

# SICILIAN EXPERIENCE

## NO. 3

3 days  
2 nights

## PALERMO



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Explore • Experience • Expand



## 1st day

### Morning

Arrival at “Falcone e Borsellino” airport. Transfer to Grand Hotel Villa Igia Mgallery By Sofitel and check in.

Perched on a shallow cliff in Sicily overlooking the Sea of Palermo is Villa Igia, a world-class hotel reminiscent of a small castle. The villa, restored

by renowned Art Nouveau architect Ernesto Basile at the end of the 19th century for the Florio family, still has its original frescoes, decoration and furniture and is sure to charm anyone who visits. The rooms and the suites are beautifully appointed and offer large, modern bathrooms, direct-dial phones, mini-bars and Individually controlled air conditioning.



PALERMO – Grand Hotel Villa Igia Mgallery By Sofitel

### 13:00

Welcome Drink and buffet lunch at Grand Hotel Villa Igia

### 15:00

Departure by bus for an orientation tour including Palermo Cathedral

The Cathedral is characterized by the presence of different styles, due to a long history of additions, alterations and restorations, the last of which occurred in the 18th century. It is located in Corso Vittorio Emanuele. The church was erected in 1185 by

Walter Ophamil (or Walter of the Mill), the Anglo-Norman archbishop of Palermo and King William II's minister, on the area of an earlier Byzantine basilica.

### 16:00

Visit of Teatro Massimo (opera house).

The largest theatre in Italy and the third largest opera house in Europe was built between 1874 and 1897. The Architect Giovanni Battista Basile was inspired by ancient and classical Sicilian architecture and, thus, the





PALERMO – Teatro Massimo

exterior was designed in the high neoclassical style incorporating elements of the Greek temples. Realized in the late-Renaissance style, the auditorium was planned for 3.000 people, but, in its current format, has 1.350 seats.

### 16:45

Visit to Mimmo Cuticchio's Puppet laboratory

Acknowledging the demise of the traditional Opera dei Pupi and at the same time seeking to validate its presence in contemporary theater in 1989, the puppeteer and "cuntista" Mimmo Cuticchio began creatively combining puppets and actors (initially himself and his son) in the same performance. Cuticchio's experimental puppet

theater for a contemporary cultured public has received critical acclaim and international recognition. Nevertheless, he performs abroad more than in Sicily, a fact that prevents one from espousing a facile optimism with regards to the future of this art form.

### 17:15

Departure to Palazzo Gangi where the movie "Il Gattopardo" was shot by Luchino Visconti

In the mid-18th century, the prince and princess of Gangi, Pietro and Marianna Valguarnera (ancestors of the present owners), commissioned the most famous artists in Sicily to transform their 15th century home into a showpiece of splendour and elegance.

In 1963, Luchino Visconti decided to film the magnificent ballroom scene of “Il Gattopardo” here, in the Hall of Mirrors, described by Louis Bertrand, “a vast room ... Rococo style: a masterpiece of Baroque design with golden fittings and doors entirely painted ... with fresh flowers ... The ceiling is hung, like a forest of stalactites, with splendid Murano chandeliers, the like of that I have never seen before”.



PALERMO – Palazzo Gangi

**19:00**

Departure by bus the Kalsa district.

This is Palermo’s Arabic quarter, built close to the sea in an era of people’s riots, in order to allow the Emir to escape in event of revolt. In ancient times it was home to the Arabs’ entire military contingent when they ruled the city, their administrative and political offices, and also their prisons. It was named “al-halisah” that means “the elected one” in Arabic. Today it is a working-class area of the city, extremely picturesque, where it is still possible to capture a feel of the ancient Arabic-Sicilian culture and

often smell the strong aromas of the food that is prepared in the several kiosks along the streets.

**19:15**

Visit of Lo Spasimo

A former Olivetan monastery, the name Santa Maria dello Spasimo comes from Raphael’s homonym painting commissioned by a benefactor devoted to the “Virgin Dolorosa”.

The monumental structure dates back to 1509. It changes identity continuously in its five centuries long life: at first church then theatre, from lazaret to warehouse and again hospital and, in recent time open theatre, to become, since 1997, artistic centre where talents of the “Brass Group”, the “European Orchestra Jazz School”, flourish, mature and perform. Moreover, many famous international artists choose the Spasimo as perfect natural scenography for their show.

**19:45**

Welcome drink and visit of Museo delle Marionette, with live show of Sicilian Puppets

Founded in 1975, the International Puppets Museum Antonio Pasqualino was constantly inspired by the principles of modern museum and modern theatre. The museum hosts a collection of 3.500 pieces from all around the world. On the occasion a master of puppets, Mr Enzo Mancuso, will perform a brief show of Sicilian Puppets.



