

CROSSING SICILY

**FROM THE FENICIAN TO THE GODFATHER.
14 CYCLING DAYS THROUGH THE HEART OF SICILY**



INTRO

Sicily's strategic position, in the middle of the Mediterranean Sea, lying between Europe and Africa, linking the eastern and western Mediterranean and the Latin World with the Greek resulted in it being not only the prized possession of foreign powers in its tumultuous history, but also a battleground between warring nations. Sicily's long history of foreign domination has produced an incredible mix of traditions and cultures, leaving behind some of the most remarkable works of art and architecture found in the Mediterranean world. The overlapping of cultures, languages, and technological development can be seen not only in the towns and cities, but also in countryside, as the landscape has also been modified through time, with the acquiring of new irrigation and farming techniques and the introduction of new crops such as vines, olive and citrus trees, originating from other lands.

Western Sicily benefited from all the above, and as you travel through the least densely populated part of the island, you will be amazed by the many architectonic styles: imposing Elymian and Greek ruins in Segesta and Selinunte; narrow, winding medieval streets and exuberant Baroque churches in various towns and villages.

One of the most outstanding qualities of western Sicily is the juxtaposition of colors, constantly changing according to the season. The sea is a predominant feature. It's many shades of green, turquoise and blue, contrast sharply with the intense whiteness of the salt mines, exulted by the warm sun that makes everything glow or shine. Inland, the greens, yellows and browns characterize the seemingly infinite succession of cultivated rolling hills, dotted with soft colored buildings, whites, creams, yellows and greys, depending on the material used and the period of construction. The sun also helps give the excellent Sicilian food and wine it's vivid color as many dishes make use of the wide selection of fresh vegetables found locally such, as tomatoes, aubergines, peppers, zucchini, olives, oranges and capers as well as many types of cow and sheep cheese and fresh fish. The enormous variety of almond based desserts is a wide topic you should definitely indulge in.

THE SICILIAN POPULATION

The earliest inhabitants of Sicily of whom we have any written record from the Bronze Age are the Sicans in east Sicily, village dwellers that settled in the East, near Agrigento and the Sikels who probably came from mainland Italy, settling in the centre of the island and cohabiting peacefully.

Elymians: The Elymians arrived around 1200 BC, during the Iron Age. Not much is known of their origin, but it's believed they come from Troy. They settled in the west, and founded the towns of Segesta, Erice and Entella, where interesting ruins are still visible. Elymians laid the foundation for the temple of Segesta that was built by the Greeks when they conquered the city. It seems as well that we owe the Elymians the tradition of cereal-growing in western Sicily, endless fields of which are still peculiar to this area.

Phoenicians: The Phoenicians were notorious sea traders who discovered the sailing route to Sicily around 1000 BC and kept it a great secret because they realized it had great potential. They founded trading colonies in the safe natural harbours on the island of Mothya and Palermo thus establishing trade relations with the Elymians

Greeks: The Greeks arrived around 800 BC, establishing strongholds on the east coast at Naxos (735 BC) and Syracuse (734), going on into the next century with Lentini, Catania, Megara Hiblaea, Zancle, Gela, Selinunte. The Greeks greatly influenced all aspects of everyday Sicilian life and their traditions persevered even after their downfall.

Romans: During the Punic wars that started in 264 BC Sicily again found herself in an important strategic position between Italy and North Africa and by 210 Rome controlled the whole of the island. Under Roman domination the cities lost some of their autonomy. Extensive rural estates were established in the interior, and luxurious villas were built (typified by the villas found at Piazza Armerina, Patti, and Eloro), as well as a good road network that went around the island. In the early Imperial period Sicily lost importance as a Roman province.

Vandals: During the 5C Sicily was the successive prey of the Vandals and the Ostrogoths of Germanic origin, who invaded from North Africa.

Byzantine: In AD 535 it was conquered for Byzantium by Belisarius. For a short period of time in 663 AD Syracuse became the capital of the Byzantine Empire, instead of Constantinople.

Arabs: Under the pressure of the Saracen invasion (AD 827) fighting for possession of the Island continued for 50 years. Palermo fell to the Arabs in 831; Syracuse in 878. Muslim rule was marked by a

spirit of tolerance. Palermo in the 9C was one of the great centers of scholarship and art in the world, surpassed in size in the Christian world only by Constantinople. The fertility of the island was exploited to the full, helped by the construction of incredible irrigation systems, and cotton, oranges, lemons, sugar cane, etc. were cultivated for the first time.

Normans: In 1060 the Norman Count Roger de Hauteville (1031-1101), with a handful of knights, seized Messina. By 1091 Roger was in control of the entire island. Norman rule was characterized by its efficiency, and willingness to adapt to the Arabic, Greek, and Roman traditions which already existed on the island. In 1130 Roger's son (1093-1154) was crowned King of Sicily as Roger II. At that time he was probably the wealthiest ruler in Europe, and his court in Palermo the most brilliant. Meanwhile Messina flourished as a supply base for the Crusaders.

