

Sicily

Sicily is located in the central Mediterranean Sea, south of the Italian Peninsula, from which it is separated by the narrow Strait of Messina. Its most prominent landmark is Mount Etna, the tallest active volcano in Europe, and one of the most active in the world, currently 3,329 m (10,922 ft) high. The island has a typical Mediterranean climate. Sicily has a roughly triangular shape, earning it the name Trinacria. Sicilian coasts are made by never-ending, flat and sandy beaches, or small seashores made of pebbles and cliffs; every site is characterized by different color blends such as: ochre, yellow, and grey, there are even beaches black



lava colored. Sicily has got 77 green pearls, natural reserves where the Mediterranean landscape can be admired. Because of its Greek origin and the many different occupation during the past, Sicily has a unique culture and it's probably the region with the richest arts especially regarding music, cuisine, literature and architecture. It is also home to important archaeological and ancient sites, such as the Necropolis of Pantalica, the Valley of the Temples, Erice and Selinunte.



Palermo

Nowhere did so many people come together, love one another, fight against each other or just tolerate each other as in Sicily. Eyes, that are so clear in color seeming almost transparent, peeping out under crow-black hair, words of Arabic origin interweaving with French terms, clear-cut Hellenic geometries seen side by side with Baroque curls and voluptuous art nouveau curves, are the result of all this, and Palermo, the capital, is the ripest fruit of a composite past. A past that for Palermo means slender Punic columns, red Islamic cupolas, gardens and water courses, boastful noble mansions and monumental churches, viceroys and saints. It was founded by the Phoenicians on the seashore almost 3000 years ago, and it seems that at that time its name was Ziz, "flower" .



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Catania

is the second largest city in Sicily, after Palermo, and among the ten largest cities in Italy. Located on Sicily's east coast, it faces the Ionian Sea. The city has been devastated several times by volcanic eruptions from nearby Mount Etna, the most violent of which was in 1669. And it suffered through another severely damaging earthquake. Catania today is the industrial, logistical, and commercial center of Sicily. Its airport, the Catania-Fontanarossa Airport, is the largest in Southern Italy. However, it is also known for its history, culture, architecture, and gastronomy. The section of the city known as the "old town" features some of the most striking examples of baroque architecture in Italy, and is a UNESCO World Heritage Site. The opera composer Vincenzo Bellini was born in Catania, and a museum exists at his birthplace. Giovanni Verga was born in Catania in 1840. He became the greatest writer of Verismo, an Italian literary movement akin to Naturalism. His novels portray life among the lower levels of Sicilian society, such as fishermen and stonemasons, and were written in a mixture of both literary language and local dialect. The city's patron saint is Saint Agatha, who is celebrated with a religious pageantry, the Festival of Saint Agatha, on February 5 every year.



Taormina

Just south of Taormina is the Isola Bella, a nature reserve; and further south, situated beside a bay, is the popular seaside resort of Giardini Naxos. Tours of the Capo Sant'Andrea grottos are also available. The town of Taormina is perched on a cliff overlooking the Ionian Sea. Besides the ancient Greek theatre, it has many old churches, lively bars, fine restaurants and antique shops. The Santuario Madonna della Rocca is one such church. Located on the slope above the town, it commands an impressive view of the coast and Mount Etna to the south, and is accessible on foot via the staired path, Salita Castello. Taormina is approximately a forty-five-minute drive away from Europe's largest active volcano, Mount Etna. During the early 20th century the town became a colony of expatriate artists, writers and intellectuals. Its fortune began in the nineteenth century, when, after a visit by Goethe, who praised its beauty all over Europe, it became almost a must in the "Grand Tour". Travellers of the last century were the forerunners of the tourists, who every year visit Taormina, the capital of Sicilian tourism.



