NAT HAB
CULTURAL JOURNEYS

Vibrant Traditions & Personal Connections



Sicily: Crossroads of the Mediterranean

A Vibrant Collage of Cultures, Flavors & Traditions Through Time

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Trip Details:

Days
10 Days / Apr–Jun, Sep–Oct

Price
From $12995

Sicily: Crossroads of the Mediterranean

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Just off the toe of Italy's boot, Sicily has drawn visitors for centuries. Its central location in the Mediterranean made it a coveted target for trade and control, and a host of conquests—Carthaginian, Greek, Roman, Arab, Norman, Spanish and more—left their imprint, creating a multicultural melange. In the east, vineyards and olive groves flourish in the mineral-rich soil of Mount Etna, whose commanding profile dominates the island. Europe's most active volcano, it shapes Sicily's farms, wines and way of life with its primal presence. To the west, explore fishing towns, shimmering salt flats and coastal lagoons, and North African influences in Marsala. Sicily's greatest hallmark, though, is its people, renowned for their lively character and hospitality. On this intimate survey, meet Sicily like a local, as few visitors are fortunate to do.

Trip Highlights

Wine & Dine at Farms, Vineyards & Family Homes

Savor Sicily's famous food in private settings—lunch with wine pairings in a vineyard, dinner on an herb farm, olive oil tastings, and fresh fish by the sea

Experience Sicily's Vibrant, Richly Layered History

Centuries unfold as we explore ancient Greek temples, Baroque villages, colorful fishing ports, North African flavors and the little-visited Egadi Islands

Meet Sicily's Lively People Through Our Personal Connections

The very best of Sicily is its proud and hospitable residents, and we'll introduce you to its chefs, farmers, fishermen, winemakers, artisans and more



Sicily: Crossroads of the Mediterranean Itinerary

A Vibrant Collage of Cultures, Flavors & Traditions Through Time

Itinerary at a Glance

Day 1	Arrive in Sicily beneath the slopes of Mount Etna
Day 2	Explore Mount Etna's volcanic landscapes with an expert volcanologist
Day 3	Discover ancient Syracuse and the flavors of Sicily's east coast
Day 4	Noto's Baroque architecture, vineyards and culinary traditions
Day 5	Meet Sicilian artisans preserving centuries-old crafts in Ragusa and Modica
Day 6	Explore Agrigento's ancient Greek Valley of the Temples
Day 7	Experience Sicily's fishing traditions and North African culinary heritage
Day 8	Taste Marsala's culinary traditions and explore medieval Erice
Day 9	Favignana's tuna fishing heritage and Marsala's ancient salt pans
Day 10	Depart Sicily after your journey from Mount Etna to Marsala



Day 1

Arrive in Sicily beneath the slopes of Mount Etna

- Transfer from Catania to the countryside at the foot of Europe's highest active volcano
- Gather with your Expedition Leader and fellow travelers for a welcome dinner

Arrive at Catania Airport and transfer to our hotel in the countryside at the foot of Mount Etna. Rising above eastern Sicily, Europe's highest active volcano will be our setting for the first two nights. Tomorrow, we head onto its slopes with a volcanologist guide to see firsthand how repeated eruptions and rich, volcanic soil have shaped agriculture and village life on this part of the island. This evening, gather with our Expedition Leader and fellow guests for a welcome dinner.

Day 2

Explore Mount Etna's volcanic landscapes with an expert volcanologist

- Traverse lava fields, ancient craters and woodlands by 4x4 and on foot
- Learn how centuries of eruptions have transformed the landscape and enriched its agricultural soils
- Meet the owners of a family-run agriturismo for a seasonal lunch with local wine

Set out with an expert volcanologist guide to explore Mount Etna, one of the world's most active volcanoes. Travel partway by 4x4, then continue on foot through broad lava fields, old craters and woodlands shaped by centuries of eruptions. Some flows have buried roads and fields; elsewhere, vegetation has gradually returned to cover older lava. Our guide explains these cycles as we walk on the volcano's slopes to gain a vivid understanding of how it continually alters the terrain.