Swabians: In 1194 the crown was claimed by the Emperor Henry VI of Swabia, son of Barbarossa, in the name of his wife, Constance (daughter of Roger II) and the last of the Hautevilles was put to death. He was succeeded as Emperor and King of Sicily by his son Frederick II, 'stupor mundi', whose reign was marked by a prolonged struggle with the Papacy. His splendid court in Palermo, drawing on Islamic and Jewish, as well as Christian cultures, was famous throughout Europe for its splendour and learning. The Swabian line ended with the beheading of Conradin in 1268.

Angevins: The Pope invested Charles of Anjou with the crown of Sicily and Naples. The hated Angevin rule was, however, soon terminated by the famous rebellion known as the Sicilian Vespers, which broke out at Palermo at the hour of vespers on Easter Tuesday, 1282. A French officer who had insulted a Sicilian bride on her way to church by insisting upon searching her for concealed weapons was immediately killed, and every Frenchman in Palermo was massacred.

Aragonese: Every Sicilian town, except Sperlinga, followed suit by massacring or expelling its French garrison, and the Sicilians summoned Peter of Aragon to be their king. From that day for over four centuries Sicily was ruled by Aragonese princes and Spanish and Bourbon kings, a period in which the rebellious spirit of the islanders lay dormant.

Spanish: By the 16C Charles V had moved the centre of power towards the West of the Mediterranean. After the discovery of America, Sicily lost much of her strategic importance.

Savoy and Habsburg: The 18th C saw power in the island pass quickly from hand to hand, first to Savoy 1713-20 then to the Habsburg 1720-34.

Bourbons: In 1734 Sicily returned under Bourbons domination. After Napoleon failed to invade the island, the British took control of Sicily. In the first years of the 19C and established a constitution for a brief time, because revolution broke out in 1848 against the Bourbons of Naples.

Savoy: In 1860 Garibaldi fired the imagination of the Sicilian people, landing at Marsala with his "Thousands" and led an attack against Naples, thus paving the way for Italian Unification. Hard Piedmontese rule by Cavour soon proved unpopular. The Northern Italian cities took up a dominant position over the South and the economic position of Sicily was to remain for a century long way behind that in the rest of Italy. Violence increased in the ungovernable interior of the island. By 1900 Sicily was one of the main areas of emigration in the world. In 1931, 40 per cent of Sicilians still remained illiterate. The geographical position of Sicily meant that the Allies chose the island for their first important attack on Hitler in Europe. The capture of Sicily by the Allies in 1943 (Operation 'Husky') was accomplished in 38 days. During the Italian administration in 1944 Civil War broke out on the island.

CROSSING SICILY ROUTES TECHNICAL FORM

	OVERNIGHT	KIND OF ACTIVITY	KIND OF ROAD	DEGREE OF DIFFICULT	KIND OF SERVICE
Day 1	Scopello	Welcome and introduction to the tour			HB
Day 2	Erice	Cycling Scopello to Erice: Km 64,750/ Miles 38,49	asphalt	Rolling/climb to Erice	HB
Day 3	Selinunte	Cycling Erice to Selinunte: Km 128,750/ Miles 77,25	asphalt	Flat/rolling	BB
Day 4	Montevago	Cycling Selinunte to Montevago: Km 73,000/ Miles 43,8	asphalt	Gentle slope	HB
Day 5	Feudo Tudia	Cycling Montevago to Feudo Tudia: Km 134,000/Miles 80,4	Asphalt with some stretch of uneven road	Rolling/some stratches of hard climb	HB
Day 6	Cefalù	Cycling Feudo Tudia to Cefalù: Km 85,000/ Miles 51,00	Some stretch of uneven road . Madalong the route could be possible	Climb/Downhill	BB
Day 7	Contrada Gigliotto	Rest: private shuttle to visit Valle dei Templi and Mosaics of Piazza Armerina	asphalt		HB
Day 8	Rg Ibla	Cycling Contrada Gigliotto to Ibla (Rg): Km 121,500/ Miles 72,90	asphalt	Rolling/Downhill/ Gentle slope	BB
Day 9	Porto Palo di Capopassero	Cycling Ibla (Rg) to Portopalo di Capopassero: Km 98,000/ Miles 58,80	asphalt	Some stretch in climb/downhill/flat	BB
Day 10	Noto	Cycling Portopalo di Capopassero to Noto: Km 66,250/ Miles 39,75	asphalt	Rolling	BB
Day 11	Noto	Rest: relaxed time in Noto/Vendicari Nature Park			BB
Day 12	C. Gulfi	Cycling Noto to Chiaramonte Gulfi: Km 69,300/ Miles 41,58	asphalt	Rolling	BB
Day 13	Anapo Valley	Cycling Chiaramonte Gulfi to Anapo Valley: Km 76,800/ Miles 46,08	asphalt	Rolling	HB
Day 14	Siracusa	Cycling Anapo Valley to Siracusa: Km 29,750/ Miles 17,85	asphalt	Downhill	BB
Day 15	Taormina/Giardini Naxos	Rest: relaxed time in Taormina			HB
Day 16	Private shuttle to Catania airport and end of our services				