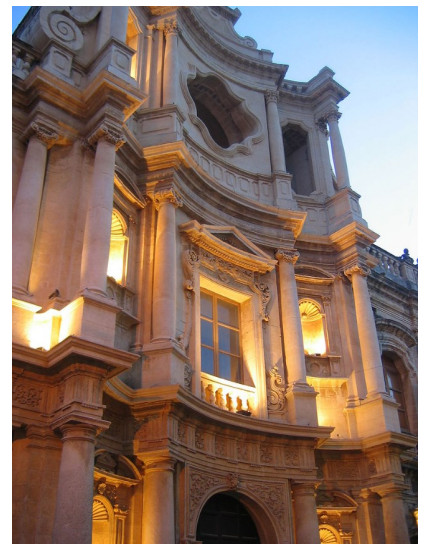
Syracuse

was founded in 734 B.C. by settlers from Corinth who were inspired, in choosing the name, by the local name for a near-by arsh, called Syraka. It is highly unlikely that these settlers already had any inkling of the great future that their colony was destined to have, but it is certain that expansion began almost immediately, with the subjugation of all the nearby places. In the fifth century the influence of Syracuse was felt all over the Mediterranean and to this city there are linked events which were decisive for the history of those years: the defeat of the Carthaginians near Himera in 480 B.C.; the defeat of the Etruscans at Cuma in 474, preventing their southward expansion; the victory over the Athenians in 413, in one of the most grandiose naval battles of antiquity. It was only with great sacrifices and deceit that in 212 B.C. the Romans succeeded in taking the city, which had the wonderful defenses done by Archimedes. Despite a certain decline, Syracuse remained the best known and most important city in Sicily, and indeed the eastern emperor Constant II for a period made it the capital of his empire. It was only with the Arab conquest, in 878, that Syracuse lost its supremacy among Sicilian cities and its true slow decline began. The dominations common to all Sicily were shared by Syracuse too, which never again reached the incredible vertices of the fifth century, but changed into that tranquil city that it is today, the silent and proud heir to a magnificent past. It is small, pretty, seated on the shores of the gulf with gardens and promenades going down as far as the waves. It was an ideal city according to Plato, who visited it several times, placing in it his hopes for political and social renewal. It was a magnificent city according to Simonides, Pindar, Bacchylides and Aeschylus, who sang of its beauty. A city of enormous military power, capable of checkmating the terrible cities of Carthage and Athens.



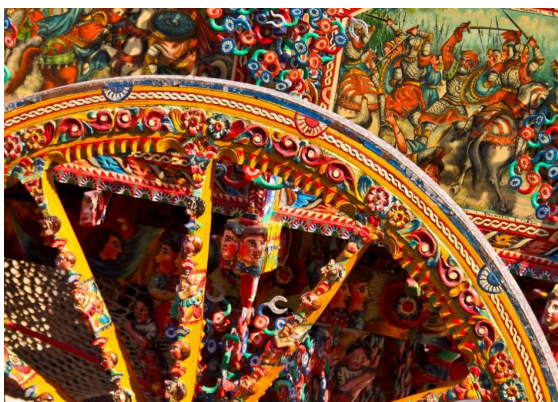
Noto

Noto is believed to have been founded by Sican populations, at the time of the fall of Troy. Falling into the hands of the Syracuse conquerors, the town absorbed Hellenic customs and rites, and was raised to the rank of a "gymnasium". Under the Roman domination, as a federate city, in the imperial epoch it was declared a Latin 'municipium', a singular condition which brought considerable privileges to the town, such as the possibility of being able to govern itself with its own laws. Conquered by the Arabs, who made it a highly armed stronghold. It took the present name and was the capital of one of three "valleys" when Sicily was divided by Arabs. The history of Noto has been determined not so much by men as by nature: in 1693 it was destroyed by the earthquake which struck the south-western part of Sicily. Conceived as a big theatre without wings, as a lively and flowing town, Noto returned to life, sumptuous and superb, on the side of the Meti hill. The architectural vicissitudes of the new town were dominated by three architects, Rosario Gagliardi, Vincenzo Sinatra and Paolo Labisi, who succeeded in developing an amazing masterpiece showing architectural unity. These were three different personalities which, though living and working in the province, transmitted to the town an original mark which goes beyond the rigid Baroque idiom, being enriched with Renaissance, pseudo-Spanish and neo-classical elements and giving life to a fanciful and dreamy style. The Triumphal arch, along the main path, marks the beginning of the town. The Santa Chiara Church, made by Gagliardi, is a fine Baroque expression and was built in 1785. The interior, small and oval, is decorated with stuccoes and putti. The Santissimo Salvatore monastery is the biggest building in town. This impression is emphasized by the rich stone decoration and the railings in wrought iron. The Santissimo Salvatore Church, built at the end of the eighteenth century, rises in a huge square. Its particular feature lies in the traces, in the façade, of the transition from Baroque to Classicism. The Cathedral, which stands at the top of a monumental staircase, was begun just a few months after the earthquake, but was only completed in 1770.



Ragusa

The city has two distinct areas, the lower and older town of Ragusa Ibla, and the higher Ragusa Superiore (Upper Town). The two halves are separated by the Valle dei Ponti, a deep ravine crossed by four bridges, the most noteworthy of which is the eighteenth-century Ponte dei Cappuccini. In the **upper town Ragusa** Cathedral St John the Baptist is the main sight. Also noteworthy is the Hyblean Archaeological Museum, with different sections devoted to archaeological finds from the Prehistoric to the Late Roman era. **Ragusa Ibla** is home to a wide array of Baroque architecture, including several stunning palaces and churches. The Cathedral of San Giorgio started in 1738 by architect Rosario Gagliardi, in place of the temple destroyed by the 1693 earthquake, and of which is the only place in the city a Catalan-Gothic style portal can still be seen. The façade contains a flight of 250 steps and massive ornate columns, as well as statues of saints and decorated portals. On a narrow winding street connecting Ragusa Ibla with Ragusa Superiore lies the church of Santa Maria delle Scale ("Saint Mary of the Steps", built between the fifteenth and the sixteenth centuries). This church is particularly interesting: badly damaged in the earthquake of 1693, half of this church was rebuilt in Baroque style, while the surviving half was kept in the original Gothic style (including the three Catalan-style portals in the right aisle). The last chapel of the latter has a Renaissance portal. The chapels are adorned with canvases by Sicilian painters of the 18th century. The Hyblean Garden offers a good view to the three churches of the Cappuccini Vecchi, St. James and San Domenico.