On Mount Etna's lower slopes, generations of farmers have worked this rich volcanic ground. Mineral-rich soils support vineyards, orchards and other crops, even as eruptions remain a fact of life here. On clear days, views extend across eastern Sicily to the Ionian coast. We descend to a family-run agriturismo for lunch, where we meet the owners and enjoy a seasonal meal accompanied by local wine. Back at our hotel this afternoon, there's some free time to relax before we drive to the nearby village of Castiglione for dinner at a local restaurant.

Day 3

Discover ancient Syracuse and the flavors of Sicily's east coast

- Admire an 11th-century Norman castle rising from a basalt cliff above the Ionian Sea
- Explore Ortigia, Syracuse's historic island center, where Greek ruins meet Baroque architecture
- Sample Sicilian specialties at a traditional delicatessen near Ortigia's bustling food market

Leaving Etna, we trace Sicily's east coast southward. Our first stop is Aci Castello, where an 11th-century Norman castle stands atop a high basalt cliff above the Ionian Sea. Its position reflects the strategic importance of this stretch of coastline to successive rulers of eastern Sicily. We stop in town for coffee and a walk before continuing to Syracuse. Founded by Greek settlers in the 8th century BC, Syracuse grew into one of the most powerful cities of the ancient Mediterranean world. Its historic center occupies the island of Ortigia, where Greek and Roman remains sit among later medieval and Baroque buildings. The famous food market is a colorful hub of activity, with vendors selling fresh-caught swordfish and sea urchins alongside shiny tomatoes, citrus, spices, cheeses and other Sicilian staples. An informal lunch offers a chance to taste local favorites at a traditional delicatessen. After free time to explore more of Ortigia independently, continue into southeastern Sicily and Ragusa Ibla, with dinner this evening at a local restaurant.

Day 4

Noto's Baroque architecture, vineyards and culinary traditions

- Walk Noto's UNESCO-listed streets lined with ornate limestone churches and palaces
- Visit a Nero d'Avola winery for a vineyard tour and lunch with wine pairings
- Discover traditional uses of Sicilian herbs at a working farm, then dine on dishes featuring its harvest

This morning we visit the enchanting small city of Noto, one of the UNESCO-listed Late Baroque Towns of the Val di Noto and a celebrated center of Sicilian Baroque architecture. When a devastating earthquake struck southeastern Sicily in 1693, destroying towns across the region and prompting a major rebuilding campaign, Noto was reconstructed in the Sicilian Baroque style, using the warm-hued local tufa limestone seen in the elaborate facades, balconies, churches and palaces along its broad central streets. In the fading light of late afternoon, the stone gleams gold in the setting sun's glow. On a guided walk, gain insight into Noto's celebrated architecture, then continue into the surrounding countryside to a winery specializing in Nero d'Avola. Walk among the vines and learn how the estate grows and produces Sicily's best-known red grape, followed by a lunch with wine pairings. Next, we visit a farm growing medicinal and aromatic herbs. As we walk through the gardens and fields, learn to identify plants cultivated for cooking and other practical uses, and hear how they have traditionally been used in Sicilian households. Dinner is served at the farm, incorporating herbs and plants grown here.

Day 5

Meet Sicilian artisans preserving centuries-old crafts in Ragusa and Modica

- Step inside a private workshop to see how traditional Sicilian carts are carved and painted
- Learn to make Modica's distinctive grainy chocolate with a master chocolatier
- Wander Modica's steep Baroque streets past ornate churches and limestone palaces

Spend the morning on foot in Ragusa Ibla, another Sicilian city profoundly altered by the 1693 earthquake. Its reconstruction produced the Baroque churches, palaces and stone streets we admire today. During our walk, step inside the atelier, or private workshop, of a traditional Sicilian cart master. The richly painted *carretto siciliano* served as practical transportation across the island well into the 20th century, while its carved and decorated panels developed into a distinctive form of folk art, with scenes depicting religious subjects, legendary heroes or episodes from Sicilian history. Alongside this artisan still practicing the craft, we get a close-up look at the workmanship and narrative imagery that make the carts living pieces of art.