THE ACCOMMODATION

Day 1	Scopello	Pensione Tavernetta	0924 541129; via Diaz, 3 91010 www.scopellonline.com/latavernetta.albergolatavernetta@libero.it
Day 2	Erice	H Elimo	0923 869377 pbx; fax 0923 869252 Erice : info@hotelelino.it Web: www.hotelelino.it
Day 3	Selinunte	H Admeto	0924-46796 fax: 0924 941055; via Palinuro, 3 ; E-mail : info@hoteladmeto.it www.hoteladmeto.it
Day 4	Montevago	Terme Acqua Pia	Acque Calde 92010 Montevago (Ag) Sicily tel. 092539026 - cell 3355638514 www.termiacquapia.it < http://www.termiacquapia.it > Loc. Tel. 0925/39026 - Fax 0925 39130 termiacquapia@termiacquapia.it
Day 5	Feudo Tudia	Agrit. Feudo Tudia	Borgo Tudia tel/fax 0934 673029 tudiadi@hotmail.com www.tudia.net
Day 6	Cefalù	H Le Calette	Cefalù Via Vincenzo Cavallaro 12 tel 0921 424144 fax 0921 423688
Day 7	Contrada Gigliotto	Agr. Gigliotto	Tel.- fax 00.39.933-970898 www.gigliotto.com
Day 8	Rg Ibla	H Il Barocco	via Santa Maria La Nuova n1 0932 663105; fax 0932 228913; info@ilbarocco.it www.ilbarocco.it
Day 9	Porto Palo di Capopassero	H Vittorio	via V. Emanuele 2 96010 Portopalo di C.P. 0931 842181-803229; fax: 0931 844226; info@hotelvittorio.com
Day 10	Noto	H La Fontanella	via Rosolino Pilo, 3 96017 Noto Ph 0931 894724; 0931 894735; 0931 571356 e-mail info@albergolafontanella.it
Day 11	Noto	H La Fontanella	via Rosolino Pilo, 3 96017 Noto Ph 0931 894724; 0931 894735; 0931 571356 e-mail info@albergolafontanella.it
Day 12	C. Gulfi	H Villa Nobile	C.so Umberto 168 Tel.0932 928537; fax 0932 925135 Chiaromonte Gulfi www.ibla.net/villanobile email: albergovillanobile@tiscali.it
Day 13	V Anapo	Agr. Sacre Pietre	C.da Fusco Valle dell'Anapo 96010 Sortino (Sr) 339 4476996 (Vincenzo); 3337824537 (Nunzia) 0931 953277 0931 64299 (uff. Sr) www.sacrepietre.it info@sacrepietre.it
Day 14	Siracusa	H Relax	Albergo Hotel Relax Siracusa (Italy) - Viale Epipoli 159 - cap 96100 Tel.+39 931 740.122 - 740.177 Fax +39 931 740933 e-mail info@hotelrelax.it
Day 15	Taormina/Giardini Naxos	H Caesar	PARC HOTELS ITALIA - TEL. +39 - 0942 / 643131 FAX +39 - 0942 / 643141 www.parchotels.it sicily@parchotels.it

PROGRAM

DAY 1

Transfer from Palermo Falcone–Borsellino Airport to the ancient village of **Scopello** a very small village sprang up around an ancient “baglio” dating back to the seventeenth-century (during the Roman period, in western Sicily, the so called “bagli” were built with defensive purpose and then, in the XV century, were used in agriculture and included in the interior the houses of the farmers and the storehouses for tools and cattle).

The village of Scopello is located 100 meters above sea level not far from the Zingaro Nature Oriented Reserve. It is one of the most picturesque places in the province of Trapani and is renowned for the homonymous tuna fish station, which during 1500 was one of the most productive in Sicily.

In Scopello you'll be shown the tour and given some informative document and your hire bikes as well.

You could spend this first day walking relaxedly inside the **Zingaro Nature Reserve**.

The coastline that stretches between Scopello and San Vito Lo Capo has become a nature reserve, the first established in Sicily, since 1980. It is one of the unspoiled and most charming areas in Sicily and can be explored only on foot. The reserve is a place of great value not only for the beauty of the little bays where you can **STOP** for a refreshing swim, but, above all, for the presence of endemic species both animal and vegetal and the woods of dwarf palm. You can **STOP** for a swim at any of the little bays along the coast path or climb up the mountain to enjoy a wonderful view on the Gulf of Castellammare. Visiting the Museum of Contrada Sughero it'll be possible to discover usages and customs of the people that lived in the Park at the beginning of the twentieth century.

Overnight stay: in Scopello

DAY 2

From Scopello to Erice

The Archaeological site of **Segesta** is one of the most important and representative in Sicily. The site is renowned for the temple, one of the most representative images of tourism in Sicily, and for the theatre that like a shell suspended in space looks towards the Gulf of Castellammare. Segesta, together with Erice and Entella, was a powerful city of the Elymians, population coming from Turkey, and was marked by several conflicts with Selinunte. During the first Punic War, under the rule of the Romans and the Greeks the town underwent periods of glory; then it was destroyed by the vandals and occupied by the Saracens and ceases to exist in the Early Middle Ages.

