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Sicily Guide magazine
http://amunisicily.weebly.com/
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http://www.explorasicilia.com/
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http://www.alberghiitaliani.it/plus-sicilia/plus-enal/
http://www.siciliamontaintrekking.it/escursioni.htm
http://www.siracusa1.it/siracusa/homepage.html
http://www.taorminaenettẢ.html

ACCOMMODATION:

Casamundo - Holidays Homes
http://www.casamundo.co.uk/
Tourism department
http://www.regione.sicilia.it/turismo/web_turismo/
Ragusa Tourism
http://www.ragusaturismo.it/
Syracusa Portal
http://www.syracusat1.it/siracusa/homepage.html
Province of Catania
http://www.provincia.ct.it/
Taormina Etna Consortium
http://www.taorminaenetta.html

USEFUL INFORMATION:

Tourist Service
http://www.zuleima.org/index.php/ita/elements/index

REGIONAL TOURIST AGENCIES:

Bed & Breakfast in Sicily
Locali d'autore
Agritourismo site
http://www.agriturismo.com/sicilia/sicilia.php
Residence d'epoca
http://www.residenzedepoca.it/residenze_d_epoca/sicilia/
Casa Barbero
http://www.casarbarbero.it/
Le Lume
http://www.lelume.com
Antica Badia
http://www.anticabadia.com
Best Western Hotel Mediterraneo Palace
http://www.mediterraneopalace.it/
Borgo Rio Favara Resort
http://www.borrogiofavarait.html
Cambia cavallo - Unesco area & resort
http://www.cambia cavallo.it/
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http://www.clubmed.it/cm/villaggio-europa-sicilia-kamara_p-197-it-v-KAMC-pe-09E-ac-vh.html
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http://www.anticastazione.com
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http://www.baia samuelle.it
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Il Barocco
http://www.ikastalia.it/
Kastalia Resort
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Le Magnolie
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Le Magnolieresort.com
http://www.hotelmiramareagusa.com/home.php
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http://www.villadeltauro.it/en/
Villa Carlotta Hotel
http://www.villacarlottahotel.com/
La Casa di Melo
De Stefano Palace
http://www.dessteinapolacehotel.com/inglese/

PUBLIC TRANSPORT:

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The M/V Jean De La Valette is a state of the art, high speed passenger car ferry that takes you to Sicily in just 90 minutes. The vessel is the largest high speed catamaran operating in the Mediterranean and one of the largest in the world.

Jean De La Valette was built by Austal Ship, in 2010, in Western Australia, to the specifications of Virtu Ferries, based on many years of experience on the Malta-Sicily route and the welcome in-put of thousands of passengers. The vessel carries 800 passengers in 6 air conditioned lounges, with reclining leather seats for perfect passenger comfort. Those who wish may also make use of ample seating space on deck. Leisure areas include, a shop offering interesting and useful items at very favourable prices and catering. The vessel also carries 165 vehicles on the car deck which is secured during voyages for reasons of passenger safety. The Jean De La Valette complies with stringent IMO (International Maritime Organization) safety regulations as well as those of the European Union. Like all vessels owned by Virtu Ferries Jean De La Valette is registered under the Malta Flag.

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Sicily is a country of diversity, you cannot do it justice in a short spell of time. It is easy to forget that the Island, population of 5 million, only became part of the Italian state in 1860.

We suggest you look out for the ever changing landscape, a feature even on a short trip and it is not every day that you will visit a volcano, Etna; the characteristic hill-top towns rebuilt after the devastating earthquake of 1693 and the affluence of picturesque Taormina.

You might like to try some delicacies, Torroncini (nougat) or Pasta di Mandorla (almond cakes) which are nice to take back home with you. So are some of the local liquors, Limoncello (lemon), Vino alla Mandorla (almond wine) both served well chilled, or an amaro “Averna” (bitter liquor).

If your stay is for a few days, do not forget Sicily was once Magna Grecia; the Greek Temples of Agrigento are a unique experience as are the Roman Mosaics at Piazza Armerina. The archaeological sites of Siracusa include the Greek and Roman Theatres and the Cathedral, a former Temple of Athena in the ancient City of Ortegia. The baroque cities of Noto, Ragusa and Modica are minutes away from Pozzallo. Palermo, the capital is a treasure trove; Erice and Cefalu are within easy reach. Shopping in Catania is an experience.

The Iblei Mountain Range is arguably one of the most picturesque areas of Sicily, with a variety of rivers, valleys, canyons and lakes that bring with them a vast flora and fauna, making the countryside around the baroque towns of the Provincia di Ragusa a paradise for lovers of nature.

The cities and towns of the region, many of them UNESCO Heritage Sites, are themselves a treasure trove not only of Sicilian Baroque, but also of world renowned Greek and Roman monuments.
Ragusa is a city and commune in southern Sicily. It is the capital of the province of Ragusa, with around 75,000 inhabitants. It is built on a wide limestone hill between two deep valleys, Cava San Leonardo and Cava Santa Domenica. Together with seven other cities in the Val di Noto, it is listed among the UNESCO World Heritage Sites.

The origins of Ragusa can be traced back to the 2nd millennium BC, when in its area there were several settlements of the ancient Sicels. The current Ragusa Ibla lies probably on one of them, identified as Hybla Heraea.

The ancient city, located on a 300 m high hill, entered in contact with the nearby Greek colonies, and developed thanks to the nearby port of Camerina. After a short Carthaginian rule, it was administrated by the Romans and the Byzantines: the latter fortified the city and built a large castle. Ragusa was occupied by the Arabs in 848 AD, remaining under their rule until the 11th century, when the Normans conquered it. Selected as County seat, its first Count was Geoffrey, son of Count Roger I of Sicily.

Ragusa thereafter followed the events of the Kingdom of Sicily, created in the first half of the twelfth century. A Chiaramonte family fief, it remained the county capital after the unification with that of Modica in 1296, a status it lost in the 15th century, when the Normans conquered it. Ragusa was occupied by the Arabs in 848 AD, remaining under their rule until the 11th century, when the Normans conquered it. Selected as County seat, its first Count was Geoffrey, son of Count Roger I of Sicily.

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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 them is the eighteenth-century Ponte dei Cappuccini.


In 1693 the city was devastated by a huge earthquake, which killed some 5,000 inhabitants. Following this catastrophe the city was largely rebuilt, many baroque buildings date from this period. Most of the population moved to a new settlement in the former district of Patro, calling the new municipality “Ragusa Superiore” (Upper Ragusa) and the ancient city “Ragusa Inferiore” (Lower Ragusa). The two cities remained separated until 1926, when they were fused together to become the provincial capital in 1927 at the expense of Modica, the former capital and the most populous and important city in the region since 1296.

The economy of the surrounding province hinges mainly on light industries, agriculture (horticulture, olives), farming, tourism, light manufacturing and small oilfields.

Marina di Ragusa is a village in southern Italy, a frazione of the comune of Ragusa. The site is noted for its beautiful beaches and lively nightlife. Marina di Ragusa is located on the Mediterranean coast of the island of Sicily, directly opposite the island of Malta. The village has an official population of 4,070 but during the summer it gets to over 60,000 inhabitants.

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Just a few kilometres up the coast from Italy’s southernmost point, in the deep south-east of Sicily, is one of Sicily’s prettiest seaside villages: Marzamemi.

It was the Arabs of the 10th century who put Marzamemi on the map. They not only gave the village its poetic name, Marsà al-hamam (translating as something like Turtle Dove Bay) but also built the original tonnara (tuna processing plant), which was to become one of the most important on the island. Although the tonnara itself is no longer in function, Marzamemi continues its artisanal fishing and processing activities, producing all manner of delicacies, including canned tuna, dried tuna roe (bottarga), smoked swordfish, marinated anchovies, seafood pasta condiments, tuna salamis and much more besides!

The old centre of the village, most of which dates back to the arrival of the Principe di Villadorata in the mid-18th century, is situated on a little promontory and organised around the extremely picturesque Piazza Regina Margherita. On the south side is the little fishing harbour with its bobbing fleet of colourful wooden boats, on the others a series of charming buildings, including the Church of San Francesco di Paola, the tonnara, the prince’s aristocratic palazzo and a row of fisherman’s houses, whose sky blue doors and potted red geraniums lend a chromatic vivacity to the whole picture. Narrow streets lead off the main square, offering glimpses of the turquoise sea to the east and north.

Marzamemi is worth visiting at any time of year, but it really comes into its own in the high summer months. In July it often hosts an International Film Festival during which films are projected directly on the walls of the buildings surrounding the piazza. This wonderfully balmy nocturnal al fresco atmosphere continues all through August as visitors and locals mingle in the open-air bars, sipping on sundowners and cooling down by dancing to live bands and DJs who provide entertainment for anyone in a dancing mood.

Scoglitti is a small fishing village near the town of Vittoria on the south coast of Sicily.

In addition to its fishing industry, the village derives a substantial part of its income from tourism. The village hosts a daily fishing auction, and annual events such as the Festival of St Francesco, and the procession of the Virgine dif Portosalvo.


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Modica is a city and comune in the Province of Ragusa, Sicily. The city is situated in the Iblean Mountains and, along with Val di Noto, is part of UNESCO Heritage Sites in Italy. According to Thucydides, the city was founded in 1360 BC or 1031 BC and was inhabited by the Sicels in the 7th century BC. It was probably a dependency of Syracuse. Modica was occupied by the Romans after the battle of the Egadi islands against the Carthaginians in the Punic Wars 241 BC, together with Syracuse and all of Sicily.

Modica became one of the thirty-five decuman (spontaneously submitted) cities of the island and was oppressed by the praetor Verres. It became an independent municipium, and apparently a place of some consequence. The city is also mentioned among the inland towns of the island both by Pliny and Ptolemy; and though its name is not found in the Itineraries, it is again mentioned by the Geographer of Ravenna. Silius Italicus also includes it in his list of Sicilian cities, and immediately associates it with Netum (now Noto Antico), with which it was clearly in the same neighborhood.

The southeast of Sicily and Modica (according to the German historian L. Hertling) was rapidly Christianized, as the diocese of Syracuse boasts an apostolic foundation by St. Paul in 61 AD. In 535, the Byzantine general Belisarius expelled the Ostrogoths and established for Justinian I the government of the East-Roman Empire (also improperly known as the Byzantine Empire) and the already Greek-speaking population fixed their culture until the Latinization of the Normans in the 11th century. In 845, Modica was captured by the Arabs who referred to the city as Mudiqah. In 1091 the conquest of Modica and the entire Val di Noto ended the long lasting war of the Normans, led by Roger of Hauteville, against the Arabs.

In 1296, Modica became the capital of an important county, which under the Chiaramonte family became a flourishing semi-independent state controlling the whole southern third of the island, with the right of a mint of its own and other privileges. The most striking event of the modern era was the earthquake of 1693, which destroyed the entire Val di Noto, although to a slightly lesser extent in Modica.

Annexed to Italy in 1860, Modica remained district capital until 1926, when it was included in the province of Ragusa.

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Modica

Less well-known than its prestigious neighbours (Ragusa, Noto and Modica) but just as fascinating and beautiful, Scicli is well worth a visit if you’re ever in south-eastern Sicily.

It sits in a gorge just a few miles from the long sandy beaches of Sampieri and Donnalucata and is overlooked by a towering rocky mass on which the Church of San Matteo sits.

The town shares much of its history with the other UNESCO Heritage Site towns of the Val di Noto.

The town shares much of its history with the other UNESCO Heritage Site towns of the Val di Noto, most specifically the fateful earthquake of 1693, during which over 3,000 of the town’s population died. Scicli, like the towns in the area, was totally rebuilt in pure Sicilian Baroque style. Today, it is a joy to wander round.

Scicli's history, of course, long predates 1693, and it is thought to have taken its name from its founders, the Sicels, one of the three main tribes that inhabited Sicily before the arrival of the Greek colonists. Like the rest of the island, it was passed from one invading conqueror to another, reaching its economic and cultural peak during the Arab and Norman dominations.

There is a lot to see in Scicli including a number of lovely churches such as those of Sant’Ignazio, San Matteo, San Bartolomeo and Santa Maria la Nova. This latter has a Byzantine wooden statue of the Virgin Mary. The many aristocratic palazzi, such as Palazzo Beneventano, are also fun to see, brimming over with characterful gargoyles, elegant swirls and decorative fancies.

A stroll along Via Francesco Mormina Penna is also strongly recommended as it provides a perfect example of a late Baroque street, harmonious in its wholeness and equal to anything found in the neighbouring towns of greater fame.