Caltagirone

is an inland city and a County in the Metropolitan City of Catania. The city's name derives from the Arabic meaning Castel of the pottery. And that attests to the antiquity of the pottery works which are still thriving. Nowadays, the production is more and more oriented to artistic production of ceramics and terra-cotta sculptures. A collection of ancient and modern pottery and terra-cotta, dating back to the Magna Grecia period, is available in the local Museum of Pottery, created in 1965, but the main landmark of the city is the 142-step monumental Scalinata di Santa Maria del Monte (Staircase of Santa Maria del Monte), built from 1608 in the old part of



the town. The peculiarity is that each step is decorated with different hand-decorated ceramics, using styles and figures derived from the millennial tradition of pottery making. Once a year, on and around the day of the city's patron saint, (St. James, 25 July), the staircase is illuminated with candles of different colors arranged in order to reconstruct an artistic drawing of several tens of meters.



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Piazza Armerina



Not so far from Caltagirone but belonging to Enna another City, lies the County of Piazza Armerina. The town is famous chiefly for its monumental Roman villa with its exceptional mosaics in the Villa Romana del Casale, one of the richest, largest, and varied collections of Roman mosaics in the world, for which the site has been designated as a [UNESCO World Heritage Site](#). The villa and artwork contained within date to the early 4th century AD. The mosaic and opus sectile floors cover some 3,500 sq metres and are almost unique in their excellent state of preservation due to the landslide and floods that covered the remains. Although less well-known, an extraordinary collection of frescoes covered not only the interior rooms, but also the exterior walls.



Agrigento

A City on the southern coast of Sicily, and capital of its province was founded on a plateau overlooking the sea, with two nearby rivers, the Hypsas and the Akragas, and a ridge to the north offering a degree of natural fortification. Its establishment took place around 582–580 BC and is attributed to Greek colonists from Gela, who named it "Akragas". It was one of the leading cities of Magna Graecia during the golden age of Ancient Greece with population estimates in the range of 200,000 to 800,000 before 406 BC. Ancient Akragas covers a huge area—much of which is still unexcavated today—but is exemplified by the famous Valle dei Templi ("Valley of the Temples", a misnomer, as it is a ridge, rather than a valley). This comprises a large sacred area on the south side of the ancient city where seven monumental Greek temples in the Doric style were constructed during the 6th and 5th centuries BC. Now excavated and partially restored, they constitute some of the largest and best-preserved ancient Greek buildings outside of Greece itself. They are listed as a World Heritage Site.



Not so far from Agrigento there is the famous **Scala dei Turchi (Stairs of the Turks)**, a rocky cliff on the coast. The Scala is formed by marl, a sedimentary rock with a characteristic white color. It lies between two sandy beaches, and is accessed through a limestone rock formation in the shape of a staircase, hence the name. The latter part of the name derives from the frequent raids carried on by Moors.

Trapani

was founded by the Elymians to serve as the port of the nearby city of Eryx (present-day Erice), which overlooks it from Monte Erice. The city sits on a low-lying promontory jutting out into the Mediterranean Sea. It was originally named Drépanon from the Greek word for "sickle", because of the curving shape of its harbour. Carthage seized control of the city in 260 BC, subsequently making it an important naval base, but ceded it to Rome in 241 BC following the Battle of the Aegates in the First Punic War. Two ancient legends relate supposed mythical origins for the city. In the first legend, Trapani stemmed from the sickle which fell from the hands of the goddess Demeter while she was seeking for her daughter Persephone, who had been kidnapped by Hades. The second myth features Kronos, who eviscerated his father Ouranos, god of the sky, with a sickle which, falling into the sea, created the city. In ancient times, Saturn was the patron god of Trapani. Today, Saturn's statue stands in a piazza in the center of the city. The city was badly damaged during World War II, when it was subjected to intense Allied bombardments. It has grown greatly since the end of the war, sprawling out virtually to the foot of Monte San Giuliano. Tourism has grown in recent years due to the city's proximity to popular destinations such as Erice, Segesta, and the Egadi Islands. The City is renowned for



its Easter related Holy Week activities and traditions, culminating between Good Friday and Holy Saturday in the Procession of the Mysteries of Trapani a day-long passion procession organized and sponsored by the city's guilds, featuring twenty floats of wood, canvas and glue sculptures, mostly from the 17th and 18th centuries, of individual scenes of the events of the Passion. The Misteri are among the oldest continuously running religious events in Europe, having been played every Good Friday since before the Easter of 1612.