After the visit of Segesta you'll cycle to Erice.

Erice is located on the top of the homonymous Mount that towers above Trapani. The town nowadays has a very pleasant medieval atmosphere, but in ancient times it was an important religious centre for the Elymians, a population that lived in western Sicily before the Greek colonization.

Here they built a temple to the goddess of fertility where the Phoenicians worshipped Astarte, the Greeks Aphrodite and the Romans Venus. Erice was contended by the Syracusans and by the Carthaginians till the Roman conquest in 244 BC. During the Arabian invasion it was called Gebel Hamed (Mount of Hamed). In the XII century it gained again some of the lost importance and then followed the political fate of the Island.

Overnight stay: in Erice.

DAY 3

From Erice to Selinunte

You'll pedal totally relaxed. The panoramic descent from Erice and the following route in the interior will lead you to the Marsala Salt Mining Reserve and to **Mozia**, little uncontaminated Punic Island. The panoramic downhill road will lead you from Erice to the sea cycling along almost completely flat roads, in the open country. Once arrived to the sea you'll enjoy a magnificent view of the Salt Mine and the wind mills.

At the landing-stage to Mozia it'll be possible to visit the **Marsala Salt Mining Reserve** and discover the process of salt cultivation and look at a wind mill at close range. Then, by a little boat it'll be possible to go to the suggestive Island of Mozia, Punic fortress, owned and operated by a foundation established by the Whitaker family, winemakers in Sicily. The foundation preserves what Giuseppe Whitaker, English man born (1850) and grown up in Palermo, keen on archaeology, put into light. It is possible to visit the Archaeological Museum and the ruins of a considerable civilization, complete with the harbour and the cemetery. Some of the finds displayed in the Museum have a distinctly Egyptian influence, while others are probably Hellenic.

This flat region has always been known for its fine grapes, but it was the Englishman, John Woodhouse, who introduced the wine business in 1796, having already developed a similar product (the Port wine) in Portugal.

After Mozia the last kilometers on the level will lead you to Marsala where you'll visit the wine-producing firm with wine tasting.

The origin of **Marsala**, the most populous in the province of Trapani, dates back to 397 BC when the Greeks of Siracusa defeated Mozia. The Phoenicians, inhabitants of Mozia, found shelter in this level coastal district. They founded a city called Lilibeo with a strategic role in the area of the Mediterranean Sea. In fact it became a joining point for the exchange of goods between East and West.

After the Roman period, Lilibeo became capital city of western Sicily giving hospitality to Cicerone as questor (75 BC).

It was just from here that in 830 started the occupation of Sicily by the Arabs and a period of thriving trade with the near Africa. Under the Arabs Lilibeo was renamed and called *Marsa Allah* (port of God).

During the Spanish domain the architecture of Marsala acquired a style of the Renaissance and of the late Baroque. The landing of Garibaldi and The Thousands, gave Marsala an important role in the process of national unification.

In Marsala it is possible to visit a renowned wine co-operative store and the Museum in order to know the secrets of the production of the homonymous wine.

The second part of this stage is quite hilly, it will lead you to the Archaeological sites of **Cave di Cusa quarries** and **Selinunte**, the ancient Selinus, and will give you the chance to enter the interior of the Island. Leaving the flat vineyards around Marsala curve inland towards a softly undulating series of hill, and then down to the sea again, passing by the Cave di Cusa Archaeological site, one of the most fascinating natural workshop of construction material of the Greek period. The site, near Campobello di Mazara, gives a clear idea about the way in which the temples were built. Visiting this site, one seems to be catapulted back to the fatal moment when the work of the people of Selinunte was abruptly interrupted, perhaps because of the arrival of the Carthaginian troops, which had set out to destroy the city. Going through Campobello di Mazara you'll reach Selinunte, an abandoned ancient Greek city, with the ruins of an acropolis and numerous temples. The city was founded in the seventh century BC, and effectively destroyed in 409 BC. Selinunte's glorious heyday lasted for a period of about two centuries, when it was one of the most progressive Greek cities in Sicily, famous throughout Magna Grecia. The archaeological park surrounding Selinunte and its monuments extends about 1.300 meters east to west and it is open from 9:00 AM to an hour before sunset most days with the exception of major holidays. Furthermore, in Selinunte, there is the **Nature Oriented Reserve of the Belice River and "Dune Limitrofe"**.

Overnight stay: in Selinunte.

DAY 4

From Selinunte to Montevago SPA

Today you'll pedal as far as the **Ruins of Poggioreale** crossing the Belice Valley.

The route that leads to Poggioreale penetrates another Sicily without the sea as landmark, except in the distance. The landscape is characterized by hills on which rise several ruins of ancient buildings once used in agriculture. Poggioreale is one of the towns of the Belice Valley struck by the earthquake in 1968. Visiting the ruins of the town you'll have an idea about the interior of Sicily in the first half of the twentieth century. Lots and lots of emotions pervade the soul of the traveller in this abandoned place. Near the ruins of Poggioreale it is possible to see the work of art of the modern artist Alberto Burri who has covered with a white cement flow the ruins of the neighbouring country of Gibellina, maintaining the street pattern.