Chiaramonte Gulfi

Chiaramonte Gulfi is located on a hill-top 15 km north of Ragusa at an altitude of 668 m above sea level. The highest point is on Monte Arcibessi at 907 m. The town is also called Balcony of Sicily for its panoramic position, with views over the Valley of the Ippari and its towns (Comiso, Vittoria, Acate) and all the way to the Mediterranean sea if looking south, as far as Mount Etna in direction north and to the Erean Mountains with Caltagirone if looking west.

In the area numerous archeological sites from the Bronze Age and Iron Age have been found, as well as ruins dating to the Greek archaic era and Hellenistic era. Also Roman, Byzantine and medieval testimonies can be found.

The city was founded by the Greek colonists from Syracuse in the 7th century BC with the name of Akrilai. Destroyed a first time by the Carthaginians in 406 BC, it was rebuilt during the Timoleonic era. In 213 BC Akrilai was the location of battle in which the Syracusan army, led by Hippokrates, was defeated by the Roman army led by the Consul Marcus Claudius Marcellus. Thenceforth the city of Akrilai was part of the Roman province of Sicily, its name being changed to Acrillai.

The ancient town was destroyed a second time by the Arabs of the Caliph Asad ibn al-Furat in 827 AD, and the name Acrillae disappeared. The rebuilt centre was known by the Arab name of Gulfi, which means “pleasurable place”. In 1299 Gulfi was besieged and captured by Roger de Lauria for the Angevines during the War of the Vesper; Manfredi Chiaramonte, who had been named Count of Modica by the Aragonese King Frederick III, moved the survivors to an upper location, called Baglio, which he fortified and protected with a castle.

In 1593 the town had grown outside the walls and had 5,711 inhabitants. It was nearly entirely destroyed by an earthquake in 1693, and was subsequently rebuilt.

The Church of the Annunciation is the oldest in Palazzolo Acreide; probably built in the 13th century - it was destroyed by an earthquake in 1693 and rebuilt by Matteo Tranisi (17th century). The exterior of the church stands out for the wide portal, which is characterized by four spiral columns decorated with vine shoots and friezes in a naturalistic style. The church has three naves decorated with several paintings, among which we mention the “Annunciation”, by Paolo Tanasi (19th century), a local painter.

Finaly, we remind visitors that the Anapo Valley around Piazzolo Acreide stands out for the beauty of its country landscape and traditions, which are celebrated in honor of St. Paul (June) and St. Sebastian (January), periods in which tourists can enjoy some local products and typical dishes, like the macaroni called “maccu”, ravioli with ricotta, risotto with mushrooms, the “Cavatelli” and the noodles with special seasonings. Among the main courses stand out the pork steaks and sausage, loins of veal, kebabs, roast meats and fried rabbit. Among the desserts we mention the “Cannolicchi” and all specialties with ricotta and almonds.

GIARRATANA

Giarratana (34km from Ragusa; 3500 inhabitants) is the smallest and the least populated city in the province of Ragusa and stretches between the Iblean mountains and flat lands. It is bathed by the Irmiono River flowing from the Lauro Mount. An artificial dam built along the course of the river, about 10km from Giarratana, has played a major role in both the city’s agriculture and tourism, since it has given life to a magnificent lake and landscape.

Giarratana has ancient roots. Before the 1693’s earthquake it stood on a different site called Terravecchia. Prehistoric settlements were discovered in its surroundings, such as Scalona (2000 BC) and the more recent Donna Scala, thought to have been populated by Sikel tribes. Another ancient settlement, named Monte Casale, on the Lauro mount, is believed to have been the site of Kasmenai, a mysterious town and the military outpost that the Greek-Syracusans founded in the Southern reaches of their Sicilian dominions. The earliest record about Giarratana dates from the Norman occupation, when it was ruled by Goffredo “The Norman”, the Count of Ragusa. Other sources hold that during the Swabian rule, in 1195, Henry VI, King of Sicily, granted the town to Rinaldo Acquaviva, and that during Aragon's reign, a certain Gualtierio from Caltagirone was proclaimed Lord of the city.

Giarratana was then assimilated into County of Modica, and later sold, first to Guglielmo and Niccolò Casasegia, then to Simonetto Settimo, in 1454, whose family ruled the city for a longtime. On 11 January 1693 Giarratana was razed to the ground by an earthquake. The municipality board decided to rebuild the city on a close, sunnier site, a hill referred to as the Poju di l’iddior, where it eventually grew. From that time, Giarratana shared its destiny with the entire province.

http://www.sicilyweb.com/english/ragusa/giarratana.htm

PANTALICA

The Necropolis of Pantalica is a large necropolis in Sicily with over 5,000 tombs dating from the 13th to the 7th centuries BC. Pantalica is situated in the valleys of the rivers Anapo and Calcinaro, between the towns of Ferla and Sortino in southern-western Sicily. Together with the city of Syracuse, Pantalica is listed as “Syracuse and the Rocky Necropolis of Pantalica” on the list of UNESCO World Heritage Sites.

Pantalica is located on a plateau surrounded by canyons formed by the Anapo and Calcinaro rivers between the towns of Ferla and Sortino in south-eastern Sicily. It is an important natural area with various paths allowing visitors access. The Anapo valley is accessible by a path that runs for 10 km along the ancient route between Syracuse and Vizzini. The route to the plateau can also split off to the Sella di Filippo ("Filippo's Saddle"), starting from the Ferla region or, on the other side, the bank of the Sortino, which then leads to the Grotta dei pipistrelli ("Cavern of the Bats").


ORTIGIA

The best way to see the island of Ortigia is just to wander. It's difficult to get lost (it measures just 1km by 500 metres), but packed with over 2,500 years of history. Architectural styles vary widely, encompassing Greek and Roman remains, Mediaeval Norman buildings and a great deal of (relatively) understated Baroque. Restaurants, trattorias and bars abound and it is especially nice to sit out on the western side in the late afternoon, warmed by the sun and with a view over the lagoon. On crossing the bridge from the mainland you have three possibilities: turn right and walk along the western part, turn left towards the eastern part or go straight on into the centre.

The historical highlight of the western side is the fountain of Arethusa. Legend has it that Arethusa, originally an Arcadian nymph, fled underwater to Siracusa in an attempt to rid herself of the persistent amorous advances of the river God Alpheios. The Goddess Artemis transformed her into the fresh water spring that we can see today. All was in vain, however, as Alpheios located his prey and mixed his own waters with hers. Legend also has it that the spring is directly connected under the sea to the river at the sanctuary of Olympia.

Going straight on will take you first to the remains of the Temple of Apollo, which, being built in the 7th Century BC was supposedly the first great Doric temple of its kind in Sicily. Continuing up Corso Matteotti will bring you to Piazza Archimede, named after the town's most famous son.

From here it is a short walk to the real centre of Ortigia, the Piazza del Duomo. This delightful pedestrian square is home to the wonderful Cathedral built on the site of an ancient Temple of Athena as can clearly be seen from the original Doric columns that were incorporated into the building's main structure. Also on this square is the beautifully symmetrical Baroque Palazzo Beneventano and the church of Santa Lucia, the town's patron saint.

Turning left at the entrance to the island will take you immediately to the colourful daily morning street market, which sells a fantastic array of fruit, vegetables, fish and meat. From here wandering around the eastern limits of Siracusa you will find a maze of streets that eventually open out at the southern extreme of the island and the inaccessible Castello Maniace, a true bastion built by Frederick II in 1239.

Other sights of interest on Ortigia include the Byzantine Miqwe (Jewish baths) under the Hotel alla Giudecca.

Syracuse was the most important city of Magna Graecia. It defeated the mighty Athens in 413 and was home to many a great Greek, including the inimitable Archimedes. At the height of its economic, political and military powers, the city had a population of 300,000 and, according to Cicero, was “the greatest Greek city and the most beautiful of them all”.

For those travelling to Sicily today, Siracusa is not to be missed. It is relatively easy to visit in a day, though obviously deserves rather more time. A visit can be split into two easy parts: one dedicated to the archaeological site, the other to the island of Ortygia.

THE ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITE
The archaeological site, situated in the northwest of the town, is home to a staggering number of well-preserved Greek (and Roman) remains. The main attraction is undoubtedly the Greek theatre that dates back at least until the 5th Century BC. Its cavea is amongst the largest ever built: its 59 rows could accommodate up to 15,000 spectators. The theatre is still used for an annual Greek theatre festival running from the middle of May to the end of June.

Just over the ridge from the theatre are the old stone quarries (latomie). While today there is a delightful, fragrant lemon orchard, they used to serve a different, more sinister purpose: 7,000 Athenian prisoners of war were kept here after the Sicilian Expedition in 413.

Of most interest is the famous “Ear of Dionysius”, a 20m-high, slender pointed arch cut into the rock face that develops inwards for about 65m. The name was given by Caravaggio during his visit in 1608 and legend would tell us that it was used by Dionysius the Tyrant as a prison for his bitterest enemies.

The excellent Cathedral-like acoustics meant that he could hear their conversations from outside.

The Roman amphitheatre, built in the 3rd Century AD, is also very impressive. 140m long, it is one of the largest to be found anywhere. Its function was far removed from the Greek version. Here, traditional circus fare was offered, with gladiators and wild animals providing spectacles of blood-curdlng violence. In the centre is a rectangular hole that is thought to have had one of two purposes: a space for scenic machinery or a drain for the blood and gore!

The Archaeological Museum is just a stone’s throw from the archaeological park (in Via Teocrito) and contains a great collection of exhibits from all over the Syracuse area.
Noto is, quite simply, the apotheosis of Baroque town planning and architecture. Completely destroyed by the terrible 1693 earthquake, it was rebuilt from scratch on a new site, about 10km from the old centre.

Under the supervision of the Duke of Camastra, the Spanish Viceroy’s right-hand man, three architects, Labisi, Sinatra and Gagliardi, set to work, intent on creating a new town based firmly on Baroque ideals.

The idea was to create a linear, perfectly proportioned urban centre whose parallel lines would provide myriad panoramas. The town was divided into three parts by three roads running from east to west, thus ensuring the constant attentions of the sun. At the top lived the nobility, in the middle the clergy, and at the bottom, the “hoi polloi”.

The main building material used was local compacted limestone, a substance that seemingly absorbs the sun’s aureate rays and transforms them into a soft golden-honeyed glow. The effect at sunset is quite something.

The main thoroughfare is Corso Vittorio Emanuele along which many of Noto’s most representative buildings stand. It begins at the Porta Reale and extends east via three piazzas, each with its own church. The public gardens are situated along this road (or at least looking on to it) as are the Monastero del Santissimo Salvatore with its graceful tower, the inspired Palazzo Ducrezio, the Cathedral (whose dome collapsed in 1996), the Church of San Francesco, the Jesuit Church and College and Palazzo Nicolaci di Villadorata.

All these buildings are obviously Baroque in style but each is unique with its own fascinating design. The architects seem to have been given free reign to run through the whole gamut of late 17th Century architectural devices and forms with a virtuosity that has visitors almost chuckling at their originality. Curvaceous concave facades battle for supremacy next to their convex cousins, while rectilinear edifices frown regally at their presumptuous frivolity. Grotesque masks, cherubs and curlicues jostle with volutes and other embellishments, and puffed-up wrought iron goose breasted balconies abound.

Near the end of the Corso is Piazza XVI Maggio with its magnificent Church of San Domenico and a magnificent Fountain of Hercules. Running parallel to Corso Vittorio Emanuele further up the town is Via Cavour, the home of elaborate noble palaces including Palazzo Astuto and Palazzo Trigona Cannicarao.

At the end of May, Noto celebrates the marvels of Spring and the coming summer with a colourful “Festa” known as the “Infiorita”. The street of Corrado Nicolaci becomes home to flower artists who create the most beautiful mosaics using petals.

A UNESCO Heritage site, Noto is not to be missed, even if Baroque architecture is not your cup of tea.
**VITTORIA**

This busy agricultural town rises at the foot of the Monti Iblei, not far from the sea in a dominating position on the picturesque Ippari valley, and takes its name from the Countess of Modica Vittoria Colonna Enríquez, who founded the town on 24 April 1607.

Though Vittoria is a new town, the area was inhabited since prehistoric times. In its territory one finds the Camarina, a Doric (Greek) colony founded in 598 BC that was destroyed by the Romans in the 3rd century BC. The harbour and sea resort of Scoglitti Romans in the 3rd century BC that was destroyed by the (Greek) colony founded in 598 BC was inhabited since prehistoric times. It is a fine 17th century Roman arch, positioned in a charming natural setting under old steps in an area very rich in rock grottoes used as a necropolis thousands of years ago, just under the ancient, traditional quarter of Fundrisi.

