

Sicily

Gardens, Culture & Cuisine

April 3-14, 2023



ITINERARY

Day 1 - April 3, 2023 » Arrival in Sicily and welcome dinner at a Noble Palace

Independent arrivals in Palermo. Check into our hotel, the Grand Hotel Piazza Borsa, set in 3 historical buildings in the city center. The hotel has a restaurant, bar and spa with complimentary Wifi.

Tonight we will join our guide for a welcome dinner at Villa Tasca.

Villa Tasca is located in a park full of citrus groves and centuries-old trees. This historic, family home has entertained guests including Jacqueline Kennedy, King Ferdinand of Bourbon and Queen Carolina. We will enjoy a Garden visit and dinner with music.



ITINERARY

Day 2 - April 4, 2023 » Palermo (UNESCO) Garden Tour and Villa Malfitano

Today we will enjoy a tour of Palermo, a city rich not only in history, art, and beauty but also exotic and lush plants. During the Arab domination, palm trees were planted in Palermo. In the past centuries, noble families collected and imported exotic plants with the same passion they had for buying artwork. Trees and plants from Africa, Latin America, Australia, and Japan found their home in this city. Mingled with monuments and squares, they create a unique urban landscape.

After our light lunch sampling traditional Sicilian cuisine, we will visit Villa Malfitano and its lovely private garden. The Villa was built during the Belle époque age by the Sicilian-English family Whitaker, who developed the wine industry in Marsala. The garden of the villa was designed by Emilio Kunzmann. We will find many rare plants from Tunisia, Sumatra, Australia, and South America.

Dinner at leisure and overnight in Palermo.



ITINERARY

Day 3 - April 5, 2023 » Tour of Monreale Church with lunch at an olive oil mill and winery

In the morning we will visit the jewel of the Arab-Norman crown in Sicily: the golden cathedral of Monreale. It is one of the most sumptuous examples of the so-called Arab-Norman style. Built by the Norman king William II, the Church became an important Bishop's site to balance the religious power of the nearby Palermo Cathedral. The magnificence of the golden mosaics, decorating the interior will leave us astonished. We will include a tour of the magnificent cloister, enriched by sculpted columns and capitals.

Later we stop at an Olive oil mill and winery where we will listen to the fascinating story of the owners and their family and walk among the olive trees to learn about the local olive oil production. Afterwards, we will have the opportunity to try the local olive oil on a fragrant slice of homemade bread and enjoy a light lunch paired with Sicilian wines

Return to Palermo in the afternoon with the evening at leisure



ITINERARY

Day 4 - April 6, 2023 » Transfer to Agrigento – Guided visit to Kolymbetra Garden, Picnic Lunch and guided visit of the Temple Valley

Today we travel to Agrigento to visit the Garden of Kolymbetra, a shaded corner of paradise, where nature is fused with history. The garden is a thrill for the five senses: from the aroma of the orange blossoms to the flavor of the almonds, from the silvery tint of the olive trees to the moisture of the soil, all accompanied by the delicate sound of water constantly flowing in the background.

We will enjoy a picnic lunch inside the Kolymbetra garden and a guided tour of the Valley of the Temples.

Our accommodations are at the Villa Athena, situated within the Archaeological Park of the Valley of the Temples. The villa is a magnificent residence built at the end of the 18th century which has a spa and free Wifi. Dinner this evening is included at the hotel.

Overnight in Agrigento.



ITINERARY

Day 5 - April 7, 2023 » Sant'Angelo Muxaro

After breakfast we visit Sant'Angelo Muxaro, a small village with an ancient history located in the hinterland near Agrigento, on a lonely hill in the middle of the Platani river valley. The Sant'Angelo Muxaro visit provides an opportunity to "meet the locals". We will walk among the picturesque village lanes with stops for tastings and encounters. We'll include a dairy stop with tasting of cheeses produced each day by a local family, a bakery stop with a taste of "pani cunzati" (bread with local olive oil and pepper), and almond cookies and honey. The morning ends with a panoramic tour of the natural archaeological area.

We return to the village for a lunch based on local products and dishes.

After lunch we will visit San Biagio Platani: the old tradition of Easter Arches, also known as bread arches, started in 18th century. During the Easter period, two confraternities compete in a lively and passionate demonstration called "Archi di Pasqua".

Overnight in Agrigento Villa Athena with dinner included.



ITINERARY

Day 6 - April 8, 2023 » Visit Piazza Armerina and Visit to an experimental Olive Oil farm

This morning we visit an experimental olive grove where they are working to improve the olive species. There are over 400 olive varieties from 20 different countries.

We will have lunch at a manor farm with locally produced ingredients.

Our next stop is a visit to the impressive structures of the Villa Romana at Casale which contains the greatest complex of Roman mosaics in the world.