From here, after the visit to the ghost town, you'll keep going on by bike towards Contessa Entellina.

You'll spend the night in a SPA where you can have massages and to have a swim in a thermal swimming pool

Overnight stay: Montevago.

Day 5

Montevago – Borgo Tudia

By this long day you'll pass through Contessa Entellina founded in 1450 by Greek-Albanian inhabitants who were immigrants from the militar colony of Bisiri. The name of Entellina was added in 1875 and

derives from Entella, an ancient village inhabited by the Elima people.

The most ancient part of the town now has new building structures since in 1968 the town was shaken by a violent earthquake that razed the original cottages.

Then you'll pass through Chiusa Sclafani that is a very small town, is on a slope and its activity is prevalently agricultural and produces cereals, olives, almonds, grapes, cherries and peaches. The handicraft is bound to wood and cloth working. The town had called only Chiusa until 1862 in honour and to remember its founder Matteo Chiusa Count of Adrano, later it was added Sclafani. The small town has medieval origins and was founded in 1320 on the ruins of a previous country-house. For a long time it has been under domination of the Sclafani family, then it came to Colonna family until 1812 and feudal duties were abolished. Another nice town by which you'll ride is Palazzo Adriano which name derives from Sicilian dialect U Palazzu (the building). The first nucleus has been founded during the XV century by a group of Greek-Albanian refugees escaped to Turkish persecution. Palazzo Adriano has been chosen to film exterior shoots of "Nuovo cinema Paradiso" by the director Giuseppe Tornatore.

Then you'll climb to Vicari and another old village in the middle of Sicily and will reach Borgo Tudia which is important to know as this farm was the base of a "latifondo", the typical large landed estate we had in Sicily until one hundred years ago (latifundia)

Some info regarding to latifundia

The latifundia [Latin *lātifundium*: *lātus*, "spacious" + *fundus*, "farm, estate"] of Roman history were great landed estates, specialising in agriculture destined for export: grain, olive oil or wine. They were characteristic of Magna Graecia and Sicily, of Egypt and the North African Maghreb and of Hispania Baetica in southern Spain. The latifundia were the closest approximation to industrialized agriculture in Antiquity, and their economics depended upon slave labor.

"Latifundia" is often extended to describe the haciendas of colonial and post-colonial Mexico, Venezuela and Argentina.

Contrast the villa system of Antiquity, the plantation systems, and modern monocultures in agribusiness.

Hellenistic Latifundia

The landscape of the Greek mainland does not lend itself to large estates. Trade in olive oil and wine were typically the produce of many small groves and vineyards, concentrated in fewer hands at the presses and shipping ports. The grasslands of Thessaly and Macedon were pasturelands for grazing horses. Meat was not a staple in Mediterranean diets.

Roman Latifundia

The basis of the latifundia in Italy and Sicily was the *ager publicus* that fell to the dispensation of the state through Rome's policy of war in the 1st century BC and the 1st century AD. As much as a third of the arable land of a new province was taken for *agri publici* and then divided up with at least the fiction of a competitive auction for leaseholdings rather than outright ownership. Later in the Empire, as leases were inherited, ownership of the former common lands became established by tradition, and the leases became taxable.

Overnight stay: in a farm in the middle of nowhere: "Borgo Tudia"

Day 6

Borgo Tudia - Cefalù

It is no exaggeration to qualify the madonita area as a botanical garden in the heart of the Mediterranean. It is also interestingly referred to as a crossroads between three continents. In fact, over millions of years, this area has been favourable to the development of hundreds of native and exclusive species, as well as a survival ground for species native to other areas, as distant as Central and Northern Europe. The Madonie is home to over half of Sicily's species; a figure topping 2600. The geological structure of the Madonie is also heterogeneous in many ways: structure, breadth, height, hydrological structure, exposure and climate. Its landscapes are varied and stunning, going from the snow caps on the Carbonara, second only to the Etna in Sicily, to the wonderful coastline of Cefalù

Cefalu has a beach, winding, narrow, medieval streets, and delightful restaurants overlooking a rocky coast. All under the everpresent gaze of the Norman-Arab-Byzantine cathedral, one of the greatest churches of southern Europe. Nestled between the Madonie Mountains and the sea, Cefalù's mountain boasts the ruins of a large fortress and an ancient Sicanian-Greek temple.

Overnight in hotel 3 star in Cefalù.

Day 7

Rest day: shuttle to Valle dei Templi and Villa Romana del Casale (UNESCO heritage).

In this rest day a private shuttle will lead you to two of our most important archaeological sites: Valle dei templi in Agrigento and the ruins of Villa del Casale close to Piazza Armerina.

Our guide will transfer luggage and bikes to the accommodation of the night that will be in countryside.
Overnight: 4 star farm.