The Salty Route

Along the route that starting from Trapani going through Paceco leads to Marsala along the lagoon of Stagnone, mountains characterized by the blinding whiteness glinting in the sun are visible. What you see is not snow but the salt rocks, one of the most valuable historical resources of Sicily during the period of the Phoenicians to whom we owe the first productive technologies. The favorable climatic conditions such as swallow water, high temperature and the wind favoring evaporation, help in order to create the striking and unreal scenery of the salt flats, forming an immense checkerboard characterized by the greenish color that tends to pink. The tourist itineraries that lead to the salt flats wind along the banks of the basins and along the banks of the shimmering pools for the crystallization of salt, reach the island in which tower restored windmills, a reminder of time when they were the main instruments to pump water and grind the salt. A landscape to be enjoyed, preferably at sunset, when everything goes red.



Egadi Islands

This small archipelago stretches on the sea in front of Trapani and Marsala, it is formed by three bigger islands such as: Favignana, Levanzo and Marettimo and the islet of Formica. The Egadi islands, close to the sicilian coast, offer to visitors an "easy travel", with the serenity and peace of the countryside of Trapani. It is easy to reach, visitors can take ferries or hydrofoils. The islands have different personalities, Favignana is quite comfortable and "family size", Levanzo has the charm of its soft minimalism and Marettimo is for people who love trekking. These three islands are linked by a satisfying relation with the mediterranean environment. Under the pinnacles of tufa of Calarossa similar to castles peaks, we ate the first Punic War. But the island of Favignana has become important for another reason: the tuna fishing, already practiced by the Phoenicians but ritualized by the Arabs. A ceremonial made of propitiatory songs punctuated by the rhythmic timing of the voice of the Rais, the head of the tuna fishery. For its position, the island is lapped by ocean currents and this position creates an ideal condition for tuna breeding. Since ancient times, an ingenious system of nets led the flocks to the place where the killings had to take place. The activity of the tuna fishery ended in the 70's and the austere buildings of the factory close to the sea have become a true monument of industrial architecture that bears witness of the golden age.



The Aeolian Islands

Lipari, Panarea, Filicudi, Alicudi, Salina, Vulcano and Stromboli. On the routes of the mythical Ausonians and Cnydian sailors north-east of the Sicilian coast, whipped by a salty wind, the Aeolian archipelago spreads out, like a fan, its seven enchanted isles which, because of their explosive volcanic nature, are sisters of the Hawaiian islands, the pearls of the Pacific. The Aeolian islands, starting in remote times, were colonised by Neolithic peoples interested in exploiting obsidian, an insuperable material for making carving tools. Between the sixteenth and fourteenth centuries B.C., the islands became an important commercial stage on the metal way, and in particular on the tin route, which from the British Isles went down to the orient, passing through the Straits of Messina. Later, in the Roman epoch, the archipelago prospered with the sulphur, alum and salt trade, which however gradually declined, until the islands were abandoned. This was due to further eruptions and also to the fact that the Second Nicea Council designated them a dwelling of the devil and a place of physical manifestations of this disturbing presence. Then in the Norman epoch the islands were gradually re-peopled and started a new season of splendours, taking on what is more or less their physiognomy now.



The Pelagie Islands



from the Greek *pélagos* meaning "open sea", are three small islands: **Lampedusa**, **Linosa**, and **Lampione**, located in the Mediterranean Sea between Malta and Tunisia, south of Sicily. To All three islands are part of the comune of Lampedusa. Geographically, part of the archipelago (Lampedusa and Lampione) belongs to the African continent and it is an Italian maritime exclave in the Tunisian continental shelf; politically and administratively the islands fall within the Sicilian province of Agrigento and represent the southernmost part of Italy.

Lampedusa is a raft of calcareous stone between the sea and the sky, Lampedusa emanates a strange and ambiguous fascination. Flat and almost devoid of vegetation, infinitely solitary because of the absence, on the

horizon, of any reference point, it has very beautiful coasts. An absolute must for anyone visiting Lampedusa is a trip to the Isola dei Conigli (rabbit island), a tiny islet declared a nature reserve, in whose dunes the Caretta Caretta turtle (**Loggerhead sea turtle**) lays its eggs. Another place which is a must is the shrine of the Madonna di Porto Salvo, about which there are various legends. The island is a mecca for very exclusive tourism, for those who are true nature lovers and not in search of social pleasures. Linosa, which is little more than a volcanic rock, came up from the sea bed through successive eruptions, in the course of millennia, in the "fire line" of the Italian geological system. Totally different from nearby Lampedusa, a calcareous offshoot of the Tunisian plateau (indeed, with the nearby rock Lampione, geologically it is unquestionably part of the African continent), it is the emerging tip of a submerged volcano going down to a depth of 1000 metres. The coast is very jagged and dark, while inland there are fertile plains around three craters - Monte Rosso, Monte Nero and Monte Vulcano. The natural environment, both terrestrial and maritime, has remained practically intact and is extremely charming. the Riserva Marina Isole Pelagie, and its vegetation and wildlife are strictly protected. Animal species include the



endemic *Podarcis filfolensis* ssp. *laurentimulleri*, which is a subspecies of Maltese wall lizard, numerous migrating birds, and the *Armadillidium hirtum pelagicum*, a land crustacean. The waters are populated by sharks, including the sandbar shark, groupers, lobsters, and varieties of yellow and