In Roman times it was renowned for the production of the Mesopotanium wine, which was widely exported in dedicated containers which were also found among the ruins of Pompei. In the 18th century the town grew and prospered, becoming one of the main wine-production areas in Sicily.

What to see

The ruins of the Greek colony Camarina, where excavations restored the layout of regular blocks of dwellings and the perimeter wall, 7 km (4 miles) long with three gates.

The Temple of Athena of the 5th century BC, with its three large Necropolis) in which, many items of Attic and Sicelian pottery were found. (the Sicels were the ancient inhabitants of this area of Sicily)

The 17th century church of Santa Maria delle Grazie, which was rebuilt after the 1693 earthquake that severely hit eastern Sicily. This church has invaluable altars in polychrome marble, and imposing, fine oak furniture from the mid-18th century by Carmelo D’Asta, in the sacristy. The Piazza del Popolo, in the centre of the town, with its 19th-century Theater, in neo-classical style, built in 1863 on a project by the architect Giuseppe Di Bartolo Morselli.

Examples of Industrial Archeology, like the old electric plant built in 1890, and the distilleries of the Wittacker and Florio, all of which are being restored by the municipal authority.


**ENNA**

Enna has earned the nicknames “belvedere” (panoramic viewpoint) and “ombelico” (navel) of Sicily. At 931m above sea level, Enna is the highest Italian province capital.

The most important monuments of Enna are:

- The Castello di Lombardia (Lombardy Castle), perhaps the most important example of military architecture in Sicily. It was created in very old times by Sicilians, rebuilt by Frederick II of Sicily and restructured under Frederick II of Aragon. The castle, which bears this name because of the garrison of Lombard troops that defended it in Norman times, has an irregular layout which once comprised 20 towers: of the six remaining, the Torre Pisana is the best preserved one. It has Guelph merlons. The castle was divided into three different spaces separated by walls: the first courtyard is home to a renowned outdoor lyric theater in which high quality shows are performed; the second one houses a large green park, while in the third courtyard it is possible to see the vestiges of royal apartments, a bishop’s chapel, medieval prisons and the Pisan Tower.

- The Duomo (Cathedral), a noteworthy example of religious architecture in Sicily, built in the 14th century by Queen Eleonora, Frederick III’s wife, but largely renovated after the fire of 1446. The great Baroque facade, in yellow tufa-stone, is surmounted by a massive campanile with finely shaped decorative elements. The portal on the right side is from the 16th century, while the other is from the original 14th-century edifice. The interior has a nave with two aisles separated by massive Corinthian columns, and three apses. The stucco decoration is from the 16th and 17th centuries. Art works include a 15th-century crucifix panel painting, a canvas by Guglielmo Borremans, the presbytery paintings by Filippo Paladini (1613), a Baroque side portal. The cathedral’s treasure is housed in the Alessi Museum, and has precious ornaments, the gold crown with diamonds “Crown of the Virgin,” Byzantine icons, thousands of ancient coins and other collections.

- The Municipal Library, located in the San Francesco building. The latter church has a noteworthy 15th century campanile and, in the interior, a fine painted Cross from the same century.

- The church of San Tommaso is also of note for its 15th century belfry, with three orders. It has windows framed by an agile full-centered archivolt. The church contains a marble icon (1515) attributed to Giuliano Mancino and precious frescoes by Borremans.

- The Janniscuru Gate is the only one preserved of the 7 old gates once located at the entrance of the town. It is a fine 17th century Roman arch, positioned in a charming natural setting under old steps in an area very rich in rock grottoes used as a necropolis thousands of years ago, just under the ancient, traditional quarter of Fundrisi.

- Palazzo Varisano, housing the Regional Archaeological Museum of Enna, with material dating from the Copper Age to the 6th century AD coming from many archaeological areas in the Province of Enna.

- Torre di Federico, an octagonal ancient tower which was allegedly a summer residence of Frederick II of Hohenstaufen. The two floors possess beautiful vaults. The aspect of the building is austere. It was part of a bigger complex, named Old castle and destroyed by Arabs, of which nowadays there remain some pieces of the old, imposing walls on the top of the green hill housing municipal gardens where the Tower rises.

- The Campanile of the destroyed church of San Giovanni, features pointed arches with finely shaped archivolt,

- and a three light mullioned window with Catalan-style decorations.

- The Municipal Library, located in the San Francesco building. The latter church has a noteworthy 15th century campanile and, in the interior, a fine painted Cross from the same century.

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HIGHEST ITALIAN

ENNA IS THE

CAPITAL
Lake Pergusa (Latin: Pergus lacus or Hennaeus lacus) is set between a group of mountains in the chain of Erei, and it is located 5 km from Enna. It is a vital place in the migratory current of lots of birds. In addition to birds, which are certainly the protagonists of the Pergusa nature reserve, here there are also interesting species of mammals, reptiles, amphibians and invertebrates.

Around the lake, there is the most important racing track of Southern Italy, the Autodromo di Pergusa, that hosted international competitions and events, such as Formula One, Formula 3000 and a Ferrari Festival with Michael Schumacher. In the area of Pergusa lake we can also find an archaeological site, known as Cozzo Matrice, practically the rests of an old fortified village, where some imposing walls dating about 8000 BC, a sacred citadel, a rich necropolis and the remains of an ancient temple dedicated to Demeter, dating more than 2000 years ago. The important forest and green area named Selva Pergusina (that means “Pergusa’s Wood”) surrounds a part of the Lake Pergusa Valley, evoking a scenographic panorama. Pergusa is strongly linked to the myth of the Greek Persephone, Demeter’s daughter, which was kidnapped here by Hades.

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Enna

Caltagirone is a town and comune in the province of Catania, on the island of Sicily, about 70 km southwest of Catania. It is bounded by the comuni of Acate, Gela, Grammichele, Licodia Eubea, Mazzarino, Mazzarrone, Mineo, Mirabella Imbaccari, Niscemi, Piazza Armerina, San Michele di Ganzaria.

The city has been long famous for the production of pottery, particularly maiolica and terra-cotta wares. Nowadays the production is more and more oriented to artistic production of ceramics and terra-cotta sculptures. Other activities are mainly related to agriculture (production of grapes, olives, peaches).

The city's name derives from the Arabic “qal'at-al-jarar” (“Castle of [pottery] jars”) - a name that attests to the antiquity of the pottery works which are still thriving. It has been inhabited since prehistoric times, as shown by the presence of two necropolises dating from the second millennium BCE and by numerous other archaeological finds. It was later inhabited by the Sicels pre-Roman population. The Arabs built a castle here that in 1030 was attacked by Ligurian troops under the Byzantine general George Maniakes, who have left traces of Ligurian language in the current dialect. The city flourished under the Norman and Hohenstaufen domination, becoming a renowned center for production of ceramics.

The city was almost completely destroyed by the earthquake of 1693. Many public and private buildings have then been reconstructed in earthquake Baroque style. Primarily for this reason the city has been included, together with the surrounding territory, in an area protected by the UNESCO World Heritage program.

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.

The main landmark of the city is the 142-step monumental 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 colours arranged in order to reconstruct an artistic drawing of several tens of meters.

Religious buildings include:

- The Cathedral of St. Julian, of Norman origin, with a twentieth-century art nouveau façade by Saverio Gulli.
- The Baroque church of San Francesco di Paola. The sacristy is in Gothic style, dating from before the 1693 earthquake.
- San Francesco d’Assisi, edified in 1236 and rebuilt in Baroque style after 1693. The façade has two orders with marine symbols and a statue of the Immaculate. The dome is unfinished.
- Church of the Gesù (1570). The façade has eight statues portraying saints and the Madonna with Child. The interior, one a single nave, houses a Pietà by Filippo Paladino (1607) and Christ’s Nativity by Polidoro da Caravaggio.
- Santa Maria del Monte (12th century).
- The Renaissance Church of the New Capuchins, in white stone, with a noteworthy treasure and a picture gallery.
- St. James.
- Also noteworthy is the Palazzo Senatorio (fifteenth century), the former Town Hall.

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Caltagirone
PIAZZA ARMERINA

Situated deep in the Sicilian hinterland, at 721 metres above sea level, stands Piazza Armerina, one of Sicily’s most frequented tourist spots. However, it is not the town that most people come to see, but the famous Villa Romana del Casale. Built in the middle of the 4th Century AD as a hunting lodge by a Roman patrician (it is not known for sure who the owner was) the Villa is home to some of the best preserved and extensive examples of Roman mosaics spread over around 3500m.

These extraordinarily vivid mosaics, probably produced by North African artisans, deal with numerous subjects, ranging from Homeric escapades and mythological scenes to portrayals of daily life, including the famous tableau of girls exercising in their “bikinis”.

The Villa was built in four main sections: the main entrance with its thermal baths, a peristyle with living area and guest rooms, the private rooms of the owner, complete with basilica (public hall) and a triclinium (dining area) and elliptical courtyard.

Almost completely covered by a landslide in the 12th Century, the Villa was partly rediscovered in the 19th Century. However, not until the 20th Century, with the excavations of Paolo Orsi, Giuseppe Cultrera and Gino Vinicio Gentile did the magnitude and magnificence of Villa Romana del Casale come to light. It is now a UNESCO Heritage site.

The town of Piazza Armerina is also worth a visit if you are in the area. Its main sights include an Aragonese Castle built at the end of the 14th Century and an imposing 18th Century Duomo.

If you’re there in mid August (12th, 13th and 14th), a visit to the “Palio dei Normanni” is a must. This event, a competition of knightly combat and horsemanship, records the heroics of the Norman invaders who ousted the Arabs from Sicily in around 1061. The town still has ties with its Norman savours through its dialect, a kind of Gallic Italian brought to the area by the Normans and the subsequent influx of immigrants from Lombardy.


ACIREALE

Acireale is a coastal city and commune in the north-east of the province of Catania, Sicily, Italy, at the foot of Mount Etna, on the coast facing the Ionian Sea. It is a diocese, famous for its churches, including the Neo-Gothic St. Peter’s Basilica, St. Sebastian’s Basilica in the Sicilian Baroque style, and the 17th century Acireale Cathedral, and a seminary, for the training of priests. Acireale is also noted for its art and paintings; the oldest academy in Sicily, the “Accademia dei Dafnici e degli Zelanti”, is located here.

According to tradition, the city’s origins trace back to Xiphonia, a mysterious Greek city now completely disappeared. In Roman times, there existed another Greek town, Akis, which was involved in the Punic Wars. In Ovid’s Metamorphoses, there is a great love between Acis, the spirit of the Acis River, and Galatea the sea-nymph. According to mythology, the tears of Galatea after the death of Acis gave birth to the Acis River, Fiume di Jaci, flowing past Acireale. In the Middle Ages, the town expanded around the castle (now part of Aci Castello), known as Jachium under the Byzantines, as Al-Yāj under the Arabs, and, later, as Aquilia. In 1169, a huge earthquake scattered the population of the mainland, divided between the numerous boroughs of Aci. Another Aquilia was founded in the late 14th century further north, creating the nucleus of the modern city. The only remains of the medieval Aquilia Nova is the Gothic-Lombard-style portal of the cathedral.

Church of Saint Dominic, Piazza San Domenico. This neoclassical style church was rebuilt in the 18th century after the original 16th-century structure sustained considerable damage caused by the 1693 Sicily earthquake. In the 16th century, Emperor Charles V freed the city from feudal ties, creating it as a Crown commune. In the late 16th century, the town had between 6,000 and 7,000 inhabitants. The most ancient document mentioning the Carnival of Acireale dates to 1594. The town expanded its role as a trade center (it was granted the right to hold a Free Market or Fiera Franca) and received numerous new edifices. Acireale was nearly destroyed by an earthquake in 1693, which substantially halted its economic growth. During the Expedition of the Thousand (1861), which freed Sicily from the Kingdom of Naples, Acireale was the first town to rebel against the Bourbons. In 1941, it was bombed by the Allies, resulting in many civilian casualties. Acireale offers many leisure activities, which includes art, festivals and concerts, nature, open-air markets, theater, and thermal baths. The church of San Biagio in Acireale contains some of the relics of the Venerable Gabriele Allegra, who had entered the Franciscan seminary in 1918. Villa Belvedere and Parco delle Terme, two large public parks and “La Timpa”, a beautiful natural reserve overlooking the Ionian Sea, offer great nature sights. Piazza Duomo, with its St. Peter’s Basilica, is in the main square of the city. There are many beautiful historic Baroque buildings in town, such as Palazzo Pennisi and Palazzo Modò, which date from the 17th century, and Palazzo Musmeci dating from the 18th century. The commercial city center is primarily located in the streets including and adjacent to Corso Umberto and Corso Italia, which are the city's principal thoroughfares.

