the sun.”

— Dacia Maraini, *The Silent Duchess*

Day #8: “Masseria Mandrascate

Thursday: June 20th, 2019

European Breakfast

Free morning in Cefalu’

***Pranzo!* (Lunch on your own)**

Departure for Masseria Mandrascate

Welcome to your new home for our last 4 nights! Mandrascate is a fortified farm from the 17th century, and we have rented the entire place just for our group! This is a typical example of old Sicilian architecture. A member of the Association of Italian Historical Mansions, this farm is located in the heart of Sicily, an area which cultivates wheat, olive trees and vineyards. The guest rooms are decorated in a traditional Sicilian style, complete with antique family furniture. Take a refreshing swim in the pool surrounded by aromatic plants and fig trees. Stroll through the Italian garden, complete with fish pond. We might run into a few geese and chickens which run loose in the courtyard...



Day's recap
Cena (Dinner)

“Traveling forces you to lose sight of all the familiar comforts of home. Nothing is yours except the essential things – air, sleep, dreams, the sea, the sky – all things tending towards the eternal or what we imagine of it.”

~ Cesare Pavese

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Day #9: Time Travel in Agrigento”

Friday: June 21st, 2019

European breakfast

Late morning departure for Agrigento and the Valley of the Temples

Agrigento is a city on the southern coast of Sicily, a pleasant 2 hours drive. Once the site of the ancient Greek city of Akragas, this was one of the leading cities of *Magna Graecia* during the golden age of Ancient Greece. Agrigento was founded on a plateau overlooking the sea. It was established around 580 BC and became one of the richest and most famous of all the Greek colonies.

We will visit the best-preserved ancient Greek temples that Sicily has to offer, all dating back to the years 400-500 BC. These include:

The Temple of Concordia (440-430 BC)

The Temple of Juno (450-440 BC)

The Temple of Hercules (500 BC)

The Temple of Olympian Zeus (480 BC)



Return to Mandrascate

Day's recap and *Cena* (Dinner)

*“I love the language, that soft bastard Latin,
Which melts like kisses from a female mouth,
And sounds as if it should be writ on satin
With syllables which breathe of the sweet South.”*
~ George Gordon Noel Byron

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Day #10: “Ragusa and Modica”

Saturday: June 22nd, 2019

European breakfast

Morning departure for Modica

Modica has Neolithic origins, and is well-known for its rich repertoire of culinary specialities, especially chocolate! Rebuilt following the devastating earthquake of 1693, its architecture has provides a striking testimony to the exuberant genius of Baroque art in Europe and is part of UNESCO Heritage Sites in Italy.

Departure for Ragusa

The origins of Ragusa can be traced back to 2000 BC. The ancient city is located on a striking 980 foot hill. There is both an “upper town” (Ragusa Superiore) and a “lower town” (Ragusa Inferiore), that are fused together by bridges. Here we will visit the Cathedral of Saint John the Baptist, the medieval castle, the Cathedral of Saint George and other beautiful structures, streets and alleyways that are influenced by Gothic, Baroque, Arabic and Norman designs.

Pranzo! (Optional light lunch)

Back to Mandrascate

Day’s recap

Cena! (Group Dinner!)

“You may have the universe, if I may have Italy.”
~ Giuseppe Verdi

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Day #11: “Piazza Armerina and Life on the Farm”

Sunday: June 23rd, 2019

Continental breakfast

Piazza Armerina and the Villa Romana

The Villa Romana del Casale is a Roman villa built in the first quarter of the 4th century and located about 3 km outside the town of Piazza Armerina in southern Sicily. Containing the richest, largest and most complex collection of Roman mosaics in the world, it is one of 44 UNESCO World Heritage Sites in Italy. The villa was constructed as the center of a vast agricultural estate that covered the surrounding area. The owner was probably a member of senatorial class if not of the imperial family itself, i.e., the absolute upper class of the Roman Empire. In part the villa is believed to have been used as a hunting lodge. Many of the mosaics portray hunting scenes from around the world, and the gathering of wild beasts were to be shipped back to the Coliseum of ancient Rome. Besides fabulous hunting scenes, visit the "Chamber of the Ten Maidens," informally called the room of "the bikini girls". These maidens appear in the villa's mosaic artwork as performing sports that include weight-lifting, discus throwing, running and various ball-games. Bravissima!!!