Lunch is on your own to choose among the many inviting trattorias that line the streets. Then continue to Modica, famous for chocolate made here since the period of Spanish rule in the 16th and 17th centuries. The Spaniards, introduced to Aztec chocolate during their conquests in Mexico, brought the same processing methods to Modica to make *xocoatl*, produced by crushing cocoa beans on a stone to create a grainy, crumbly paste flavored with sugar, cinnamon, vanilla and sometimes chili. A maître chocolatier demonstrates the approach before we have our own chance to make and taste this centuries-old style of chocolate. Out the door, the Baroque streets of Modica await, and we climb narrow streets up the limestone slopes where ornate churches and palaces survey the landscape below. After free time to explore on your own, we return to Ragusa for dinner.

Day 6

Explore Agrigento's ancient Greek Valley of the Temples

- Visit a family-run olive estate for a private tour, extra-virgin olive oil tasting and farm lunch
- Walk among ancient Greek temples and monumental Doric columns with a local guide at Agrigento's UNESCO-listed archaeological site
- Spend the night at a restored 14th-century estate overlooking the archaeological site

Leaving Ragusa this morning, we travel along the west side of Sicily toward Agrigento. En route, stop at a family-run olive estate surrounded by mature groves. During a private visit, we learn how the family cultivates and harvests its trees, following the process from olives to oil, and discovering what producers look for in an extra-virgin olive oil. A tasting follows, plus a light farm lunch.

Continue to the UNESCO World Heritage Site of Agrigento, where we spend the afternoon with a local guide exploring the Valley of the Temples, one of the world's great surviving Greek archaeological sites. Founded by Greek settlers from Rhodes and Crete in 581 BC, the city known as Akragas was one of the most magnificent and influential centers in the Mediterranean. Set among almond and olive trees, remarkably well-preserved monuments include 11 massive Doric temples, one with all 34 columns still intact; three sacred sanctuaries, a necropolis, hydraulic works, the agora and more. After our tour, we head to our atmospheric hotel, a restored 14th-century estate overlooking the Valley of the Temples.

Day 7

Experience Sicily's fishing traditions and North African culinary heritage

- Meet local fishermen in Sciacca's working harbor to learn about traditional fishing techniques
- Learn how centuries of trade with North Africa influenced western Sicily's food traditions
- Prepare regional recipes in a private cooking class with a local chef at a restored Sicilian baglio

Continue west to Sciacca, a historic fishing port on Sicily's southwest coast where the harbor remains the working focus of the town. Only a narrow stretch of sea divides Sciacca from North Africa, and the town reflects the heritage of the Arabs who sailed across the Mediterranean in 840, along with earlier Greek and later Norman influences. Colorful buildings are stacked on the steep hillside above the sea, overlooking the fishing fleet that has long supported families and supplied local kitchens with blue fish, anchovies, sardines and mackerel. In the old quarter along the harbor, meet local fishermen who explain the techniques they use in these waters, and how the catch and conditions have changed over time. Get your own taste of the local seafood as we sit down for a traditional lunch overlooking the sea.

This afternoon, continue toward Marsala on Sicily's western tip. The region faces the Strait of Sicily, a narrow stretch separating Italy from North Africa, with just 140 miles between Marsala and Tunis. Centuries of movement across these waters have left a strong cultural and culinary overlap; in fact, Marsala is a city whose very name stems from the Arabic *Marsa Allah* (The Harbor of God). And while pasta is prolific in mainland Italy, couscous is a staple in Marsala, adopted from Tunisia. Cannoli likewise has North African roots, attributed to women of local harems who blended native ricotta with sugar cane and candied fruits introduced by Arab rulers.

Our destination outside the city is a restored *baglio,* a fortified farm building with thick stone walls that's set around a courtyard, which was a distinctive style of rural Sicilian architecture from the 16th to 19th centuries. Many baglios today, such as the one we are staying at for the next three nights, have been refurbished as agritourismos. Gardens and terraces offer panoramic views of the surrounding vineyards and Mediterranean Sea. In the evening, gather in the kitchen for a hands-on cooking class with a local chef. We'll prepare Sicilian recipes together, then sit down to dinner to feast on what we have made, accompanied by wines from the estate.