Acireale is famous throughout Sicily for its spectacular floats, costumes, and parades during the carnival season, which attracts many visitors.

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Acireale
ACI CASTELLO

Aci Castello is a city and comune in the Province of Catania in Sicily. The city is located 9 km north of Catania on the Mediterranean coast. The primary economic sectors are agriculture and industry (in Catania). The city is neighbored by Aci Catena, Acireale, Catania, San Gregorio di Catania and Valverde.

The city of Aci Castello developed around the castle, which was built in 1076 by the Normans upon the foundations of a 7th-century Byzantine fortification. In 1169, Aci Castello started to expand after an eruption of Mount Etna made the towns in its vicinity uninhabitable. The castle later became the property of the bishops of Catania.

In 1296, Roger of Lauria, admiral of the Aragonese fleet during the War of the Sicilian Vespers, was granted the fief of Aci and its castle as a reward for his faithful service to King Frederick III of Sicily. When relations between the two men soured and di Lauria transferred his loyalties to the Angevins, the castle was besieged and captured by King Frederick and di Lauria stripped of his fiefs. In 1320, the castle and Aci were taken from Roger's descendant, Margaret of Lauria and given to Blasco II de Alagona. Whilst the latter was away defending Palermo from the attacking Angevins, Bertrando di Balzo sacked Aci in his absence.

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Aci_Castello
TAORMINA

Taormina is a comune and small town on the east coast of the island of Sicily, in the Province of Messina, about midway between Messina and Catania. Taormina has been a very popular tourist destination since the 19th century. It has popular beaches (accessible via an aerial tramway) on the Ionian sea, which is remarkably warm and has a high salt content. Taormina can be reached via highways (autostrade) from Messina from the north and Catania from the south.

HISTORY

The area around Taormina was inhabited by the Siculi even before the Greeks arrived on the Sicilian coast in 734 BC to found a town called Naxos. The theory that Taormenion was founded by colonists from Naxos is confirmed by Strabo and other ancient writers.

The new settlement seems to have risen rapidly to prosperity, and was apparently already a considerable town at the time of Timoleon's expedition in 345 BC. It was the first place in Sicily where that leader landed, having eluded the vigilance of the Carthaginians, who were guarding the Straits of Messina, and crossed direct from Rhegium (modern Reggio di Calabria) to Taormenion. The city was at that time still under the government of Andromachus, whose mild and equitable administration is said to have presented a strong contrast with that of the despot and tyrants of the other Sicilian cities. He welcomed Timoleon with open arms, and afforded him a secure resting place until he was enabled to carry out his plans in other parts of Sicily. Andromachus was not deprived of his position of power when all the other tyrants were expelled by Timoleon, but was permitted to retain it undisturbed till his death.

Little is recorded about Tauroenium for some time after this. It is probable that it passed under the authority of Agathochles, who drove the historian Timaeus into exile; and some time after this it was subject to a domestic despot of the name of Tydanderion, who was contemporary with Hicetas of Syracuse and Phintias of Agrigentum. Tydanderion was one of those who concurred in inviting Pyrrhus into Sicily (278 BC), and when that monarch landed with his army at Tauroenium, joined him with all his forces, and supported him in his march upon Syracuse. A few years later we find that Tauroenium had fallen into the power of Hieron of Syracuse, and was employed by him as a stronghold in the war against the Mamertines. It was also one of the cities which was left under his dominion by the treaty concluded with him by the Romans in 263 BC. There is no doubt that Tauroenium continued to form a part of the kingdom of Syracuse until the death of Hieron, and that it only passed under the government of Rome when the whole island of Sicily was reduced to a Roman province; but we have scarcely any account of the part it took during the Second Punic War, though it would appear, from a hint in Appian, that it submitted to Marcellus on favorable terms; and it is probable that it was on that occasion it obtained the peculiarly favored position it enjoyed under the Roman dominion. For we learn from Cicero that Tauroenium was one of the three cities in Sicily which enjoyed the privileges of a civitas foederata or allied city, thus retaining a nominal independence, and was not even subject, like Messana, to the obligation of furnishing ships of war when called upon. The city, however, suffered severe calamities during the Sertulian War in Sicily (134-132 BC), having fallen into the hands of the insurgent slaves, who, on account of the great strength of its position, made it one of their chief posts, and were able for a long time to defy the arms of the consul Publius Rupilius. They held out until they were reduced to the most fearful extremities by famine, when the city was at length betrayed into the hands of the consul by one of their leaders named Sarapion, and the whole of the survivors put to the sword.

Tauroenium again played a conspicuous part during the wars of Sextus Pompeius in Sicily, and, from its strength as a fortress, was one of the principal points of the position which he took up in 36 BC, for defence against Octavian. It became the scene also of a sea-fight between a part of the fleet of Octavian, commanded by the triumvir in person, and that of Pompeius, which terminated in the defeat and almost total destruction of the former. In the settlement of Sicily after the defeat of Pompeius, Tauroenium was one of the places selected by Augustus to receive a Roman colony, probably as a measure of precaution, on account of the strength of its situation, as we are told that he expelled the former inhabitants to make room for his new colonists. Strabo speaks of it as one of the cities on the east coast of Sicily that was still subsisting in his time, though inferior in population both to Messana and Catana. Both Pliny and Ptolemy assign it the rank of a colonia, and it seems to have been one of the few cities of Sicily that continued under the Roman Empire to be a place of some consideration. Its territory was noted for the excellence of its wine, and produced also a kind of marble which seems to have been highly valued. Juvenal also speaks of the sea off its rocky coast as producing the choicest mullets. The Itineraries place Tauromenium 32 miles from Messana, and the same distance from Catania.

After the fall of the Western Roman Empire, Taormina continued to rank as one of the more important towns of Sicily, and because of the strength of its position was one of the last places that was retained by the Eastern Roman emperors; but it was taken by the Arabs in 902 after a siege of two years. Following two uprisings (962 and 969) the Arabs totally destroyed the town. Taormina was renamed “Al-Muizzia” in honour of Imam al-Muizz, who was a Fatimid Caliph (reigned 953-975). Muslim rule of the town lasted until 1078, when it was captured by the Norman count Roger I of Sicily.

The area around Taormina was inhabited by the Siculi even before the Greeks arrived on the Sicilian coast in 734 BC to found a town called Naxos.
After the fall of the Normans and of their heirs, the Hohenstaufen, Taormina followed the history of Sicily under the Angevins and then the Crown of Aragon. In 1410 King Martin II of Sicily was elected here by the Sicilian Parliament. Later Taormina was under Spanish suzerainty, receiving the status of “city” in the 17th century.

In 1675 it was besieged by the French, who had occupied Messina. Under the Bourbons dynasty of the Kingdom of Two Sicilies, Taormina did not have a relevant role; however, it obtained an easier access when part of the Catrabico promontory was partially cut and a seaside road connecting it to Messina and Catania was created. It received also a station on the second-oldest railroad in the region. Starting from the 19th century Taormina became a popular tourist resort in the whole of Europe: people who visited Taormina include Oscar Wilde, Nicholas I of Russia, Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, Nietzsche (who here wrote his Also sprach Zarathustra), Richard Wagner and many others.

In the late 19th century Taormina gained further prominence as the place where Wilhelm von Gloeden worked most of his life as a photographer of predominantly male nudes. There is some speculation about Taormina being an early gentlemen’s destination. Also credited for making Taormina popular was Otto Geleng, best known in his hometown of Berlin for his fine paintings, which he composed and painted in Italy but exhibited in Germany. What distinguishes Geleng, however, is his choice to depict the more southern regions where he captured the spectacular views and light of Sicily. He often painted the area’s Greek colonial ruins, including Taormina. Taormina’s first important tourist was Johann Wolfgang Goethe who dedicated exalting pages to the city in his book entitled Italian Journey, but perhaps it was Geleng’s views that made its beauty talked about throughout Europe and turned the site into a famous tourist center. The artist arrived in Sicily at the age of 20 in search of new subjects for his paintings. On his way through Taormina he was so enamoured by the landscape that he decided to stop for part of the winter. Geleng began to paint everything that Taormina offered: ruins, sea, mountains, none of which were familiar to the rest of Europe. When his paintings were later exhibited in Berlin and Paris, many critics accused Geleng of having an ‘unbridled imagination’. At that, Geleng challenged them all to go to Taormina with him, promising that he would pay everyone’s expenses if he were not telling the truth.

During the early 20th century the town became a colony of expatriate artists, writers, and intellectuals. D. H. Lawrence stayed here at the Fontana Vecchia from 1920 to 1922, and wrote a number of his poems, novels, short stories, and essays, and a travel book, Sea and Sardinia. Thirty years later, from April 1950 through September 1951, the same villa was home to Truman Capote, who wrote of his stay in the essay “Fontana Vecchia.” Charles Webster Leadbeater, the theosophical author, found out that Taormina had the right magnetics fields for Jiddu Krishnamurti to develop his talents, so the young Krishnamurti dwelt here from time to time. Halldór Laxness, the Icelandic author and Nobel Prize winner, worked here on the first modern Icelandic novel, Vefarinn mikli frá Kasmír.

By this time Taormina had become “a polite synonym for Sodom” as Harold Acton described it. Later, however, after the Second World War Acton was visiting Taormina with Evelyn Waugh and, coming upon a board advertising “Ye Olde English Teas” he sighed and commented that Taormina “was now quite as boring as Bournemouth.”
The present town of Taormina occupies the ancient site, on a lofty hill which forms the last projecting point of the mountain ridge that extends along the coast from Cape Peloruss to this point. The site of the old town is about 250 m above the sea, while a very steep and almost isolated rock, crowned by a Saracen castle, rises about 150 m higher: this is undoubtedly the site of the ancient Arx or citadel, the inaccessible position of which is repeatedly alluded to by ancient writers. Portions of the ancient walls may be traced at intervals all round the brow of the hill, the whole of the summit of which was evidently occupied by the ancient city. Numerous fragments of ancient buildings are scattered over its whole surface, including extensive reservoirs of water, sepulchres, tesselated pavements, etc., and the remains of a spacious edifice, commonly called a Naumachia, but the real purpose of which is difficult to determine. But by far the most remarkable monument remaining at Taormina is the Ancient theatre, which is one of the most celebrated ruins in Sicily, on account both of its remarkable preservation and its beautiful location. It is built for the most part of brick, and is therefore probably of Roman date, though the plan and arrangement are in accordance with those of Greek, rather than Roman, theatres; whence it is supposed that the present structure was rebuilt upon the foundations of an older theatre of the Greek period. With a diameter of 109 metres (after an expansion in the 2nd century), this theatre is the second largest of its kind in Sicily (after that of Syracuse); it is frequently used for operatic and theatrical performances and for concerts.

The greater part of the original seats have disappeared, but the wall which surrounded the whole cavea is preserved, and the proscenium with the back wall of the scena and its appendages, of which only traces remain in most ancient theatres, are here preserved in singular integrity, and contribute much to the picturesque effect, as well as to the interest, of the ruin. From the fragments of architectural decorations still extant we learn that it was of the Corinthian order, and richly ornamented. Some portions of a temple are also visible, converted into the church of San Pancrazio, but the edifice is of small size.

**ARCHAEOLOGY**

**CULTURE AND TOURISM**

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 village 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. Taormina is approximately a forty-five minute drive away from Europe’s largest active volcano, Mount Etna. Icelandic writer Halldór Laxness, who won the Nobel prize for literature in 1955, wrote most of his first novel, Vefarinn mikli frá Kasmír (“The Great Weaver from Kashmir”), in Taormina which he then praised highly in his book of autobiographical essays, Skáldatími (“The Time of the Poet”, 1963).

Between 1948 and 1999 the English writer Daphne Phelps lived in the Casa Cuseni designed and built by Robert Hawthorn Kitson in 1905, and entertained various friends including Bertrand Russell, Roald Dahl, and Tennessee Williams.

**EVENTS**

Many exhibitions and events are organized during the summer in Taormina. The exceptional stage for pop and classical concerts, opera and important performances often recorded by television (for example, the ceremony of the Silver Ribbon Award, the Festivalbar, the Kore) is the Ancient Theatre. Since 1983, the most important performances are realized by Taormina Arte, the cultural institution which organizes one of the most famous music, theatre and dance festivals. Within the program of Taormina Arte there is the Taormina Film Fest, the well-known cinema festival, the heir of the Cinema Festival of Messina and Taormina, dating from 1960, which for about twenty years has hosted the David of Donatello Awards with the participation of the most famous Italian film stars. During the Taormina Film Fest the Silver Ribbons are now awarded, a prize created by Italian Film Journalists. Since 2005, in October, Taormina Arte has organized the Giuseppe Sinopoli Festival, a festival dedicated completely to the great conductor, who died in 2001 and was for many years the artistic director of Taormina Arte.