Day 8

From Contrada Gigliotto to Ragusa Ibla (UNESCO heritage).

This stage will start with a rolling ride until Caltagirone, then a long descent stretches alternate with gentle slopes, in about 50 Km, will lead you to the coastline. This is the "Baroque Landscapes" entrance stage that, little by little, will introduce you to the beauty of the Iblei landscape.

In **Ibla** you'll be astonished in front of the imposingness of the San Giorgio Duomo, with the characteristic front (which has the shape of a body of a violin) rising above the oblique staircase. Very suggestive is the view on the duomo that you can enjoy from the "De Gaspano" staircase.

In our opinion Ibla is a real jewel made of stone with a quiet town centre, paved roads, big stony faces beneath the balconies that look at the traveller, signs of a different time. You'll arrive in Ibla once you've gone across the other side of Ragusa and having driven along the winding road that leads to the Repubblica Square with the beautiful Purgatorio Church.

Overnight stay: in Ragusa-Ibla, in a lovely baroque restored palace

Level of difficulty: quiet long section with an up and down sometimes quiet hard

Overnight in hotel 3 star in Ibla.

Day 9

From Ragusa-Ibla to Portopalo di Capo Passero/Marzamemi

Today you'll reach the south east side of Sicily, yet further south of Tunis, passing through another gem of the Baroque architecture in Sicily: **Modica**, a town that conjugates the fashion of the Baroque style with the tradition of a delicious chocolate. Then you'll pass through **Scicli** where you can appreciate his eighteenth-century style which is the result of the rebuilding process of an ancient village, founded by the Siculi around the X century b.c., and subsequently destroyed during the 1693 earthquake. Scicli is also an example of the Baroque style, typical of south-eastern Sicily. In Scicli, most of the historic buildings are located outside the town centre, where, nevertheless, you can find churches and palaces of great artistic interest. We recommend the eighteenth-century Beneventano Palace, one of the most noteworthy examples of Baroque in the province of Ragusa. Along the route you'll be guided by the brightness of the sea on a path, almost on the flat that will lead you to the little and quiet fishermen village of **Portopalo di Capopassero**, fascinating for its position. The little Capopassero Island that faces the land is the most extreme point of the south-east of Sicily. Due to the extraordinary vegetation, it is an important botanical site and houses a tower built with defensive purposes in 1600. In 1943, the 10th of July, in Portopalo di Capopassero the Anglo-American allied troops landed.

Overnight stay: in Portopalo di Capopassero

Overnight in hotel 3 star in Portopalo di Capopassero.

DAY 10

From Capo Passero to Noto

Today, leaving the sea on your back, you are entering the heart of the tour. For the most you'll drive through peaceful landscapes in the interior, with lots of uphill stretches, but the landscape will pay your effort back. White limestone drywalls surround the route and from the height it'll be possible to observe the Sicilian quarries (canyons) excavated among these mountains by the intense activity of the rivers in this side of Sicily. At the end of the stage you'll arrive in **Noto**, the Baroque par excellence in Sicily. Sumptuous buildings and majestic churches will drive you into an atmosphere out of time.

Overnight stay: in Noto.

Day 11

Rest in Noto (UNESCO heritage).

Relaxing day to discover **Noto**. It is universally recognized as capital city of the Baroque Style that is the cross-section of wonders the rebuilding after the 1693 earthquake created in the eastern part of Sicily. The Spanish governor didn't engage in reconstruction of damaged buildings, but decided to rebuild the whole town according to new aesthetic values that fitted requirements at that time, above all

the ostentation of political and religious powers. The exceptionality of Noto and the baroque towns of this area resides in the imposing design of palaces and churches, classic of the baroque style, that mix with cosy courts and hidden perspective.

An alternative is to cycle to **Vendicari Nature Reserve**, wonderful natural area very famous for bird-watching activity. In this little paradise several migratory species, coming from Africa, find a shelter during spring after thousand kilometers of flight. But in autumn it is possible to observe big wading birds. A very clean sea colder than the one in the north of the Island laps the sandy coastline. The ruins of the flourishing tuna fish station remember us the richness springing from this sea since the Hellenistic Age.

Overnight stay: in Noto

DAY 12

From Noto to Chiaramonte Gulfi (UNESCO heritage)..

Also this stage is set in the interior of Sicily and will give you lots of different emotions due to the magnificence of the landscape. Here you will see majestic trees called "Carrubbi", typical trees in this part of Sicily, precious both because they are facing with the danger of extinction and as they represent part of a rural culture, now nearly lost. The stage passes through Palazzolo Acreide which is another of the jewels of the Val di Noto area, where the Baroque is in contrast to the ancient ruins. Ancient Akrai was founded by the Siracusans in 664 b.c. in a strategic position overlooking the surrounding countryside. The theatre was built at the height of the town's fame about 300 years b.c. This Baroque town is one of the eight in Sicily protected by UNESCO; it was re-built after the 1693 earthquake, and a visit to its alleys and squares is highly recommended, above all Palazzo Iudica-Cafici with its long balcony supported by 27 brackets decorated with grotesque masks.