Pantelleria

Set between Africa and Sicily, nearer to the black continent than to its own, Pantelleria, a volcanic island, can be considered a true nature paradise. Its shape is circular and culminates, at the center, in Montagna Grande ("big mountain") from whose top, on dry clear days, it's possible to admire a spectacle of incomparable beauty as to say the view of the African and Sicilian coasts in a single vista. Having volcanic origin, it still shows residual signs of its ancient activity, both around the out crater of Montagna Grande - where there are twenty-four mouths locally known as 'cuddie', and inside the crater itself, where there is the "Venus' mirror" pool, fed by thermal springs whose temperature can go up to 50 degrees Celsius - and in other places, where there are other activities, such as fuming vapors, called "lavare" or "mofete". Morphologically, the area is very interesting: beaches, splendid coasts, rich in needles, like the famous natural "Elephant arch"; no less famous and fascinating are the numerous grottoes on Pantelleria, including the very interesting "Pertusa di Notaro", also known as the "Cold cavity" because of the cold air coming out of the cracks in it. One should not miss the easy excursions to the "Bagno dell'acqua" ("water bath"), to Montagna Grande, to Punta Spadillo, to the pretty Gadir village, to the Western Bay, the Turks' Rock, Scauri, Monte Sant'Elmo and the Sesi, very ancient megalithic cupola shaped tombs. The island gives also the possi-



bility to go horse riding in order to discover different natural itineraries, what is more different boat trips are offered in order to visit bays and sites situated along the coast such as: "Ballata dei Turchi", the cliff of "Dietro l'isola", "Del Tracino" and the rocks of Formaggio.



Tourists that love natural itineraries could not lose the opportunity of living the experience of a beautiful holiday in a marvelous island that can be admired every day and during the whole year.



Ustica

According to archaeological findings, it appears that the first inhabitants of this island were Phoenicians or Carthaginians. Coins, mosaics and various objects also testify to the presence of the Romans, who called it Ustom, "burnt", which gave the present name. From the eighth century there was an Arab dominion, with a single interruption during the Norman domination - in the course of which the Benedictine convent and the Santa Maria church were built. It was only in 1763, after repeated attempts, that the Spanish government succeeded in occupying and re-populating the island, which was afterwards fortified by the Bourbons. The new population was brought from the Aeolian Islands, and it is for this reason that the inhabitants preserve customs and dialect from the latter. The main attractions of Ustica are its magnificent sea beds, protected, starting from a few years ago, by the setting up of a marine reserve. Coming to the island, you usually land at the Santa Maria harbour, which the black volcanic sand under the surface of the water gives a deep turquoise colour. There are various interesting excursions: for example, you can go up to the fortress, at 157 meters on Cape Falconara, where there is a magnificent view of the whole island, the sea and the Sicilian coast, or sail round the island, visiting the numerous grottoes along the coast. Among them we will mention the Grotta Azzurra, Grotta della Pastizza and Grotta di Blasi. Ustica is particularly known for scuba diving, with a number of diving schools established on the island. Recreational divers are attracted by the relatively deep dives, which are a feature of the island's volcanic geology.



In the mid- to late 19th and early 20th century, as the population of the island grew too large, hundreds of families emigrated to the United States. Many of these families settled in New Orleans and surrounding areas, where there are today thousands of descendants whose ties remain strong to Ustica. A smaller number of families settled in San Jose and San Francisco, in New York, Massachusetts, Oregon, Montana and in Chicago.



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Isole dello Stagnone

Right in front of the City of Marsala lies the Stagnone Islands. It extends on the west coast of Sicily in the municipality of Marsala, in the sea between Cape San Teodoro and head Boeo or Lilybaeum. The reserve is named after the "Lagoon" a lagoon, the largest in Sicily, characterized by shallow water (1-2 meters, often no more than 50 cm) between the four islands of San Pantaleo (Mozia), Grand Island, Schola and Santa Maria. The lagoon was formed relatively recently (did not exist at the time of Phoenician colonization of Mozia) following the movement of sand caused by underwater currents that created the Big Island around two original islands. The birth of the island has closed a portion of the sea and open source here, since there are no currents needed to spare, water has become stagnant, with a temperature above the normal. The main activity of the Lagoon was one of the salt that was exercised by evaporating water channeled into special ponds, then pick up the halls. Pumping water and grinding of salt were carried out by means of windmills, some still preserved.