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Taormina

**SAVOCA**

Savoca is a comune in the Province of Messina in Sicily, located about 170 km east of Palermo and about 30 km southwest of Messina. Savoca borders the following municipalities: Casalvecchio Siculo, Forza d’Agrò, Furci Siculo, Sant’Alessio Siculo, Santa Teresa di Riva.

The town, together with Forza d’Agrò, was the location for the scenes set in Corleone of Francis Ford Coppola’s The Godfather. Bar Vitelli in Savoca, which is still a functioning establishment, was featured in the motion picture as the place where Michael Corleone asked Apollonia’s father to meet his daughter.


**FORZA D’AGRO**

Forza d’Agrò is a town and comune in Sicily, part of the Province of Messina.

Forza d’Agrò is on the lower peak of a small mountain, while on the higher peak that overlooks the town are the remains of a Norman castle. Much of the town consists of traditional buildings and stone paved lanes that are impassable by car. Due to this lack of recent development, Forza d’Agrò has featured as the backdrop in a number of films, such as The Godfather trilogy.

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Forza_d’Agr%C3%B2
SOME EXAMPLES OF ACCOMMODATION

AGRITURISMO

**AGRITURISMO BORGO ALVERIA**
Contra Noto Antica, S.P. 64, 96017 Noto
http://www.borgoalveria.com/

**TORRE DANTONA**
Contrada Dantona, 97010 Marina Di Modica
http://www.torredantona.it/

**AL CASALE**
C.da Cavalusi – 97100 Ragusa
http://www.alcasale.net

**AGRITURISMO VILLA CARCARA**
Contrada Carcara, 97100 Ragusa
http://www.villaacarcara.com/

**CASATO LICITRA**
C.da Bocampello S.P. 14 Castiglione - Kastalia Km 8 - 97100 Ragusa
http://www.casatolicitra.it/1320/home?lang=EN

**OSPITALITÀ RURALE CIANCIÒ**
C.da Cianciò - Graffetta - Modica (RG)
http://www.masseriaciancio.it/info.htm

SOME EXAMPLES OF HOTELS & RESORTS

**KASTALIA RESORT**
Athena Resort
Sp 15 Castiglione-Scoglitti km 19, 97100 Castiglione Scoglitti, Ragusa
http://www.athenaresort.com/

**POGGIO DEL SOLE RESORT**
S.P 25 Ragusa – Marina di Ragusa km 5,7 Marina di Ragusa
http://www.poggiodelsoleresort.it/it/

**HOTEL ANTICA STAZIONE**
Contrada Santissimo – 97012 Chiaromonte Gulfi
http://www.anticastazione.com/

**TORRE DON VIRGILIO**
Strada provinciale Rocciola Scrofani 260 – 97015 Modica
http://www.torredonvirgilio.it/

**DONNAFUGATA GOLF CLUB**
Contrada piombo. 97100 Ragusa
http://www.donnafugatagolfresort.com/

Visit www.virtuferries.com/?page_id=129 for more accommodation options
FOOTBALL - TRAINING CAMP IN SICILY

PROPOSED ITINERARY

Day 1
05:30 Meet at the 'Virtu Passenger Terminal'
06:30 Departure to Pozzallo
08:15 Arrival Pozzallo
09:00 Departure to Modica. This proud, prosperous and ancient city is one of Sicily's baroque gems. The main street ‘Il Corso’, is a typical Sicilian meeting place with cafes and majestic buildings. We will have time to visit the impressive monument of San Giorgio's cathedral, which was built after the earthquake of 1693, surrounded by a flight of 250 steps to further enhance the scenic beauty of its fine façade.
12:00 Arrival Resort
12:30 Lunch in Resort
16:00 Room allocation
Free time in Resort / Pool / Beach
18:00 Training session
Shower / Relaxing in rooms
20:00 Dinner
Free time in Hotel including animation and use of Hotel facilities.

Day 1 (Option B)
05:30 Meet at the 'Virtu Passenger Terminal'
06:30 Departure to Pozzallo
08:15 Arrival Pozzallo
09:00 Departure to Parcallario adventure park
10:45 Approx arrival Parcallario adventure park
Upon arrival you will be briefed by the instructor about how to use equipment, the route to be taken together with a brief description of other activities available (according to the capabilities of individuals) under strict supervision.
Lunch (included in the price).
Adults - Antipasti, mixed grill & drink.
Children - Hot dog / Burger & chips + drink
15:30 Departure Parcallario adventure park
17:00 Approx arrival Resort - room allocation
Shower / Relaxing in rooms
20:00 Dinner
Free time in Hotel including animation and use of Hotel facilities.

Day 2
07:30 Breakfast
09:00 Training session
Shower / Relaxing in rooms
12:30 Lunch
Free time in Resort / Pool / Beach
18:30 Training session
Shower / Relaxing in rooms
20:30 Dinner
Free time in Hotel including animation and use of Hotel facilities.

Day 3
07:30 Breakfast
09:00 Training session
Shower / Relaxing in rooms
12:30 Lunch
Free time in Resort / Pool / Beach
18:30 Training session
Shower / Relaxing in rooms
20:30 Dinner
Free time in Hotel including animation and use of Hotel facilities.

Day 4
07:30 Breakfast - Check out
09:00 Departure to Etnaland http://www.etnaland.eu/en/Acquapark/AL/
11:00 Arrival Etnaland (Entrance not included)
17:00 Departure Etnaland
18:30 Arrival Pozzallo Centre
20:00 Departure Pozzallo Centre
20:10 Arrival Pozzallo Port
Check in
21:30 Departure Pozzallo
23:15 Arrival Malta
(Can be modified according to requirements)
FOOTBALL – TOURNAMENT & TRAINING IN SICILY

PROPOSED ITINERARY

Day 1 (Option A)

05:30 Meet at the ‘Virtu Passenger Terminal’
06:30 Departure to Pozzallo
08:15 Arrival Pozzallo
09:00 Departure to Modica. This proud, prosperous and ancient city is one of Sicily’s baroque gems.
   The main street ‘Il Corso’, is a typical Sicilian meeting place with cafes and majestic buildings.
   We will have time to visit the impressive monument of San Giorgio’s cathedral, which was built after the
   earthquake of 1693, surrounded by a flight of 250 steps to further enhance the scenic beauty
   of its fine facade.
12:00 Arrival Resort
12:30 Lunch in Resort
16:00 Room allocation
   Free time in Resort / Pool / Beach
18:00 Training session
   Shower / Relaxing in rooms
20:00 Dinner
   Free time in Hotel including animation and use of Hotel facilities.

Day 1 (Option B)

05:30 Meet at the ‘Virtu Passenger Terminal’
06:30 Departure to Pozzallo
08:15 Arrival Pozzallo
09:00 Departure to Parcallario adventure park
10:45 Approx arrival Parcallario adventure park
   Upon arrival you will be briefed by the instructor about how to use equipment, the route to be taken
   together with a brief description of other activities available (according to the capabilities of individuals)
   under strict supervision.
   Lunch (included in the price).
   Adults - Antipasti, mixed grill & drink.
   Children - Hot dog / Burger & chips + drink
15:30 Departure Parcallario adventure park
17:00 Approx arrival Resort
18:00 Training session
   Shower / Relaxing in rooms
20:00 Dinner
   Free time in Hotel including animation and use of Hotel facilities.

Day 2

07:30 Breakfast
09:00 2 friendly tournament matches with official referees from Federazione Italiana Giuoco Calcio, against
   Sicilian teams (TBA) of same age group.
14:00 Shower / Lunch (depending on actual tournament timings)
   Free time Resort / Pool / Beach
20:30 Dinner
   Free time in Hotel including animation and use of Hotel facilities.

Day 3

07:30 Breakfast
09:00 2 friendly tournament matches with official referees from Federazione Italiana Giuoco Calcio, against
   Sicilian teams (TBA) of same age group.
14:00 Shower / Lunch (depending on actual tournament timings)
   Free time Resort / Pool / Beach
20:30 Dinner
   Free time in Hotel including animation and use of Hotel facilities.

Day 4

07:30 Breakfast
Check out
09:00 Departure to Etnaland http://www.etnaland.eu/en/Acquapark/AL/  
11:00 Arrival Etnaland (Entrance not included)
17:00 Departure Etnaland
18:30 Arrival Pozzallo Centre
20:00 Departure Pozzallo Centre
20:10 Arrival Pozzallo Port
   Check in
21:30 Departure Pozzallo
23:15 Arrival Malta
   (Can be modified according to requirements)
TOURNAMENT RULES

Pitch Size
Under 5 to under 6: 5 metres in length x 25 metres wide
Under 7 to under 9: 35 metres in length x 25 metres wide
Under 10 to under 11: 60 metres in length x 45 metres wide (Maximum)
55 metres in length x 40 / 45 metres wide (Minimum)
Under 12 to under 13: 100 metres in length x 60 metres wide (Maximum)
90 metres in length x 45 / 50 metres wide (Minimum)

The Ball
Under 5 to under 6: Size 3
Under 7 to under 9: Size 3
Under 10 to under 11: Size 4
Under 12 to under 13: Size 4

Number of Players
Under 5 to under 6: 4 vs 4 (no goalkeepers)
Under 7 to under 9: 5 vs 5 (with goalkeepers)
Under 10 to under 11: 8 vs 8
Under 12 to under 13: 11 vs 11

Red / Yellow Cards
Under 6 to under 11: In these age bracket referees are to be called Game Instructors, with the aim to correct rather than punish.
Under 12 to under 13: A player shown a yellow card may continue to play. If a player is shown a second yellow card then the player is dismissed from the match and will receive a suspension.

Assistant Referee
Under 6 to under 11: Assistant referee not required
Under 12 to under 13: Assistant referees may be utilised

Game Duration
Under 5 to under 6: Two periods of 15 minutes each – Rest time 10 minutes
Under 7: Two periods of 20 minutes each – Rest time 10 minutes
Under 8 to under 11: Two periods of 25 minutes each – Rest time 10 minutes
Under 12 to under 13: Two periods of 30 minutes each – Rest time 10 minutes

Off-side Law
Under 6 to under 11: No offside law is applicable
Under 12 to under 13: The offside law is applicable

The throw-in
Up to under 6: No throw-in is applicable, but pass-in.

EDUCATIONAL & ADVENTURE

Short Breaks
For Students & Adults

AN ITINERARY FULL OF ADVENTURES
WHICH INCLUDES 4X4 OFF ROADING AND CAVE EXPLORATION
**OPTION 1**

**SUGGESTED ITINERARY**

**DAY 1**

05:30  Meet at the Virtu Passenger Terminal.

06:30  Departure to Pozzallo by High Speed Catamaran – **JEAN DE LA VALETTE**

08:15  Arrival Pozzallo, departure by 4x4 vehicles.

First stop: a typical industrial archaeological site, visiting the old mines from where at the end of the IX Century and early X Century AD tar was extracted and exported world-wide to asphalt the roads of big cities. We will venture down some caves to approximately 60m.

Back on our 4x4's for a ride down to the valley of the River Irminio, which was once used for navigation but is today merely a torrent surrounded by unspoiled nature. The ride will take us across country paths, muddy patches and flowing streams.

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Irminio  
http://www.sicilyincoming.com/river-irmino-nature-reserve.html

Picnic lunch in the countryside on the way to **Ragusa Ibla**.

Ragusa Ibla – a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Rebuilt after the 1693 earthquake that devastated southern Sicily, it is now best known for the Duomo San Giorgio built by the renowned Sicilian Baroque architect Rosario Gagliardi.


17:30  Transfer to Hotel Antica Stazione in Chiaramonte Gulfi, the "balcony of Sicily" with a panoramic view stretching from Mt Etna to Gela and the Mediterranean beyond.

http://www.anticastazione.com

18:00  Shower / Free time.

20:00  Dinner  
Starter: Pasta  
Main: Cotoletta with fries  
Drink & Dessert

22:00  Lights out.
**OPTION 1**

**SUGGESTED ITINERARY**

**DAY 2**

09:00 Breakfast

09:30 Departure for **Buccheri Adventure Park** an experienced local guide will give us an and informative commentary throughout the day.

[www.parcallario.it](http://www.parcallario.it)

10:30 Arrival Buccheri – Parcallario Adventure Park.