This stage will **STOP** to **Chiaramonte Gulfi**, another pearls of the interior of Sicily, town of ancient origins rich in wonderful baroque architectures fruit of the rebuilding process started after the 1693 earthquake. The town center is medieval and well preserved.

Overnight stay: in Chiaramonte Gulfi.

DAY 13

From Chiaramonte Gulfi to Pantalica-Valle dell'Anapo (UNESCO heritage)..

From Chiaramonte Gulfi going through the heart of the Iblei landscape, you'll pass through little towns in the province of Siracusa where you'll be astonished by the architecture of churches and noble buildings. Then you'll reach the **Anapo Valley Nature Reserve** whose name is due to the homonymous River.

Pantalica, located inside the valley, is a fascinating archaeological site in one of the cities of mysterious origins dating back to 2300 years ago that has maintained the beauty of an extraordinary place.

What has come till today is the Necropolis, the biggest in Sicily and one of the most important in the world. More than 5000 quarries excavated inside the rock, overhanging on Anapo and Calcinara Rivers that let we dream about a land inhabited by winged giants. Below, in the valley dipped in the shade of trees such as Plans, Ashes and Oaks, intoxicated by thousand smells in a little Eden, you can go up the cold waters of the rivers, go hiking along the coastal paths (by our own or with an expert guide) or have a walk through the path of the ancient narrow gauge railway track that passed through these valleys up to 1956.

Overnight stay: in Pantalica-Valle dell'Anapo.

DAY 14

From Pantalica-Valle dell'Anapo to Siracusa-Ortigia (UNESCO heritage)..

The last stage of the tour will lead you to **Ortigia**, heart of the city of **Siracusa**. Very short and relaxing it will give you the chance to have a pleasant ride on the back of a donkey inside the Anapo Valley before leaving towards Ortigia, or, if you prefer, you can leave early in the morning to go directly to Ortigia and dive into thousand alleys of the town.

Twenty-seven centuries of history separate the origin of this city from present days. Ortigia, the little Island very close to the coast, is the ancient heart of the city. It was from Siracusa that started the Greek colonisation of the Island.

In Ortigia, (and in other parts of Sicily as well), it is possible to find considerable cultural stratification that in different historical periods contributed to make this city a marvelous treasures casket.

It's very delightful to wander through the small routes inside the ancient city center of Ortigia and get lost in the multitude of artisanship laboratory, or walk along the external ring close to the sea, immersed in the blinding light of the rising sun, or caressed by the breeze in the afternoon.

Overnight stay: in Ortigia, the old center of Siracusa.

DAY 15

Private shuttle to Giardini Naxos/Taormina

Your amazing bike tour through Sicily is finished, but another nice part is waiting for you:

Today a private shuttle will take you to Taormina, another icon of the tourism in Sicily, it is probably the most famous place of Sicily. Perfect for shopping, we'll have the dinner in one of the oldest restaurant of the town

Overnight: Giardini Naxos. One shuttle go and back to Taormina and dinner in Taormina included

Day 16

Private shuttle to Catania airport. End of our services

USEFUL NUMBERS

FIRST AID:118

POLICE:113

CARABINIERI:112 (Carabinieri are similar to the Police.
You can find a Carabinieri station in every village of Sicily)

+39 347 6613322 Dario Carzan
SICICLANDO:+39 347 6613323 Giuseppe Crinò
+39 328 5395834 Dario Bruno

Getting to and from the Airport

(PALERMO AIRPORT - CITY CENTRE - PALERMO AIRPORT YOU DON'T MAKE USE OF SICICLANDO TRANSFER)

Bus Services

Autolinee Prestia e Comandè
Tel.: 091 586351

Buses run every 30 minutes, 365 days a year
From Palermo: from 5.00 a.m. to 11.00 p.m.
From the airport: from 6.00 a.m. to midnight
Average journey time from/to Stazione Centrale (central station): approx 50 minutes
Average journey time from/to Politeama: approx 30 minutes
Fare: € 4,80

Train services

"Trinacria Express" service
Trains run every hours, 365 days a year from 5.00 a.m. to midnight
(frequency increased during rush hours)
From Palermo: 10th minute (e.g. 6.10 – 7.10 etc.)
From the airport: 40th minute (e.g. 6.40 – 7.40 etc.)
Average journey time from/to Stazione Centrale (central station): 45 minutes
Fare: € 4,50

Taxi

Tel.: 091 7020222
091 225455
091 591662

GENERAL INFORMATION

You will be given your hire bikes at the hotel, these bikes are essentially hybrids and have 24 gears with luggage pannier attachments at the rear, puncture repair kit, pump and spare inner tube, all of which you should know how to use. In the case of more severe damage to the bike you can contact Siciclando (see "Useful Numbers"). They will endeavour to reach you or send out a representative to assist you. Please, be as accurate as you can in indicating your location when you ask for assistance.

Each of the routes is designed to take in points of interest, views and, as far as possible, quiet roads, paying special attention to the altimetry. Inevitably there will be some hill-climbing involved.