Day 8

Taste Marsala's culinary traditions and explore medieval Erice

- Compare three vintages of Marsala wine during a tasting in a historic cellar
- Learn to prepare traditional Sicilian couscous during lunch in a private home
- Ascend Mount Erice by cable car for panoramic views, then watch artisans at a Trapani ceramics workshop

Begin the day with a walking tour in Marsala's Old Town, tracing the legacy of Arab rule in western Sicily and the city's long connections with North Africa. Then we enter a historic wine cellar to learn about the fortified wine also called Marsala, named for the city where it is produced. We'll follow the aging process in the cellar and taste three vintages side by side, comparing how additional time changes the wine's flavor. Next, a special lunch is in store as we are welcomed into a private home. Our host demonstrates how to make Sicilian couscous, especially popular in this region where centuries of maritime travel and commerce brought this dish of steamed semolina granules to Sicily from Berber cultures across the channel.

A short drive north, Trapani and environs are our focus this afternoon. Overlooking two seas, the Tyrrhenian and the Mediterranean, and the Egadi Islands, Trapani sits at the foot of Mount Erice, which we ascend via cable car. From its 2,464-foot summit, get a 360° view of the ocean and surrounding landscapes, including the sprawling salt pans where sea salt has been extracted since Phoenician and Roman times. At the top of the mountain is the well-preserved medieval town of Erice. We wander among its stone lanes, medieval churches, castle ruins and fortified walls while learning about the Elymian, Phoenician, Arab and Norman influences on this strategically placed settlement. We'll also visit a ceramics workshop in Trapani, the most famous location in Sicily for the classic blue, green and yellow pieces, to watch artisans at work and perhaps pick up a bowl or platter to take home. At the end of a full day, return to Baglio Donna Franca for dinner and another night.

Day 9

Favignana's tuna fishing heritage and Marsala's ancient salt pans

- Ferry to Favignana to learn about its historic tuna fishery and the families who depended on it
- Visit Marsala's centuries-old salt pans to see traditional harvesting methods and historic windmills
- Enjoy a farewell dinner overlooking the lagoon as the sun sets

Cross by ferry this morning from Trapani to Favignana, largest of the Egadi Islands, famous for its rocky limestone coves and crystal-clear turquoise waters as well as ancient tufa stone quarrying and its historically famous bluefin tuna industry. Using the *mattanza*, an ancient Phoenician-derived trap-net technique, Atlantic tuna migrating into the Mediterranean were guided through a series of underwater net chambers into a final enclosure, as fishermen sang a rhythmic, Arab-derived chant as they harpooned the captured fish. In the late 19th century, the Florio family invested heavily in the fishery and processing industry, transforming Favignana's economy as it established the Tonnara, one of Europe's largest tuna-canning plants. Sadly, due to severe overfishing of Mediterranean bluefin tuna stocks, the last traditional mattanza in Favignana took place in 2007**.** With a local expert, walk through the historic center and visit places associated with the former Tonnara as we learn about the traditional fishermen, processing workers and families whose livelihoods depended on tuna. At a family-run shop, taste tuna products still prepared locally.

Following lunch and free time in town, return by ferry to the mainland and our hotel. Early this evening, we visit Marsala's ancient salt pans, observing a windmill to see how seawater is moved through a succession of shallow evaporation basins before the salt is harvested. The Phoenicians established the first saltworks here almost 3,000 years ago, with the first commercial production happening in the mid-16th century. Traditional manual harvesting still takes place each summer, and we savor a tasting at the end of our tour. As the sun lowers, the geometric pools reflect the golden light, with the windmills rising above the lagoon to create a photogenic subject. Our farewell dinner is served nearby, overlooking the water at sunset.

Day 10

Depart Sicily after your journey from Mount Etna to Marsala

- Transfer from the Marsala countryside to Palermo Airport for homeward flights

After breakfast, depart the Marsala countryside and transfer to Palermo Airport for flights home.

Ready to Book? Call an Adventure Specialist at 800-543-8917



Sicily: Crossroads of the Mediterranean Accommodations

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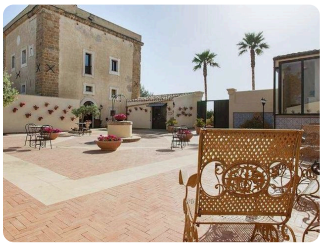
Cavanera Etnea Resort

On Mount Etna's slopes, this terraced vineyard estate on a restored Sicilian farm features a swimming pool and traditional *palmento*—a winemaking structure with a gravity-fed lava-rock cellar.