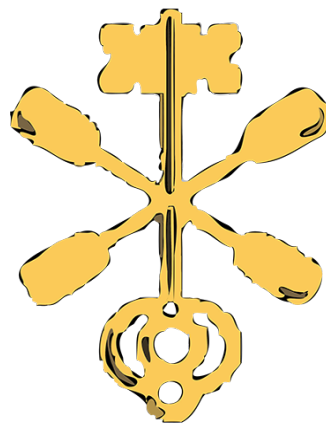
Pranzo! (Optional light lunch)

Local Wine or Olive Oil Tasting (TBA)

Return to Mandrascate for free time and Cooking Class

Day's recap

Cena! (Closing Banquet)



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“Traveling is almost like talking with men of other centuries.”
~ Rene Descartes

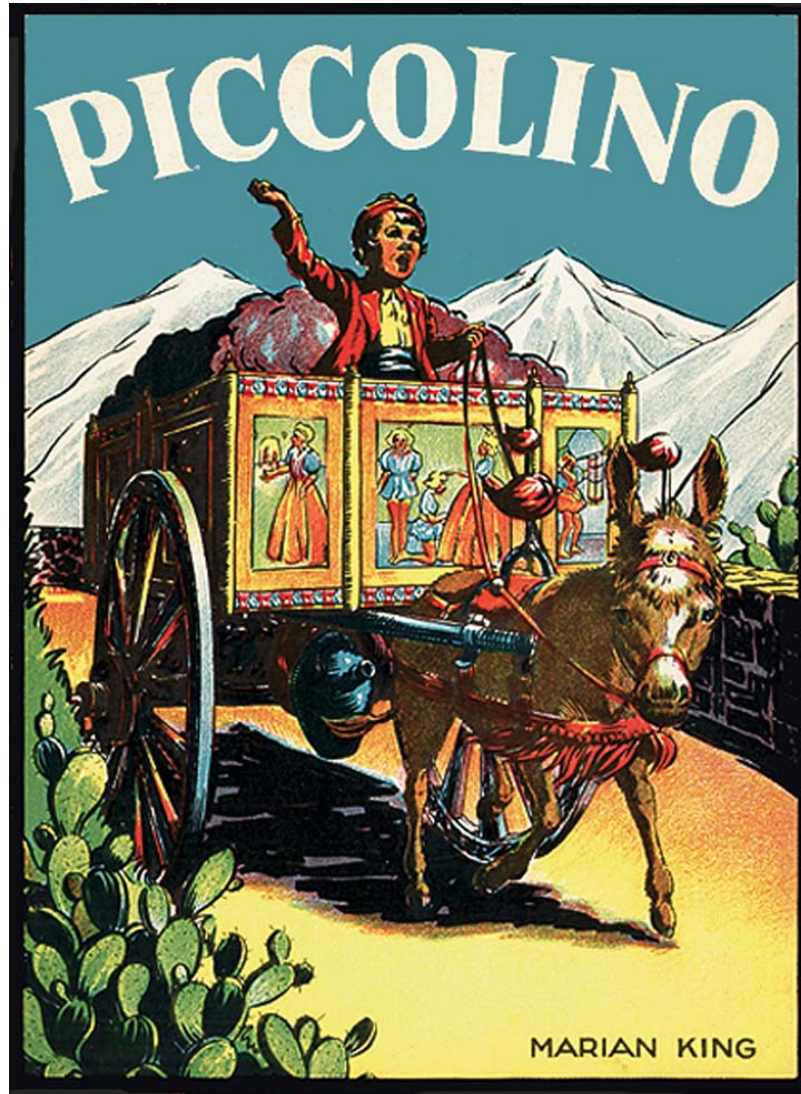
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Day #12: “Arrivederci Italia!”

Monday: June 24th, 2019

- TBA.... A.) Morning departure for the Catania Airport
- TBA B.) Departure for U.S.A. (with international layover)



*Open my heart and you will see,
Graved inside of it, “Italy.”*

~ Robert Browning

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Italy in 2019

“WHAT IS INCLUDED”

Centrally Located Hotels

Double or Triple room occupancy in our historic hotels in 'Taormina, Cefalù' and Valgaurnera and centrally located with private baths. 3 nights in 'Taormina, 3 nights in Cefalù' and 4 nights in Valgaurnera.

Meals

Daily European breakfast
Daily exquisite traditional main meal with local wine (lunch or supper)
Two light meals (lunch or supper)
Plus “The Last Supper”...A closing banquet-extravaganza!

All Ground Transportation

Round trip Minivan Transportation throughout the trip
All day trips are included: Castelmola, Siracusa, Savoca, Castelbuono, Palermo, Monreale, Agrigento, Piazza Armerina, Modica and Ragusa

All Entrance Tickets

Taormina: Greek Amphitheatre
Cefalù: Cathedral and “La Rocca” hike
Agrigento: Valley of the Temples
Piazza Armerina: The Roman Villa

Keyrow's Services

Paolo will serve as your personal full time director. Together with his team local expert-guides, he will offer daily walking tours and share in his knowledge of the places and things that we will experience together.

Please make known any special needs well in advance of the trip.

*The Creator made the universe with designs by Michelangelo.
~ Mark Twain*

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