12:30 Departure for **Diga Santa Rosalia**.

An artificial lake resulting from a massive dam built across the River Irminio which we crossed on the 4x4s yesterday.

13:30 Arrival at Agriturismo Diga Santa Rosalia.

After a typical Sicilian lunch: Sicilian antipasto, 2 types of pasta, 2 types of meat, fresh fruit, cannolo Siciliano and water, we will take a walk along the lake and through the forest to admire the amazing views and the fauna and flora of the area as well as several species of birds, rabbits, wild pigs, the regional cingiale nero (black wild boar) and foxes. A short horseback ride with an instructor will round of our adventure.

15:30 Departure Diga S. Rosalia.

16:15 Arrival **Modica Centro Storico**.

This proud and prosperous ancient city is one of Sicily's baroque gems. The main street ‘Il Corso’, is a typical Italian meeting place with cafes and majestic buildings. The church of San Giorgio, also by Rosario Gagliardi, is an impressive monument, surrounded by a flight of 250 steps to further enhance the scenic beauty of its fine facade.


Guided walking tour of Modica, we will also have the opportunity to visit a typical chocolate factory to get a taste of the famous Cioccolato di Modica.

17:30 Transfer to Hotel Antica Stazione in Chiaramonte Gulfi, the “balcony of Sicily” with a panoramic view stretching from Mt Etna to Gela and the Mediterranean beyond.

[http://www.anticastazione.com](http://www.anticastazione.com)

18:00 Shower / Free time

20:00 Dinner

Starter: Pasta

Main: Cotoletta with fries & Dessert

22:00 Lights out

**DAY 2**

08:00 Breakfast

09:00 Departure to **Cava Grande del Cassibile**. This excursion is extremely interesting from the archaeological point of view; lovers of unspoiled nature will also have a field day with magnificent panoramic views as an extra bonus. The 520 metres high canyon that we visit is definitely the deepest and most spectacular of the Iblea Range. Along the canyon there are numerous, splendid lakes and the cascading waterfalls with emerald coloured water surrounded by white rocks, sculptured by the flowing water. The fauna and flora as well as the wildlife are also extremely interesting with many species of fish, aquatic animals, birds and various mammals including porcupines, foxes and rabbits.

[www.cavagrandedelcassibile.it/home_page.asp](http://www.cavagrandedelcassibile.it/home_page.asp)

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**OPTION 2**

**SUGGESTED ITINERARY**

**DAY 1**

05:30 Meet at the Virtu Passenger Terminal.

06:30 Departure to Pozzallo by High Speed Catamaran – **JEAN DE LA VALETTE**

08:15 Departure by 4x4 vehicles.

First stop: a typical industrial archaeological site, visiting the old mines from where at the end of the IX Century and early X Century tar was extracted. Tar was exported world-wide to asphalt the roads of big cities. We will venture down some caves to approximately 60m.

Back on our 4x4's for a ride down to the valley of the river Irminio, which was once used for navigation but is today merely a torrent surrounded by unspoiled nature. The ride will take us across country paths, muddy patches and flowing streams.

Picnic lunch in the countryside on the way to Ragusa Ibla.


Picnic lunch in the countryside on the way to Ragusa Ibla.

Ragusa Ibla – a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Rebuilt after the 1693 earthquake that devastated southern Sicily, it is now best known for the Duomo San Giorgio built by the renowned Sicilian Baroque architect Rosario Gagliardi.


17:30 Transfer to Hotel Antica Stazione in Chiaramonte Gulfi, the "balcony of Sicily" with a panoramic view stretching from Mt Etna to Gela and the Mediterranean beyond.

[http://www.anticastazione.com](http://www.anticastazione.com)

18:00 Shower / Free time

20:00 Dinner

Starter: Pasta

Main: Cotoletta with fries & Dessert

22:00 Lights out

**DAY 2**

08:00 Breakfast

09:00 Departure to **Cava Grande del Cassibile**. This excursion is extremely interesting from the archaeological point of view; lovers of unspoiled nature will also have a field day with magnificent panoramic views as an extra bonus. The 520 metres high canyon that we visit is definitely the deepest and most spectacular of the Iblea Range. Along the canyon there are numerous, splendid lakes and the cascading waterfalls with emerald coloured water surrounded by white rocks, sculptured by the flowing water. The fauna and flora as well as the wildlife are also extremely interesting with many species of fish, aquatic animals, birds and various mammals including porcupines, foxes and rabbits.

[www.cavagrandedelcassibile.it/home_page.asp](http://www.cavagrandedelcassibile.it/home_page.asp)
10:00 Arrival Cava Grande del Cassibile. We will start the descent along the ancient steps until we reach the chosen route. The walk along this flat path allows us to admire the amazing views of the valley and cascading waters and ponds. We then follow a trail along the river until we come across a series of wonderful bathing ponds of crystal clear waters. We take the main path back up to the departure point – Lunch.

14:30 Departure for Noto.

15:00 Arrival Noto, the Capital City of Sicilian Baroque. The Corso Vittorio Emanuele, with magnificent baroque buildings on either side, crosses the full length of the town. The recently restored Duomo and Palazzo Villadorata, with its extravagant balconies supported by elaborate gargoyles is a must.

www.bestofsicily.com/noto.htm

17:00 Departure Noto

18:30 Arrival Hotel Antica Stazione.

19:00 Shower.

20:00 Dinner – Pizza, drink & dessert.

22:00 Lights out.

DAY 3

07:30 Breakfast

09:30 Mass – Santuario di Gulfi

11:15 Arrival Buccheri Adventure Park an experienced local guide will give us an informative commentary throughout the day.

www.parcallario.it

13:15 Departure to Diga Santa Rosalia.

14:00 Arrival Diga Santa Rosalia Lake. After a typical Sicilian lunch: Sicilian antipasto, 2 types of pasta, 2 types of meat, fresh fruit, cannolo Siciliano and water, we will take a walk along the lake and through the forest to admire the amazing views and the fauna and flora of the area as well as several species of birds, rabbits, wild pigs, the regional cingale nero (black wild boar) and foxes.

A short horseback ride with an instructor will round off our adventure.

16:00 Departure to Modica.

16:30 Arrival Modica Centro Storico. This proud and prosperous ancient city is one of Sicily’s baroque gems. The main street ‘Il Corso’, is a typical Italian meeting place with cafes and majestic buildings. The church of San Giorgio, also by Rosario Gagliardi, is an impressive monument, built after the earthquake of 1693, surrounded by a flight of 250 steps to further enhance the scenic beauty of its fine facade.


Guided walking tour of Modica and we will also have the opportunity to visit a typical chocolate factory to get a taste of the famous Cioccolato di Modica.

18:00 Departure Modica.

18:30 Arrival Pozzallo Port.

19:30 Departure to Malta.

21:15 Arrival Malta.
SICILY TRIP

For the second year running the College organized a cultural trip to Sicily for students that attend year 9 and year 10. This trip apart from cultural activities, for example, like the visit we made to Ragusa Ibla - a UNESCO World Heritage Site, also included fun activities like the visit to the Buccheri Adventure Park. It was a very successful from all aspects but here is what two students had to say about this trip.

Christian Camilleri when asked why he decided to take this trip for the second time, he said that the first trip was a wonderful experience and that he did not want to lose the chance to relive that nice experience. Christian also said that he enjoyed best the Buccheri Adventure Park and all the activities he experienced there. When asked if he would recommend this trip to others, Christian said, “definitely yes, because it is an experience that will live with you for years”.

Matthew Pace (third from left) who was experiencing this trip for the first time said, “I decided to join the group because it had an interesting program like the visit to Ragusa Ibla - a UNESCO World Heritage Site, and also because some of my friends were going”. Matthew also mentioned that he enjoyed most the Buccheri Adventure Park because as he described it “it gave us all an adrenalin boost that makes you overcome difficult challenges”. He said that he recommends this trip to anyone and also concluded that deep down; everyone wished that this trip lasted a few days more.

OUR TRIP TO SICILY – LUKE CAMILLERI – 5Y

DAY 1

Our year 5 adventure trip began at the crack of dawn on Friday 23rd May. We all met at the Virtu Passenger Terminal at 05:30 buzzing with excitement and sleepy-eyed, said our good byes and boarded the High Speed Catamaran - Jean De La Valette to Pozzallo, Sicily.

After sailing out from our magnificent Grand Harbour on a perfectly calm Spring morning, we had a light snack after which we were given a guided tour of the vessel and even the captain’s cockpit! Some of us even got a chance to sit in the captain’s very own chair.

The engineer told us that the catamaran travels at a speed of 39 knots which is equal to 20 metres per second! No wonder we arrived so quickly! We all rushed out of the catamaran to start our exciting adventure in Sicily.
After having collected our luggage, we boarded 4x4 Jeeps and set off to a typical industrial archaeological site from where tar was extracted and exported worldwide in order to asphalt the roads of big cities back in the 9th and 10th century AD, and then we continued our journey venturing down some 60 metres exploring a cave. Here we noticed a feature where rocks had been cut out of the walls in the same exact way ancient Egyptians cut the rocks they had used to build their pyramids with. After exploring the cave, we got back onto our 4x4s for some extreme off-roading along the banks of the River Irminio which was once used for navigation but is today merely an unspoilt torrent.

From here we travelled to a little farm where we had a chance to admire a wild boar pack with their 20 cute tiny piglets. This farm was set on the river's banks where we were treated to a lunch consisting of wild boar sausages followed by a juicy blood orange and delicious lemon cake. Fed and rested, we played some football and rode some trick bikes in an adjacent grassy field. We then set off to a city which had been devastated by an earthquake in 1693 but was rebuilt soon after, called Ragusa Ibla. After enjoying a scenic walk and a delicious ice cream we then made our way slowly to the hotel for a refreshing shower. Having arrived at the comfortable welcoming Hotel AnticaStazione, we were assigned to our rooms and told to regroup at the entrance hall at 17.30.

We then boarded a coach which took us to a shopping centre for an hour before returning to the hotel for dinner. This consisted of pasta with pesto starter followed by veal in breadcrumbs and chips. Ricotta profiteroles topped with nutella was served as dessert. Exhausted and content we all settled down for a good night's rest.

**DAY 2**

We woke up to a delicious buffet breakfast including fresh blood orange juice, peach, pineapple or carrot and orange juice as well as toast, cereal, eggs, bacon, sausages, tomatoes and baked beans.

Immediately after breakfast we boarded our coach which took us to the amazing Parcallario adventure park in Buccheri some 20 minutes away. This was the most fun filled part of our trip including zip lines, tightropes, tree climbing, rock climbing and many other activities.

After having used up so much energy, we had time to rest while driving to the Diga Sta Rosalia, an artificial lake made by building a massive dam across the Irminio River which we had traversed in the 4X4s yesterday. A little drive further along the river led us to Agriturismo DigaSta Rosalia, a restaurant where we were served a typical Sicilian lunch consisting of ciabatta with olive oil and rosemary followed by lasagna and juicy crunchy apples for dessert.

We exited the restaurant and went for a short horse ride round the lake in groups of three. When this was over, we drove a short way to the Centro Storico of Modica and the Chiesa di San Giorgio in baroque architecture. Then we visited the famous chocolate factory also named Modica where they showed us the plant where cocoa beans grow in and also a chocolate rock. The chocolate here is still made in the traditional Aztec method.

We left Modica for Pozzallo at around 18:00 and dined there for some pizza and pasta. Sadly our adventure was coming to an end and we boarded the Catamaran and departed punctually at 21:30 for a bumpy ride home. We docked as per schedule at Valletta at 23:15 to find all our parents eagerly welcoming us back home!

Enormous thanks go to our amazing teacher Mrs. Diana Triganza, Mrs. Denise Papagiorcopulo and the very caring parents who accompanied us, as well as Virtu Ferries for a truly memorable school trip.
Initially it was a slow start, in the dark hours on a November Sunday dawn, where we, a lone band of 26 cyclists, gathered around monster bikes and other vehicles to board the new catamaran J La Vallette. All in lycra and rainwear and sporting our muscle powered MTB's. Once these were tied up in the vessel's cavernous hold, we proceeded for breakfast or for gazing out to sea while we killed the 90 minute journey north. Once off the boat and onto the coach our guide warned us of ‘molto fango’ which is Italian for ‘much fun ahead’ or something to that effect. Excitement builds up as the weather is announced (novoloso most of the day and pioggia in the evening).

