

Cycling Safaris

SICILY ~ Guided Tour



Sicily enjoys a strategic position in the middle of the Mediterranean Sea. It lies between Europe and Africa, linking the eastern and western Mediterranean, and the Latin World with the Greek. In its tumultuous history, it was not only the prized possession of foreign powers 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 architectural 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 colours, constantly changing according to the season. The sea is a predominant feature. Its many shades of green, turquoise and blue contrast sharply with the intense whiteness of the salt mines, emphasised by the warm sun that makes everything glow or shine. Inland, the greens, yellows and browns characterise the seemingly infinite succession of cultivated rolling hills, dotted with soft coloured 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 its vivid colour 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 are the perfect reward after a great day's cycling!

Highlights of the tour:

- ❖ Archaeological sites of Segesta, Mozia, Cave di Cusa and Selinunte
- ❖ Nature reserves of Zingaro (Scopella) and the mouth of the Belice River (Selinunte)
- ❖ Marsala salt-mining reserve and windmills
- ❖ A visit to a traditional wine-producing farm with wine tasting
- ❖ Wonderful scenery in the interior part of Sicily
- ❖ Nice country village and quiet roads
- ❖ Poggioreale ruins
- ❖ The Cathedral of Monreale with its wonderful golden mosaics

TOUR ITINERARY

DAY 1

Marsala - Cave di Cusa - Selinunte

70 km

Individual transfer to Marsala where you will collect your bikes. We will deliver the luggage to your accommodation in Selinunte during the day.

This hilly stage will lead you to the Archaeological site of Selinunte and will give you the chance to enter the inland of the Island. The cycle eases off, partly among a vineyard rich countryside partly along a coastal road. Enjoy a wine tasting of the famous Marsala wine, visit the largest fishing harbour of the Mediterranean sea in Mazzara del Vallo, then stop at the Cusa caves where you can see examples of columns still attached to the rocks. The day has a magical ending in Selinunte. The cluster of time-old columns against the setting sun is unforgettable. Night and supper in the surrounding area.

Level: On average demanding

DAY 2

Selinunte - Partanna - Contessa Entellina

65 km

Today's cycle will take you as far as the "Ruins of Poggioreale". The route will lead you into another part of Sicily without the sea as your landmark. The landscape is characterized by hills on which perch several ancient ruins. 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. From here you continue your journey towards Contessa Entellina where you spend the night.

Level: On average demanding and for the last 1.5 km that leads to the accommodation

DAY 3

Contessa Entellina - Piana Degli Albanesi/Ficuzza

62 km / 38.5 miles

Today you continue to explore the interior of Sicily where nature and history come together to give you a complete idea of the island. On today's cycle you pass through the small town of Corleone, famous for being the birthplace of many mafia bosses, both fictional and real. The route ends at your accommodation in a comfortable forest hotel, close to Palermo.

Level: Easy to Moderate

DAY 4

Piana Degli Albanesi - Monreale

35 km

This day will take you along the track of an ancient railway. You will cycle through the Conca d'Oro arriving in Monreale, a dazzling mixture of Arab, Byzantine and Norman influences. Monreale is world-renowned for its Cathedral "Santa Maria la Nuova". The beautiful mosaics in the Cathedral are said to be one of the world's largest displays of this art, covering 6,340 square metres of the interior surface of the duomo.

DAY 5 **Palermo - Scopello** **40 km**

Today is a long day: you'll leave Monreale by a private transfer which will bring you to the railstation in Palermo. The train will take you to Calatafimi-Segesta railstation and you start cycling from there to Scopello via Segesta.

The Archaeological site of Segesta is renowned for its amphitheatre and temple, one of the most iconic views of Sicily. Depending on your arrival time to Scopello, explore the nearby Zingaro Nature Reserve (accessible only on foot). 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 lifestyle and customs of the people that lived in the Park at the beginning of the twentieth century. You can also do this walk on the following morning before you leave Scopello.

DAY 6 **Scopello - Castellammare del Golfo - Segesta - Paceco/Trapani** **66 km / 40 miles**

The archaeological site of Segesta is one of the most important in Sicily. The site is renowned for the temple, one of the most representative images of tourism in Sicily. The tour takes you via this beautiful temple. After a visit to Segesta you cycle to a lovely 4 star hotel in Nubia, located close to Trapani.

From your accommodation it is easy to get to Erice, a nice medieval town, located at the top of a hill. You can reach the town by bike or by cable car if you wish to avoid the climb.

Level: Moderate

DAY 7 **Erice - Saline di Trapani - Marsala** **61 km**

This is a relaxing day's cycle! The road passes by the "Saline", where salt is extracted. Enjoy a wonderful view of fishing boats and wind mills in a very characteristic landscape. You have the option to take the 10 minutes boat ride to the island of Mozia with its ancient castle and palm trees. 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 visiting Mozia your cycle takes you to Marsala where it is possible to visit a renowned wine co-operative. You spend the night in the old centre of Marsala and can enjoy a meal of the freshest fish.

Level: Easy

DAY 8 **Tour end after breakfast**

We can organize transfer shuttle from Marsala to Palermo ARP for €45,00 per person (minimum 2 people).

ACCOMMODATION

DAY 1	Selinunte	Hotel Admeto ****
DAY 2	Contessa Entellina	Rocca dei Capperi Guesthouse ***
DAY 3	Ficuzza	Hotel Antica Stazione ***
DAY 4	Monreale	Hotel Carrubella ***
DAY 5	Scopello	Tenute Plaia Farm ****
DAY 6	Paceco	Relais Antiche Saline****
DAY 7	Marsala	Hotel Villa Favorita ***

Please note that the above accommodation is subject to availability.

TOUR DATE

April 24
May 15
September 25
October 23

TOUR PRICE

€1150 per person sharing
€1320 for single occupancy

WHAT DOES THE BROCHURE PRICE INCLUDE

- 7 nights accommodation
- 2 Dinners
- 24 speed touring Bike
- Set transfer from Palermo airport to the start in Scopello
- Guide with Support Van
- Luggage Transfer

WHAT TO BRING

- Cyclist shorts/long salopette (depending on the weather), helmet, gloves.
- Wind jacket, waterproof cap (both for rain and downhill stretches).
- High protection sun cream and after sun cream.
- Swimming costume
- Casual evening dressing

BIKE FITNESS

The bikes used for this tour are hybrid with aluminum frame, 24 speeds, Shimano equipped with rear racks.

On average demanding. Although this tour has a couple of longer days and some quite challenging hills it has been deliberately interspersed with transfers and easier, shorter days to keep it within reach of the reasonably fit cyclist. Please note that 85% of the cycling route is on asphalt roads and 15% are gravel roads.

BACK UP SERVICE

The maximum group size on this tour is sixteen people. There is a back-up van available to give you peace of mind and everyone will have their own route details so you can cycle at your own pace. It is recommended that you do some cycling beforehand to get the most out of your holiday.