Bicycle touring has its inherent risks. It is a sport whose safety is dependent upon the judgment and alertness of the cyclists. As a cyclist you are responsible for the way you ride and the condition of your bicycle.

BICYCLING TIPS

BEFORE STARTING OUT

Physical condition

Make certain you are in good health and in sufficiently good physical condition to handle the exertion required by bicycling and other exercise. A check up with a doctor six months prior to your trip is advised.

Bike check

Conduct a quick check before every ride:

- inflate tires, if necessary, and insure proper pressure;
- take a quick ride to check if derailleur and brakes are working properly;
- inspect the bike for loose or broken parts;
- pay extra attention to the bike during the first few kilometers of the ride.

Clothing

Wear brightly colored clothing, and consider strips of reflective tape for your clothing to make yourself visible to motorists.

Always wear a helmet.

Shoestrings must not be too long. You might tuck the ends of the laces into the shoes or socks to prevent them from getting caught in the chain or spokes.

Avoid floppy pant legs.

Weather

Be aware of possible changes in weather and pack accordingly.

ON THE ROAD

Sharing the road

Obey traffic laws: laws that apply to motorists apply to cyclists as well.

Ride in the right-most lane that goes in the direction that you are traveling.

Signals and signs

Obey all **STOP** signs, traffic lights and lane markings.

Use hand signals to indicate your intention to **STOP**, turn or change lanes.

Intersections

Slow down before intersections and check for oncoming traffic.

Although this trip follows quiet country roads you will inevitably have to cross some major roads. If possible dismount and find the nearest pedestrian crossing. If you are used to riding/driving on the left then please remember to turn on the **RIGHT** hand side of the road when you cross a junction. It is easy to forget after a long section on your own in the countryside.

Safety

Be visible and predictable at all times.

Use lights at night.

Always keep an eye open for the pedestrians and beware of car doors, sometimes people open them without paying attention to the cyclists.

At the crossroads look for the driver and attempt to establish eye contact.

Watch for exhaust fumes.



Braking technique

Use both brakes at the same time, gently; never stab at them. On downhill, brake before a curve and pump both your brakes. Do not apply them continuously, for this can cause them to overheat and **STOP** working.

Beware of rain and wet road: water on the rims could lubricate your brake system making it hard to **STOP**. Apply the breaks lightly to clean off and dry the rims before you need to **STOP** and allow a greater distance for **STOPping**.

Dogs

In the countryside you will come across a number of dogs that are used to guard sheep and livestock. Don't panic and continue pedaling and ride past the dog. It is sometimes better to dismount and pass by. Yelling at the dog will usually startle the dog enough to get him to disengage, but if they persist in bothering you a more aggressive approach could be required. Physical violence should only be used in extreme cases!

NUTRITION

Your body needs fluids, vitamins, minerals and carbohydrates to work. While riding, your body needs more of these than it can store.

Before the ride eat a low-fat, regular portion breakfast such as cereal or pancakes and drink lots of water and fruit juice.

During the ride maintain your body's water level by drinking often; drink before you are thirsty and eat before you are hungry; consume low-fat snacks such as fruit or energy bars; good foods include bananas, oranges, apples, raisins and other dried fruits. Avoid eating a big meal during the ride.

After the ride continue to hydrate; replace lost energy stores by eating proteins, carbohydrates and sugars.

SOME MORE INFORMATION

Eating and Drinking

Centuries of cultural invasion have brought to Sicilian cooking an incredible variety based on simple fresh Mediterranean ingredients, mainly the catch of the sea and the pick of the garden: tomato, eggplant, capers, orange, fragrant herbs, swordfish, tuna, sardines and other seafood, olive oil, pasta. But Sicilians have a sweet tooth! The towns we stay in and the villages we pass through offer a great variety of *Pasticceria* (confectioner's). Try the brioche stuffed with ice cream and don't miss *Cassata*, cream horns (*Cannoli*) and *Frutta di Martorana*, perfectly authentic looking marzipan fruits and vegetables.

Breakfast is usually served around 7,30-8 a.m. and dinner – if included - around 8 p.m., depending on the hotel. Drinks are not included with dinners.

Distances

All distances indicated are in Kilometers. Please note that in Italy the comma is used as the decimal separator, whereas the period is used as the thousands separator!

Money

All the major towns that you pass through have ATM machines and if you have a cirrus logo on your card you can make withdrawals.

USEFUL NUMBERS

FIRST AID: 118
POLICE: 113
CARABINIERI: 112

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We've tried to make the information on this document as accurate as possible, but it is provided "as is" and we accept no responsibility for any loss, injury or inconvenience sustained by anyone resulting from this information.

If you notice any mistakes, please let us know so that we can correct them for the benefit of other clients. Thank you in advance.

KEY OF SYMBOLS USED IN THE ROAD BOOK

Y fork in the road; the road splits into two branches	I- first street on the right
T T junction: road terminates at another road ahead in a "T" shape	-I first street on the left
+ crossroads	RT right
BL Bear left	LT Left
	BR Bear right

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