Villa del Lauro Boutique Hotel

Once home to 18th-century nobility, this boutique hotel in Ragusa's center features frescoed halls, original stonework, round vaulted ceilings and a swimming pool in a secluded Mediterranean garden.



Foresteria Baglio della Luna

Overlooking UNESCO-listed Valley of the Temples, this restored 13th-century fortified estate features a medieval coastal watchtower, frescoed guest rooms, a walled courtyard, and dining terraces with striking views.



Baglio Donna Franca

In the Sicilian countryside, this restored 19th-century farm and working vineyard overlooks an island-filled coastal lagoon and features estate-grown ingredients and an infinity pool with sweeping Mediterranean views.

For detailed descriptions, visit nathab.com/cultural-journeys/sicily-food-wine-heritage-tour/accommodations.

What Makes Cultural Journeys Different?

Sicily: Crossroads of the Mediterranean

1 **Go Beyond the Monuments with Our Personal Introductions**

While we visit many of Sicily's important historic sites, some of the most meaningful moments happen in unexpected settings: the atelier of a Sicilian cart master, a family home in Marsala, a fishermen's quarter in Sciacca, and a locally run workshop on Favignana. Instead of hearing only about traditions from a guide, we meet people who still practice them and speak to us from their own experience.

2 **A Small Group Allows Exclusive Access**

With a group capped at no more than 12 travelers, we're able to enjoy home-hosted meals, close observation in artisan workshops and personal conversations with working fishermen. We can gather around a chocolatier's worktable in Modica and sit together over lunch in a Marsala home. These are spaces designed for intimate interactions, which are not possible on bus tours.

3 **Relax with Longer Stays at Fewer Bases**

Rather than moving from place to place each day, we spend three nights in Ragusa Ibla and another three in the Marsala countryside. From Ragusa, we visit Noto and Modica while returning to the same hotel between outings. In western Sicily, one base puts us within reach of Marsala, Erice, Favignana and the salt pans without changing rooms each night.

4 **Our Expedition Leader Connects Sicily's Many Histories**

Our itinerary passes through terrain influenced by Greek, Arab, Norman and Spanish conquests over millennia, often layered in the same town. Our knowledgeable Expedition Leader, an expert on Sicilian history and culture, connects what we see in architecture with food, crafts and local customs. Local specialist guides add depth where it matters most.

5 **Experience Sicily's Legendary Culinary Traditions**

Dining in Sicily is deeply intertwined with its rich cultural heritage. In Ortigia's famous market, stalls are heaped with fruit, cheese, spices and fresh fish. Modica's chocolate dates back more than 300 years to Spanish rule, with processing rooted in Aztec traditions. Couscous in Marsala reflects exchange with North Africa, while Marsala wine became an industry identified with the city itself. Taste these foods and many others as we learn how and why they were established here.

6 **Explore Western Sicily's Coastal Heritage Through Its People**

From the fishing boat harbor at Sciacca to Favignana's tuna industry in the Egadi Islands and the ancient salt pans of Marsala, these settings put us in touch with local people whose livelihoods have relied on the sea for centuries. Meet individuals who share history and contemporary practices, deepening our appreciation for their influence on Sicily's identity.



Dates & Pricing Summary:

Price
From $12995

Group Size
Limited to 12 Travelers

Sicily: Crossroads of the Mediterranean Dates, Pricing & Info

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2028 Departures

Departure – Return	Pricing	Notes
Dates not confirmed for 2028		
Apr 30 - May 9, 2028	**$12995**	
May 7 - May 16, 2028	**$12995**	
May 21 - May 30, 2028	**$12995**	
Jun 4 - Jun 13, 2028	**$12995**	
Jun 18 - Jun 27, 2028	**$12995**	
Sep 1 - Sep 10, 2028	**$12995**	
Sep 12 - Sep 21, 2028	**$12995**	
Sep 24 - Oct 3, 2028	**$12995**	
Oct 8 - Oct 17, 2028	**$12995**	