The Big Island or **Long Island** is the largest sandy outcrop from the Lagoon. His training, rather recently, giving rise to the lagoon. Was composed of two rocky islets, which joined to form the long island, probably for the expansion of salt deposits much exploited by the Phoenicians. There are now some salt in a state of abandonment, the forest and some sandy beaches. It houses one of the few existing populations *Calendula maritima*. **Schola** is the smallest island of the Lagoon (oval about 80 x 50 m), located between Mozia and the Great Island. During the Roman period there was a school of rhetoric, from which

it derives its name. Currently there are three buildings of the '30s and a tank, all in a state of neglect. The island is owned by the town of Marsala. **Santa Maria** is an island north of the Lagoon-shaped loop. The name is derived from the sanctuary of Santa Maria Valleverde. **Mozia (now St. Pantaleo)** is the most important islands of the Lagoon from the perspective of landscape and archaeological. Ancient Phoenician colony, has a circular shape. The most important natural richness of the Marsala Lagoon is definitely



represented dall'avifauna migratory area is where to stop and eat during long journeys or to spend the long winter before returning to Northern Europe. The Pink Flamingo is one of the biggest and showy waders that frequent the Lagoon of Marsala, is seen in large groups with its beak in water, employed to filter the mud in search of small crustaceans and molluscs. Interesting is the presence of the spoonbill, wading bird, white, with flat, rounded beak. Across the lagoon from the Lagoon, you can watch the herons are ambush while properties with neck stretched and ready to shoot sharp beak as a spear to catch fish or parked along the banks of the salt. The biggest and most common is the gray heron gray and white plumage, less frequent Heron smaller and darker plumage reddish. Also frequently encounter with the Little Egret or Great Egret, distinguishable by their different size and color of the beak and legs. More difficult are more discreet encounters with species such as the Night Heron also called "crow at night" because he loves her to turn dark shedding similar to that of a crow.



Cyclopean Isles

Formed about 500,000 years ago, the Cyclopean Isles are of volcanic origin and may at one time have been attached to Sicily. The Cyclopean Isles strongly resemble the Giant's Causeway on the northern coast of Northern Ireland, and the Isle of Staffa off the western coast of Scotland. The latter, closest in appearance to the Cyclopean pair, differs mainly in having the columns piled in terraces, one above another. There is an ancient tradition that the islands at one time formed part of the mainland of Sicily.

Homer has a curious story about the manner in which they became detached, towards the end of the ninth book of the *Odyssey*. When Odysseus visited Sicily it was inhabited by the Cyclopes, said to have had only one eye, on the forehead.

Odysseus encounters one of their number, Polyphemus, on his journey home to Ithaca, who kills two of Odysseus's men. Stuck inside Polyphemus's cave because he and his men are unable to move the boulder that blocks the entrance, Odysseus supplies Polyphemus with a special wine until he falls asleep, and blinds him by drilling the Cyclops's own wooden walking stick into his eye. Polyphemus opens the cave boulder and the Greeks escape to their ship; Polyphemus calls to the other Cyclopes for help and Odysseus, from the distance of his ship, begins to taunt and to jeer at him. Homer (Pope's translation) says:

"These words the Cyclops' burning rage provoke:

From the tall hill he rends a pointed rock;

High o'er the billows flew the massy load,

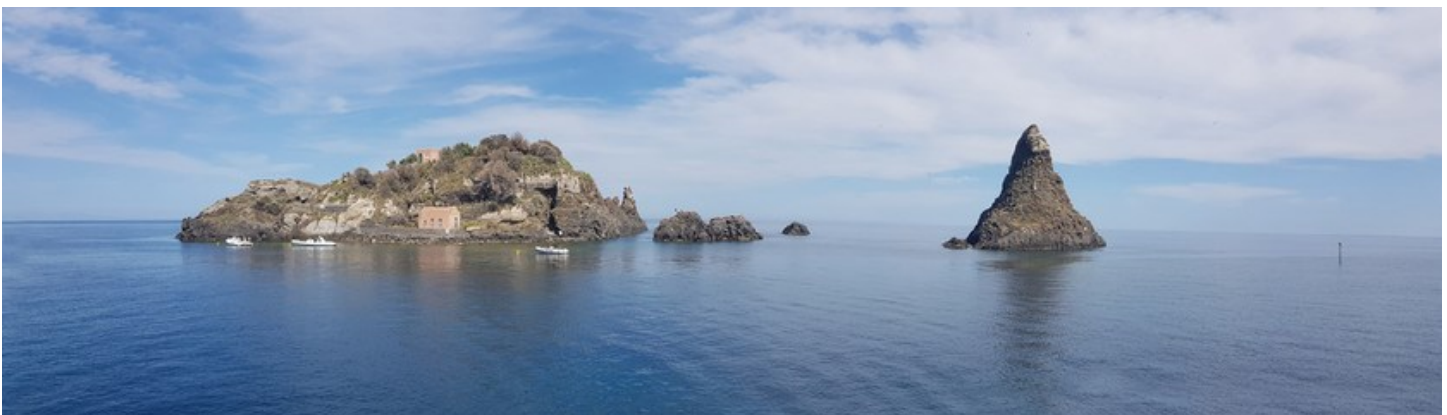
And near the ship came thund'ring on the flood.