The trek consisted of 50km of mostly country, non-asphalted roads, along the Chiaromonte/Giarratana area, north of Ragusa, ending thought the Pantalica nature reserve. A large part of the route was along a disused railway track (without metal rails of course) but including several unit tunnels and winding above a valley floor. The pace was fast and we sped past lovely valleys, misty countryside and relics of the bygone steam age – including water tanks and train station buildings. Words cannot do justice to the experience and views. A short 3km stint was over pebbly ground (another relic of the train) slippery for the tires and punishing for the riders’ arms and bike’s suspension.

The final 13km of the route went through the pristine national park of Pantalica, with its un-spoilt scenic views – gurgling rivers, tree lined cliff sides and of course more tunnels. Right up to the restaurant where we ate and hosed the ‘fango’ off the bikes before boarding the coach back to port and home. In summary all was great (but not clean) fun, nobody hurt and only 3 punctures (in 26 bikes) for this trip. The general consensus of the group was to do more of the same, as soon as possible.

Thanks to Virtu Ferries (www.virtuferries.com) for making this enjoyable day possible.

Advise for those interested in this type of adventure:

1. Travel light but get a helmet, rain gear and torch.
2. Insurance and/or E112.
3. Study weather forecast before – have a plan B tour.
4. Use tennis shoes, as I found SPD’s sticking to the pedals at the wrong moment when off-roading on slippery ground.
5. Carry light food – cereal bars - and water. A few first aid kits in the group are also a good idea.
6. Be physically fit for the 4 hour ride – less aches afterwards – and the ride takes longer.
7. Full off-road tires (not slicks or semi-slick tires). Best to give the bike a good service, especially brakes and carry spare inner tubes. MTB’s are advisable for this one.
8. Take a small camera – much to photo.
GOLF IN SICILY

RMGC Junior Academy Visits Donnafugata
By David Debono

When news of a recently opened 5 star golf resort in Southern Sicily replete with two championship courses reached the Junior Academy, and Virtu Ferries advertised very attractive day return rates, the deal was sealed.

At sunrise on Sunday 5th December I set off together with Henning, and juniors Bernhard Abele, Luca Caruana, John Micallef Stafrace and Quint van Beek on our one day mission to Donnafugata. The ninety minute ferry crossing was very comfortable and we arrived at the Club in good time notwithstanding Luca Caruana’s navigation skills leaving much to be desired. In fact he was slapped with a two shot penalty before he had even commenced his round!

Shortly after our arrival Henning conducted a training session for the boys, and then, after sorting out some minor organisation faults from Donnafugata’s end, we proceeded to play the impressive Gary Player designed Parkland course on which a European Tour Event is scheduled to be held next year.

Playing a new Championship course without the benefit of a practice round is never easy, however the boys played some very good golf. Top scorer John Micallef Stafrace made several pars and played two shots under his handicap, but it must also be mentioned that the only birdie of the day came from the eldest member of the group! All the boys gained much valuable experience from this trip, which has also confirmed Sicily as a great opportunity for our juniors to gain experience playing quality courses different to ours on a regular basis.

Here’s hoping for a quick return!

THE PROJECT

SIBIT - Sustainable Interregional Bike Tourism is a project co-funded by the European Union and the ERDF (European Regional Development Fund) within the P.O. Italy-Malta 2007-2013.

Its aim is to promote the biketourism as a sustainable form of local knowledge of territories, facilitating integration between tourism systems Sicilian and Maltese. The project, through the identification and establishment of a network of bicycle routes and the creation of a system of Bike Hotel, has allowed us to create and promote, at the international level, the new product cycling “Sicily-Malta”.

For further information visit www.medinbike.com
MALTESE PARTICIPANTS IN MOTOR SPORTS IN SICILY
IN COLLABORATION WITH VIRTU FERRIES
Gianluca Dingli during Super Rok World Finals where he represented Malta and placed 11th out of 70 drivers.

Johann Spiteri won 4 out of the 5 races he started at Racalmuto in 2012 driving his Jedi Suzuki 1000.

Joshua Anastasi (JBR-4 Kawasaki) holds off Mario Pappalardo (Formula Masters Honda) to take another win at Racalmuto in October 2012.

Josef Calleja won the 2012 Time Attack Championship driving his Subaru Impreza.
The Madonie Regional Natural Park is located in Sicily, between Palermo and Cefalù and covers 39,972 acres. It includes the Madonie mountain range and some of the highest mountains in Sicily. The park has six mountains that are over 1,500 metres and many more that are over 1,000 metres. The highest is Pizzo Carbonara at 1,979 metres, second in height only to Mount Etna.

As well as being a nature reserve, the park is an inhabited area with dozens of little villages and small towns, many of which trace their origins to medieval times. The park is also home to a number of castles and numerous ancient churches. The wild mountainous slopes are inhabited by wolves, wildcats and eagles as well as being a habitat to the rare, nearly-extinct Nebrodi fir tree.

The regional park was officially created on 9 November 1989. Within the park area there are outcrops of rocks which have been dated at over a 200-million-year period and represent all aspects of the geology of Sicily apart from the current volcanic activity. The collaboration of the Madonie Park authorities and the European Geoparks Network has allowed the research of students and lecturers of University of Palermo Department of Geology and Geodesy. Studies have been made, papers published and educational paths mapped out with signs erected with information on the ground. Madonie Geopark is a member of the European Geoparks Network and the UNESCO Global Geoparks Network.

The park is made up from fifteen municipalities of the province of Palermo in Sicily (Caltavuturo, Castelbuono, Castellana Sicula, Cefalù, Collesano, Geraci Siculo, Gratteri, Isnello, Petralia Soprana, Petralia Sottana, Polizzi Generosa, Pollina, San Mauro Castelverde, Scillato and Sclafani Bagni).

Madonie Geopark is a member of the European Geoparks Network and the UNESCO Global Geoparks Network.

http://www.parcodellemadonie.it/
The Nebrodi is a mountain range that runs along the north east of Sicily. Together with the Madonie and the Peloritani, they form the Sicilian Apennines.

The mountains run from the Peloritani on the eastern part of the island to the foothill of the Madonie mountains to the west, facing the Tyrrhenian Sea on the north. Mount Etna, from which it is separated by the rivers Alcantara and Simeto, forms the range’s southern border. The highest peak is the Monte Soro (1,817 m). The range mostly made up of sandstone and clay rocks, but include also limestone landscapes, like the Rocche del Crasto. Towns that are situated in the mountains include Troina, Nicosia, Mistretta and a number of other towns in the province of Messina.

NEBRODI NATURAL PARK

In 1993 large areas of the Nebrodi Mountains were made into national parkland. The park covers 856.87 km. It touches on many of the comuni in the mountains and is one of the largest protected parks in Sicily.

http://parks.it/parco.nebrodi/Eindex.php

The park covers 856.87 km.
AGRO-HUNTING ENTERPRISE SS TRINITA

HUNTING, OUR PASSION

The agro-hunting enterprise Trinita’ came into being fifty years ago as a family-run hunting reserve. In those days the most common hunting practices were aimed at rabbits, larks, several thrushes (very present at the time) and perhaps a few woodcocks often present in the various small canals covered in Mediterranean maquis.

The enterprise undergoes a radical change towards the mid-eighties when the present owner and manager eradicates definitively the tens and tens of hectares of vineyards, closes almost all of its drain canals, eliminating what was sowed (leaving only some fifteen hectares of olive trees which produce an excellent extra-virgin olive oil derived from biological agriculture).

Thanks to Law 20/80, 170 hectares of forest planting take place, creating numerous morasses, swamps and low small lakes. Hoofed animals are let in and several hectares of uncultivated land and swamps are purchased which together with the previous, already existing, hectares form a total area of over 300 hectares.

Today the enterprise is completely fenced in to avert the escape of the hoofed animals and to better control poaching.

GAME

Wild Ducks
It’s one of the pieces de resistance of the enterprise, very rich in swamps, morasses, canals and small canals.

Already from the beginning of September one can see the first flights of ducks, reaching a peak during the months of November and December.

Teals, shovellers, wild ducks, pintails, gadwalls, whistling ducks, pochards, etc........are present in abundance.

Wood Pigeons
Present since the opening: many are resident and lay nests. During the period of migration, i.e. October and November, they are often seen in abundance.

Turtle Doves
Extremely present, though not constantly throughout the years, they may be seen for a brief period which coincides with the first ten days of September.

Pheasant
Used to lay nests within the grounds, with several broods. It is nowadays released only for those who request it.

Unfortunately, the numerous wild boars would not allow the nidification of this gallinacean.

Wild Rabbit
Discreetly present, it is not easily hunted by dogs due to the presence of several hoofed animals.

Quail
Bird of double passage, plentiful during the period between 20 September and 15 November. It is possible to fill abundant game bags; present also and in any case until December.

Snipe
Abundantly present in the several morasses present on the grounds; the best period goes from October (the peak) to December.

Skylark
Abundant, and at times extremely so, during the period ranging between 25 October and 10 November.

Thrush
Once extremely numerous, nowadays not as abundant as before except for a brief period towards the end of October when there is a real and proper invasion. During the remaining period, game bags are mediocre or sufficient.

Rallidae (Rails)
Very abundant thanks to the presence of plentiful marshland. Black bellied plovers and other wading birds. Present inconsistently through the year.

Woodcock
Its presence during these last years has been erratic. Once very abundant, its passages nowadays are irregular. It is however possible to fill good game bags due to the various woods of Mediterranean maquis present on the grounds.

HOOFED ANIMALS

Wild Boar
Having by now become master and absolute lord of the enterprise territory, it is present in hundreds of different heads of absolutely pure Maremma breed, fast and irrepressible, it reaches a maximum build of 90 Kgs.

Fallow Deer
Originating in North Africa, it is present in our little town’s bordering territories since 1700 and was hunted by the local feudal nobles or those from neighbouring towns.

The introduction of this hoofed animal was a resounding success so much so that the males are endowed with trophies difficult to achieve in any part of Europe.

Deer
Even this hoofed animal is vastly present and endowed with formidable trophies (16, 18, 20 spikes are not uncommon) with very thick horns and therefore very heavy trophies.

Mouflon
Exclusive and crepuscular animal, present in large numbers; males reach record sizes.
DID YOU KNOW YOU COULD SKI ON MT ETNA IN WINTER?

Probably you think holidays in Sicily are connected to sun burn and Italian ice-cream, but they can be different, too (even though you can burn your skin also during this activity).

The treeless upper slopes of the volcano are perfect for snowboarding and alpine skiing and the lava bumps and high-altitude winds make Etna the perfect place for kite skiing also.

There are two slopes to choose from, both equipped with ski lifts and ample facilities, including instruction and rentals.

Each slope is in a different district the northern one ascends from 1800-2300 metres and ends in Linguaglossa, while the southern one (1900-2600 metres) leads down to Nicolosi.

Visitors may be attracted to Mount Etna with the promise of some exciting skiing and that is what they will get! But clearly this part of the island of Sicily in Italy has much more to offer.

So take some time to explore the unique natural beauty of this area when you go skiing on Mount Etna.

For more information call Virtu Ferries on 2349 1000 or 2206 9022 or send an e-mail to info@virtuferries.com

SOUTH ETNA

One can opt for Etna's southern flank's volcanic history and its natural catastrophies from Nicolosi excursion, the town thought to be the doorway to Etna, going up to Stazione sud, crossing Monti Rossi, the eruptive fissure which led to the important 1669 eruption, which covered the towns on Etna's southern flank, even reaching Catania.

Going across the plateau where the 2001 lava stopped and a series of switchbacks crossing the evocative 1983 lava flow, with fabulous phototaking opportunities. Hike from Piano Vetore along the Monte Nero degli Zappini nature trail, a first chance to know Etna's most important volcanic and botanic features, amid various lava flows, hornitos, lava caves and Etna's endemic plants.

The go along all the 1892 eruptive fissure, where the Silvestri craters originated from.

EAST ETNA

An interesting nature trip highlighting the presence of nordic woodland on Etna, which is most unusual in the Mediterranean. From Fornazzo up the Marenneve road which leads to Etna Nord, Piano Provenzana.

During the drive, Etna's birch woods, which can only be found on this side of Etna, can be seen. Continue up Etna Nord, Piano Provenzana along the road which was rebuilt after the devastating 2002 eruption. The hike climbs off-road up the eruptive fissure. Cross the 2002 lava flow field and then the 1923 eruptive fissure, with views over the Ionian and the Sicilian Tirrenian coasts. Going along the fissure, one can see the various hornitos (small lava scoriae cones) which follow the outline of the fissure.

WEST ETNA

A long hike discovering the little known flank of Etna, through various woodlands, pinewoods and vast lava fields. From Nicolosi, climbing up towards C.da Milia, amid fruit orchards, bearing mostly apples and pears.