2029 Departures

Departure – Return	Pricing	Notes
Prices and dates not confirmed for 2029		
Apr 30 - May 9, 2029	**From $12995**	
May 7 - May 16, 2029	**From $12995**	
May 21 - May 30, 2029	**From $12995**	
Jun 4 - Jun 13, 2029	**From $12995**	
Jun 18 - Jun 27, 2029	**From $12995**	
Sep 1 - Sep 10, 2029	**From $12995**	
Sep 12 - Sep 21, 2029	**From $12995**	
Sep 24 - Oct 3, 2029	**From $12995**	
Oct 8 - Oct 17, 2029	**From $12995**	

See https://www.nathab.com/cultural-journeys/sicily-food-wine-heritage-tour/dates-fees for the latest pricing details.

Included

Trip price includes: Accommodations as specified in the itinerary, services of Nat Hab's professional Expedition Leader and local specialist guides, private transportation throughout the itinerary, round-trip funicular tickets to Erice, round-trip ferry transportation to Favignana, all scheduled activities, experiences and entrance fees, meals as specified in the itinerary, wine and other beverages with select included meals and tastings, gratuities for hotel staff, restaurant staff and local drivers, and applicable parking and access fees.

Not Included

Not included: Travel to and from the start and end point of your trip, meals and beverages not specified in the itinerary, gratuities for your Expedition Leader and licensed guides, optional activities, some alcoholic drinks, items of a personal nature.

Important Information About This Trip

This itinerary crosses Sicily from east to west, with several overland travel days connecting Mount Etna, southeastern Sicily, Agrigento and the Marsala region. Driving is an important part of the journey, allowing us to link smaller towns, rural estates and coastal communities that would be difficult to combine by other means.

- Some days include longer drives, particularly as we travel between regions, though these are broken up with visits and meals along the way.
- Traveling overland allows us to stop in places such as Aci Castello, the countryside around Noto, a family-run olive estate and the fishing port of Sciacca rather than simply moving between Sicily's larger cities.
- Sicily's historic towns are best explored on foot. Expect walking on cobblestone and stone streets, stairs, slopes and uneven surfaces in places such as Ortigia, Ragusa Ibla, Modica and Erice.

- Our Mount Etna excursion includes travel by 4x4 followed by walking on volcanic terrain. The exact route may vary according to volcanic activity, weather and local access conditions.
- The Etna excursion is the trip's significant change in elevation. Cavanera Etnea sits at approximately 2,000 feet, while the excursion may reach considerably higher elevations depending on the route selected. The remainder of the itinerary is primarily at low elevation.
- Travel to Favignana is by public ferry from Trapani, and the crossing and island program may be affected by sea and weather conditions.

Mandatory Insurance

Since the areas we travel to are remote and wild (that's why we go there!), we require that all guests have, at minimum, medical evacuation insurance for this program. This is for the safety of all guests. We require that your chosen independent insurance plan includes at least $250,000 in medical evacuation coverage.

To protect your investment and to provide peace of mind while you travel, we also strongly recommend purchasing comprehensive travel insurance. Plans may cover everything from medical treatment to trip cancellations and delays and lost luggage. Please contact our office if you would like more information about the medical evacuation and comprehensive travel insurance policies we offer by calling 800-543-8917.

Getting There & Getting Home

This trip begins in Catania, Sicily, and ends in Palermo, Sicily. You must arrive at Catania–Fontanarossa Airport no later than 10 am on Day 1 in order to join the group transfer to Cavanera Etnea Resort on the slopes of Mount Etna.

Because many international itineraries require a connection elsewhere in Europe, we recommend arriving in Catania prior to Day 1 to allow for flight delays or missed connections. For guests who arrive early, recommended hotels and transfer information will be included in your pre-departure materials.

If you plan to arrive on Day 1, please ensure your flight lands by the required time so you can join the scheduled group transfer and arrive in time for the welcome gathering and dinner.

You may depart from Palermo Airport on flights scheduled after 11 am on Day 10. The itinerary includes a morning transfer from the Marsala countryside to Palermo Airport.

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CULTURAL JOURNEYS

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