It almost brushed the helm, and fell before:

The whole sea shook, and reflux beat the shore."



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The routes of wines

Starting with the province of Palermo, following the way of the **Monreale DOC**, that is 16.000 hectares of vineyards where the Catarratto is sure the king. The DOC produced by these hills are the Contea di Sclafani, the Contessa Entellina and the Monreale, whose name sure remember the nice little Norman town with its very famous Cathedral. **The Alcamo doc** route stretches looking



at west, including the DOC of Erice and that of Marsala (Terre d'Oc-
cidente and Val di Mazara). This is the province (that one of Trapani) with
more vineyards in Italy. It's really an area where tasting something step
by step, from the splendid medieval Erice, to the salt pans reserve up to
the Dancing Satyr in Mazara del Vallo. So many wines are
produced here to remember all of them in this small

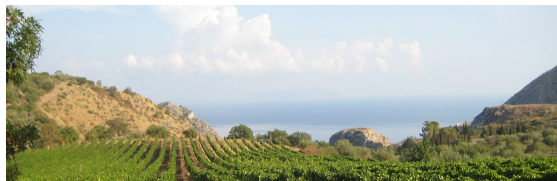


space. Following the curve that leads to the bank of the Canale di Sicilia, here it is the Strada del Vino Terre Sicane, in the province of Agrigento, where the oenological culture could be esteemed as draft for the economy of that area, with the valley of the temples as background. The DOC are also those ones of



Also those ones of Santa Margherita di Belice, Sambuca di Sicilia, **Menfi** and Contessa Entellina. Going inside the heart of the island, you can get the Strada del Vino dei Castelli Nisseni, where the famous **Nero d'Avola** vine is situated together with the archaeological area of Morgantina, Piazza Armerina and Sperlinga with its beautiful castle.

The DOC is that one of Riesi. As famous as the Nero nisseno, the **Cerasuolo** di



Vittoria signs the Strada del Vino del Val di Noto, with the baroque capitals of Noto and Modica, just to say a couple. Syracuse is a real enchantment, above all if you "taste" it together with the homonymous **Moscato**. Close to the scene

of the south east Sicilian vertex, the Etna rises, its wine route leads at the slopes of the volcano. It's a special climate, a fertile ground made by fire and lava for the unique vines as the **Carri-cante**, white and endemic. We are inside the Etna Park: besides the wine, it's the beauty of a corner of nature really uncontaminated. From the hard volcanic ground to the sweet slope of the Aeolian island. To finish the oenological tour with the wine routes of Messina province, from the city of the



strait up to the seven sisters of the Mediterranean sea. The DOC of Faro or the new one of Mamertino go with the unmistakable taste of Malvasia up to the open sea. This is as warm and full of passion as Sicily.

Sicilian Gastronomy



"They eat as if they were to die and they build as if they were to live forever". That is what Diogene said talking about the Megaresi of Sicily. They arrived in Syra-



cuse in order to know the ancient inhabitants of Sicily. This has been the native island of: Epicarpo from Syracuse, who was the first in writing about the art of cooking in 485 B.C.; Ladbaco, who created the first hotel school in 380 B.C.; Terpsione, who made a careful study, of what would be called the food science; Archestrato, who organized lunch for the Greek VIPs in 320 B.C., and Procopio de' Coltelli who, in the 17th c., exported to France



the unique Sicilian tradition of the sorbetto, that became famous with the name of ice-cream. In conclusion, speaking about gastronomy in Sicily, means speaking of the same Sicilian DNA, that has still today, a very high faith in the so-called "mangiata" (a lunch that lasts the whole

afternoon). So, we can try to describe one of these sumptuous lunch, trying to show some of the typical recipes. We can start with thistles and artichokes put into a special creme (called pastella), made of flour and water, and then fried, the sausages (the Chiamonte Gulfi salami or that one of Sant'Angelo di Brolo), the olives "accirate", that means olives immersed into the extra-virgin olive oil together with typical pot-herbs, and the



caponata, a receipt containing eggplants. Not to miss "panelle", slices of chickpea flour fried, incredibly delicious with a spray of lemon. Then the cheeses, from the caciocavallo to the maiorchino, from



the ericino to the piacentino and the fiore sicano... Go on with pasta. First among them is the "pasta al forno", that is a timbale of anelletti stuffed with everything the cook's fantasy says: tomato sauce,