Hike through pinewoods which cover the ancient Monte Nespole craters, then go along the 1974 lava fields originating from Monti de Fiore. Continuing through various woodlands and ancient lava flows to the Monte Egitto crater.

SKIING ON MOUNT ETNA
Nathan Farrugia has recently launched his fundraising challenge in a bid to finish one of the world’s toughest races, the Ultra Trail du Mont Blanc. The race sees Nathan running through three countries over 168km of tough mountain running, a total height gain equivalent to climbing to the top of Mount Everest from sea level.

In order to gain strength and experience, Nathan has had to travel overseas to practice the mountain running with his training companion Ruben DeGiorgio, one of Malta’s top trail runners. Thanks to Virtu Ferries, Nathan has been able to spend three weekends on the Sicilian Madonie and in Mount Etna, carrying out 10-hour long training runs and getting his legs prepared for the steep climbs he expects to have to tackle on Mont Blanc.

“The convenience of traveling by car was great as the Madonie is pure wilderness and not accessible otherwise. It was handy as we carried all the kit and equipment with us in the vehicle. Sicily is a great place to train as it has all we needed in terms of elevation and trails. We were backed up by the Ecotrail Sicily race organisers who accompanied us and showed us the routes.”

The Madonie nature reserve is renowned for its abundant flora and fauna. Nathan crossed hog, deer, eagles, vultures, foxes and all sorts of flora whilst running through the gorgeous trails and pathways up at 1,900m of elevation.

This weekend 9 avid trail runners, including Nathan and Ruben will race in the Etna Trail, a 30km race around the north face of the volcano. “It’s a perfect opportunity to test equipment and train hard, although the distance is much shorter than UTMB. I’d like to encourage more Maltese outdoor enthusiasts to look at Sicily for their adventures, hikes, cycles and touring.”

For more information on Virtu travel visit www.virtuferries.com

To support Nathan’s fundraising efforts please visit: the Facebook page www.facebook.com/gehwolcharitychallenge
or visit www.inspire.org.mt to donate by SMS, online or by cheque.

VIRTU FERRIES ASSISTS NATHANS GEHWOL CHARITY CHALLENGE
MALTESE SURVIVOR

Graham Sansone, also known as the Maltese Survivor is an explorer and adventure, has been establishing himself on the local Maltese scene as a survival expert. Just recently during the Easter season he has planned a survival expedition on the beautiful mountain range of Nebrodi National Park in Sicily, with the aim to collect funds for a home being refurbished in Sliema called Mamma Margherita. The present property at Mrabat Str., with the Salesians retaining the front part while building a block of six studio flats that the young homeless men, between the ages of 18 and 25, who require refuge as a result of unfortunate personal and social difficulties can be offered to rent at a reasonable price. Mamma Margherita Home would be an extension of Osanna Pia Home, with the Director having the responsibility to coordinate the project.

The survival expedition which lasted for four days took the Maltese Survivor, over uncharted territory facing the elements which were not so favorable. Facing gale force winds and temperatures that dropped to -1 degrees with a wind chill factor of -18 to -21 degrees, the Maltese Survivor had to live on what the land provided and only carrying a backpack containing rope, knife a liter of water as well as camera gear. The expedition ended well by crossing the mountain rage which was over 120km long. Unfortunately on the final day of his journey the camera person who accompanied the Maltese Survivor had to be taken for treatment due to suffering severe hypothermia. A rescue team was dispatched from Rondazzo and after 6 hours, the camera person was rescued and taken to safety. After two days of recovery both arrived in Malta aboard Virtu Ferries to be greeted by friends and fans at the arrivals terminal in Valletta.
In early August, the San Anton School Scout Group, in conjunction with Virtu Ferries, organised a day trip to Cava Grande del Cassibile, a spectacular canyon carved in white limestone, north of Noto. This national park is half a kilometer deep and meanders for about 15 kilometers through sculptured limestone formations, lakes, waterfalls and lush vegetation to the sea near Siracusa. These spectacular surroundings are reachable via a short bus ride from Pozzallo. An hour’s trek leads down defined footpaths to the bottom of the canyon.

The 29 strong contingent swam in the various laghetti filled with cool, clear fresh water or simply enjoyed the moving water. Others rested and picnicked in the shade of the many trees. The Venture and Rovers scouts also proceeded up-river for a couple of kilometers with guide Antonio, swimming though large rock pools, shaded by overhanging trees, having to climb up the many little waterfalls in an ‘Indiana Jones’ type of unspoilt environment. The tough climb back up was rewarded by locally made granita at the top of the canyon. A meal at Pozzallo beach ended this enjoyable day and all returned home with lovely memories and promises to return soon.

The Reserve, founded in July 1997, is in the area of the “iblei plateaux”, which characterizes a large part of south-eastern Sicily. It has a surface area of 3712.07 hectares, 1743.95 of which in zone A and 1968.12 in zone B. It is in the territories of the communes of Sortino, Ferla, Cassaro, Buscemi and Palazzolo Acreide, all in the province of Syracuse.
THE IBELEI PLATEAUX AND THE “GULLIES”

The vast Iblei tableland rose from the bottom of the sea through the superimposition of layers of calcareous sediments and volcanic effusions on Cenozoic seabeds; thus from the geological point of view it represents an autonomous structure in relation to the rest of Sicily. The central point of the region is Monte Lauro (986 metres above sea level), a very ancient extinguished submarine volcano, from which in a radial fashion there originated the Iblei orographic system, entirely lying in the south-eastern cusp of the island, between the Ionian Sea and the Straits of Sicily. It is a tabular structure - articulated in bevelled forms and in terraces sloping down on the coastal plane - hemmed in and interrupted by narrow, sudden and steep fractures: the deep, luxuriant calcareous fluvial valleys, known as “gullies”, among which there are the ones in the Reserve. Thus these are unique environments, which have no rivals on the island, and ones in which the abundance of flowing waters, the big permanent ponds, the elevated humidity, the protection afforded by the sheer rocks and slight or entirely absent human activity have allowed the survival of important - and sometimes exceptional - ecological niches, significant reference points for plant complexes and for animal life.

THE NATURAL ENVIRONMENT OF THE RESERVE

The territory of the Reserve therefore constitutes a remarkable complex of major interest in terms of geomorphology, nature, landscape, history and archaeology, and also ethno-anthropology. The River Anapo - which is the main one among the numerous perennial watercourses in the Iblei and one of longest in Sicily - starts from Monte Lauro and, flowing eastward, flows into the big port of Syracuse. Because of its geomorphological characteristics and general orientation, the valley of the Anapo is usually divided into three stretches. The first one, between Monte Lauro and Palazzolo Acreide, extends with a vast and arched plateau; in the second one it begins to take on the characteristic canyon conformation (gully), becoming narrow and having very steep walls, then tortuous with big meanders, luxuriant with the vegetation that covers it on the bottom and sometimes on the sides; in the third stretch, which heading towards the southeast flows from the slopes of Monte Climiti as far as the sea, the valley becomes big and arched.

On the tableland and in the various gullies (Anapo, Cava Grande, Calcinar, and the gully of the Mills) the Reserve contains important Mediterranean and hygrophilous plant associations. Especially where perennial waters flow, particularly significant in the tangle of riparian vegetation are arboreal plants, with Platanus orientalis, Salix pedicellata, Populus nigra and Populus alba, Quercus pubescens, shrubby ones with Nerium oleander, Clematis vitalba, Mirtus communis, Equisetum ramosissimus, Solanum dulcamara, Sambucus nigra, Adiantum capillus veneris, etc., and herbaceous ones with hygrophilous Sparganium erectum and Tipha latifolia. Below the plateau, to the rocks there ding Putoria calabrca, Elicrisum scandens, Dianthus carthusianorum, Capparis spinosa and yellow euphorbias, which in general characterise the landscape of the gullies in Syracuse province; lastly on the plateaux, the low bushes of Mediterranean maquis and some species of evergreen oaks are found. The fauna comprises species whose existence is directly correlated to the different environments: a lot of birds (Bonelli’s eagle, buzzard, peregrine falcon, lanner, long-tailed tit, yellow wagtail, hoopoe, king fisher, dipper, moorhen, lesser sandpiper), reptiles and amphibians (leopard rat snake, Riccioli’s snake, painted frog), mammals (marten, porcupine, fox, wild cat, weasel); among the fish, bearing witness to the quality of the waters, we find the big spotted trout, the tench, the eel and above all, the elusive and now rare Sicilian trout, a salmonid fish exclusive to southern Italy, Sicili, Sardinia and North Africa; lastly, the very interesting environment of the karstic gullies (of Bats, Trovato, Mortaio, Calcinar) hosts numerous chiropterans and nocturnal bords of prey.

The territory of the Reserve therefore constitutes a remarkable complex of major interest in terms of geomorphology, nature, landscape, history and archaeology, and also ethno-anthropology.
POZZALLO, TAORMINA & MT. ETNA

Taormina - Sicily's prime tourist resort was discovered by the British aristocracy in the mid 1800s. Facing Etna and the blue Mediterranean, this peaceful panoramic resort, 206m above sea level was colonized by the Greeks who built a theatre in the Hellenic period – 4BC. The present Teatro Greco, altered by the Romans, is the venue for classical plays every summer. The main street, the elegant Corso Umberto, with its cafés, restaurants and boutiques is a bustle of nationalities.

MT. ETNA - The largest and most active volcano in Europe. The climb to the crater takes us through picturesque villages and an ever changing landscape. The lower slopes of the volcano are extremely fertile with groves of oranges, lemons and other Mediterranean flora and of course vines which produce Sicily's best wines. We go through forests of chestnut trees which gradually give way to oak, beech, birch and pine.

Highlights and inclusions

- Arrival at POZZALLO - a typical Sicilian fishing village, gradually regaining its role as the main port of the province of Ragusa.
- Departure in air-conditioned coaches, accompanied by guides.
- Departure for Taormina. On the way we pass by ISPICA, a baroque town rebuilt after the 1693 earthquake. ROSOLINI, a typical rural town dated back to Roman times, surrounded by orange and lemon groves. SIRACUSA, the home town of Archimedes and home to the world famous archaeological zone and the University City of CATANIA, a thriving commercial centre.
- TAORMINA: Free time in Taormina to enjoy the unique panoramic view overlooking Giardini Naxos, a former Greek colony, now an international yachting centre. Time for lunch (not included in the price).
- On the way to Mt. Etna we stop to sample some typical Sicilian delicacies, including wines / almond sweets and honey; these Sicilian specialities are for sale (no obligation to buy).
- MOUNT ETNA: From the SYLVESTRI CRATER at 2000 metres, we have a panoramic view of this vast base of ETNA and the effects of the most recent eruptions. Souvenir shopping.
- Departure by High Speed Catamaran at 21.30hrs for Malta.
- Family plan: When two adults are travelling together, the first two children (4 years till under 14 years) travel FREE except for the charges, fuel surcharge (when applicable) and local transport (if required).

The company reserves the right to introduce a fuel surcharge from time to time without prior notice. The itinerary of this excursion may be altered subject to weather conditions. Virtu Ferries Conditions of Carriage apply. These conditions may be viewed at Virtu Ferries offices or www.virtuferries.com and authorized travel agents.
Mt. Etna
The largest and most active volcano in Europe. The climb to the crater takes us through picturesque villages and an ever changing landscape. The lower slopes of the volcano are extremely fertile with groves of oranges, lemons and other Mediterranean flora and of course wines which produce Sicily's best wines. We go through forests of chestnut trees which gradually give way to oak, beech, birch and pine.

Modica
This proud, prosperous and ancient city is one of Sicily’s baroque gems. The main street ‘Il Corso’, is a typical Italian meeting place with cafés and majestic buildings. The church of San Giorgio is an impressive monument, built after the earthquake of 1693, surrounded by a flight of 250 steps to further enhance the scenic beauty of its fine façade.

HIGHLIGHTS & INCLUSIONS
- Arrival at POZZALLO - a typical Sicilian fishing village.
- Met by fully air-conditioned coaches, accompanied by guides.
- On the way to Mt. Etna we stop to sample some typical Sicilian delicacies, including wines / almond sweets and honey; these Sicilian specialities are for sale (no obligation to buy).
- Drive up to Sylvester Craters of MT. ETNA having time for lunch (not included in the price) and souvenir shopping.
- Depart Mt. Etna for the baroque city of MODICA to enjoy some free time in the city centre.
- Depart Modica for Pozzallo, with a running commentary by the guide.
- Depart for Malta by High Speed Catamaran at 19:30hrs.

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FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT

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