Later we travel to Ragusa, a lovely hill town and UNESCO World Heritage Site, built in the region's rich Baroque style. We will check in to our hotel, the Locanda Don Serafino. The charming rooms are partially carved into the rock in a building from the 19th century. This Relais & Châteaux property has one of the finest restaurants in Sicily.

Dinner at leisure and overnight in Ragusa.



ITINERARY

Day 7- April 9, 2023 » Easter

Today we will have a chance to participate in the local Easter parade "A Paci" in Comiso, a small town where the religious tradition has become a spectacular performance. The statues of the Virgin Mary and Jesus are carried through narrow streets and when they arrive in front of each church, two little angels sing the "Regina Coeli" in the middle of an excited crowd of worshippers.

Later we will enjoy a typical Easter lunch of the local tradition at Vota Vota restaurant overlooking the Mediterranean Sea.

The rest of the afternoon is at leisure.

Dinner at leisure and overnight in Ragusa.



ITINERARY

Day 8 – April 10, 2023 » Easter Monday in Ragusa (UNESCO)

This morning we'll have a guided tour of Ragusa including the public garden, the result of noblemen's patronage.

Following we transfer to a magnificent 19th-century manor farm in the countryside of Chiaramonte Gulfi, where we will be bewitched by the beauty of the centuries-old olive trees, whose twisted trunks have borne witness to the long history of the olive oil production in Chiaramonte. We will enjoy a splendid lunch with local delicacies and family recipes and taste the olive oil extracted from the precious "Tonda Iblea" olive variety.

We continue with a visit to the Castle of Donnafugata which was Arezzo barons' holiday resort during the 19th century. The castle is surrounded by a large park with over 1500 plant species and various "follies" to entertain guests such as some artificial caves with fake stalactites and a labyrinth.

Enjoy late afternoon and evening at leisure in Ragusa.



ITINERARY

Day 9 - April 11, 2023 » Siracusa (UNESCO)

This morning we drive to Siracusa, the most important and powerful Greek city around the 5th century BC and according to Cicero, the most beautiful. We will stroll through the ancient city of Ortygia and tour the highlights.

After the tour, we will have free time for lunch.

In the afternoon, we will visit the private garden of the Marchese di San Giuliano in Villasmundo. The San Giuliano Garden, winner of a Great Italian Gardens prize, boasts plants specimens from all over the world. Starting in the 1970s, the Marquis Giuseppe di San Giuliano began to create a garden surrounding an old farmhouse. The garden continues to become more beautiful over time due to the passion and care of the owner.

Later we will transfer to the lovely resort town of Taormina. Our accommodations are at Villa Schuler, a 4-star boutique hotel in the historic center of Taormina.

Dinner included. Overnight in Taormina



ITINERARY

Day 10 - April 12, 2023 » Taormina and Free time

After breakfast we will enjoy a guided tour of Taormina with visits to the highlights, including the Greek-Roman theater and the Public Gardens, originally designed by Lady Florence Trevelyan, a Scottish noblewoman who arrived in Taormina in 1884. We can still admire the “Victorian follies”, built for ornamental purposes. The garden has one of the most beautiful panoramas in Taormina.

The afternoon is free to explore this charming resort town.

Dinner at leisure and overnight in Taormina.



ITINERARY

Day 11 - April 13, 2022 » The Hidden Gardens of Mount Etna

This morning we visit "Vivaio Faro", one of the largest nurseries in Italy, whose greenhouse and field plants provide a large-scale production of over 800 species and more than 5,000 varieties of flowers, ornamental plants, trees, aromatic herbs and citrus trees. The nursery, located at the foot of the Mount Etna, has grown thanks to the passion and commitment of the Faro family.

Next, we'll stroll through a private garden located on the slopes of Mt. Etna where rare sub-tropical plants integrate harmoniously with the flora of a Mediterranean woodland. The garden, created by a nobleman from Catania, hosts plants from all over the world. We will be hosted by the current owners for an unforgettable farewell lunch using ancient recipes handed down from one generation to another by the cooks of this important family from Catania.

The late afternoon and evening are free for last minute shopping and packing.

Dinner at leisure and overnight in Taormina



ITINERARY

Day 12 - April 14, 2022 » Transfer to Catania Airport -

An early morning transfer to Catania Airport is included.

Arrivederci!

TOUR PRICE: \$8198.00 members \$8298 non-members
Single supplement amount on request

INCLUDES:

- 11 night's accommodation, all rooms with private bathrooms
- All hotel taxes and service charges
- Breakfast daily- 8 lunches and 4 dinners as noted in the itinerary
- Deluxe transportation by private motor coach
- Special English-speaking escort and local guides
- All sightseeing and entrances as per the itinerary
- Escorted by Cheryl & Robert Nichols
- Tax-deductible donation of \$350 to Pacific Horticulture

COSTS DO NOT INCLUDE:

- Airfare
- Tips to your guide & driver
- Travel Insurance

**For reservations and further information contact:
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