mince, egg plants, cheese, salami... For delicate palates there is also pasta with sardines, delicious. In summer, you cannot miss the "pasta con tenerumi", that is the bud of the long zucchini plants. As easy as the "pasta alla trapanese", that is with the raw tomato and garlic, or as the pasta alla norma with the tomato sauce and fried eggplants. Go on with the second plate, that is fish cooked in different ways (generally roasted) as the sword fish, tuna fish, bass, and so on...without forgetting the "sarde a beccafico", stuffed sardines rolls, with bread-crumbs, pine seeds, raisins; or speaking about meat, the delicious sausages, fried or grilled, mutton, traditional dish during the Easter Monday together with the kid meat. About the use of the pork meat it is possible to write an encyclopaedia. As vegetables, there's the classical salad: tomato, fennel, onion, lettuce... and more you have more you put. Obviously, together with all this, there's the bread, that one backed in the wood stove, with an unmistakable smell. After fruit, the confectionery. There's the "cassata", but actually there are also further masterpieces such as the "buccellati" with figs marmalade, the "frutta martorana" with sugar and almond wheat, the "cuddureddi", pastries with honey or ricotta cheese or candied fruit, the almond biscuits or the "reginelle", biscuits covered by sesame. Above all, the "cannoli", present in the whole island.

Street food and ancient Markets

Street food is the term used in order to refer to the typical barrows of Palermo, where it is possible to try different traditional recipes. Those barrows are still present in the whole city and above all in the popular districts at the edge of big historical markets such as: the Vucciria (from French boucherie - butcher's shop), the Capo, Ballarò

(perhaps the most multiethnic corner in the city) and Borghetto Vecchio. You can get it fried food: put in big vessels "panelle", above mentioned, sesame, often combined with



oil). Not less delicious are the fried aubergines or the "cicireddu", that is, a very small fish dipped in flour and fried at the moment. The sign "pani cà meusa" still exists at the door of different food shops. This means in those shops the tradition is really respected. It's a very tasty food, but it is reserved to people who have strong palates. The ox entrails, spleen and lung, are fried in lard, and then put inside the bread with lemon on or in some cases with ricotta or local cheese. Not less popular is the "stigghiola", skewer of sheep or calf grilled. Born with



Arabs, sicilian ancient markets preserve intact the Arab roots of the sicilian culture even in the way of putting the fresh fruit, the orange above all, dried fruit, but also a big variety of exotic products, such as the spices coming from the near and far East, and the olives with their incredible variety and smell of garlic, wild majoram and chilli. Wonderful are the



counters of fish, as in the famous Mercato del Pesce of Catania (Fish Market of Catania). Here big sword fishes, dark groupers, gilt-



head and sargo, mussels and clams, octopus and many others shellfish dominate. They are rich in blue fish, among them: sardines, mackerels, silvery spatula and



gurnard. Lobsters of Mazara del Vallo, are well known. Inside the markets of Sicily you can speak, negotiate and live immersed in a world that seems almost a theatre.



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The Pupi Opera performing art and the storytellers

Traditionally, the Opra dei Pupi is the representation of the clashes between medieval knights and the Moors, its origins date back to 1800. This form of expression had a certain spread when the puppets were taken as symbols of the desire for justice of a social class. The Opra dei Pupi is closely related to other forms of expression such as the work initiated by the "Contastorie" (Storyteller), the "Cantastorie" and "Cantari," they have spread the stories of chivalry with the "Cuntu" (the story). There is an analogy between the "Cuntu" and Opra dei Pupi, both use the same scheme, in fact the chivalric adventures of these heroes are told in episodes. However, we should draw a distinction between "Contastorie" (Storyteller) and "Cantastorie". The "Contastorie" (Storyteller) handles epic themes reciting them while the "Cantastorie" handles the same theme through songs, what is more it is important to remember the "Jongleurs", they popularized the French Chansons des Gestes in southern Italy. The Opra dei Pupi is characterized by the transmission of a series of very ancient codes of conduct, among these are: the sense of honor, chivalry, the defense of justice and faith etc... The term "Puparo" means one who is involved in the puppet show. The puppeteer using a particular tone of voice creates a suggestive atmosphere full of tension that characterize the peculiarly epic scenes. The Puparo performs a drama based on improvisation following a canvas. In the past, the performance ended with a farce, a puppet show in which licentious and cheerful tones were used by people who were taken from the fabled Sicilian tradition. Sometimes the puppeteers also talked about contents unwelcome to the authorities by using the "Baccagghiu" (baccaglio) which is a jargon known even by gangsters. Depending on the school's membership the puppets can perform different movements. The puppets of the school of Palermo are lightweight and adjustable but are difficult to handle, they measure about eighty centimeters high, an iron bar is placed in them passing through the torso and the head, in order to support them, then there is another iron bar placed in the right arm that allows it to move a wire running through a closed hand allows the puppet to pull off and put back the sword. Then there is a wire connected to the puppet left knee, which allows the puppet to kneel, to articulate a step etc. The puppets of the



school of Catania are heavier, have fixed limbs, but are easy to handle. These puppets are characterized by their height, which is around four feet or thirty inches, there is a major iron bar and a secondary one that allows the puppeteers to move the puppet's right hand which carries the sword. As already stated the arts are not articulated, the puppet of Catania school shows a structure very high and very heavy, which can reach up to 16 kg, this situation implies a certain difficulty in handling, the puppeteers in fact work on axles called bridge which is placed behind the backdrop.