**20:30**

Buffet Dinner at the Ditirammu Theatre with a Sicilian ethno-performance



Ditirammu theatre is a classical example of “popular theatre” based on the old Sicilian folkloristic traditions.

**22:30**

On request possibility to enjoy an after dinner at Kursaal Kalhesa

**23:30**

Back to the hotel

## 2nd day

**09:00**

Departure by bus to the colorful Mercato del Capo. It is also an ideal site for team building and cooking lessons. Short visit of the beautiful Immacolata Concezione Church.

The market is one of the oldest in Europe, with a varied cultural history, melding both Romanesque, Norman and Saracen historical influences into a market that remarkably stands to this day. A tribute to Sicily's Arabian past, this narrow, tent lined street, resembles those one might find in North Africa or the Middle East.

**10:00**

Transfer by bus to Monreale

**10:30**

Visit of Monreale Cathedral and Cloister - exclusive organ performance. Short visit to the nearby Palazzo Guglielmo

Monreale Cathedral. The amazing, harmonious mix of architectural



PALERMO – Monreale Cathedral Cloister



styles, Byzantine, Arabic and Romanesque, that are combined in the Monreale Cathedral is one of the greatest works from the Sicilian Middle Ages. The cathedral is one of the most charming expressions of this mix of styles and cultures that is characteristic of the whole of Sicily. The construction of the Duomo in Monreale, located on the top of a hill about 10 km from Palermo, began in 1174 according to the wishes of the Norman king William II who, so the story goes, had been visited in a dream by the Virgin Mary. The Cloister. Except for some foundations and external walls, the cloister court is the only part of the monastery standing today. Its plan is a perfect square, measuring forty-seven metres on each side, enclosing a covered walkway. There are 228 columns; carved into the capitals of the columns are all manner of Biblical figures, mythological scenes, heraldic elements, Arab warriors and Norman knights, as well as floral motifs and fauna.

#### **12:15**

Private visit to Villa Tasca, with wine tasting of the famous Tasca d'Almerita wines

Villa Tasca is a sophisticated old world mansion. The interiors boasts 18th century frescoes and breathtaking decoration, including a fantastic and very precious majolica tiled floor from early 1900. The villa occupies a 24-acre park that features winding paths, an enchanted pond with swans, a neoclassical gazebo

and a wide variety of exotic plants. It represents a remarkable and unique blend of Sicilian history.

#### **13:15**

Buffet lunch at Grand Hotel et Des Palmes

Built in 1856, the hotel was founded in 1874. It was originally the home of the aristocratic Ingham-Withaker family and was linked by an underground passage to a nearby Anglican chapel. Richard Wagner and his wife Cosima Liszt were guests since the 5th of November 1881, and the armchair where the great composer sat while he wrote his opera "Parsifal" is still conserved in the hotel.

#### **15:00**

Departure for the tour "Villas and Palaces of Palermo" including:

#### **15:15**

Visit to Palazzo dei Normanni and Cappella Palatina

The Norman Palace was the seat of the Kings of Sicily. It was started in the 9th century by the Emir of Palermo and extended in the 12th century by Roger II and other Norman kings. It contains the Cappella Palatina, by far the best example of the so-called Arab-Norman-Byzantine style that prevailed in the 12th-century Sicily. The wonderful mosaics, the wooden roof, elaborately fretted and painted, and the marble incrustation of the lower part of the walls and the floor are very fine. Of the palace itself the greater





PALERMO – Norman Palace (Palazzo dei Normanni), view from the famous red domes of the Church of St. John of the Hermits (San Giovanni degli Eremiti)

part was rebuilt and added in Spanish times, but there are some other parts of Roger's work left, specially the hall called Sala Normanna. Since 1946 the palace hosted the Sicilian Regional Assembly.

### **16:30**

Visit to Sant'Anna Monumental Complex, now hosting the Modern Art-Gallery, a possible venue for special events.

Located in the heart of the old city centre, the Sant'Anna alla Misericordia complex is made up of the former Franciscan convent of the Chiesa di Sant'Anna, one of Palermo's most spectacular baroque churches. The Museum is distributed on 3 floors, with an overall internal and external floor area of some 4700 m<sup>2</sup>.

### **17:30**

Visit to Palazzo Butera

Palazzo Butera was erected by Don Giuseppe Branciforte, count of Raccujua in 1658. The palace however was expanded and transformed in 1769 by Salvatore Branciforte, prince of Butera. He is credited with the project and realization of the road Palermo-Messina. This palace has been heavily restored. Its main entrance is in Via Butera, although its main front overlooks the sea.

### **18:00**

Return to the hotel

### **20:00**

Drinks, Gala Dinner and live show at Villa Igiea.



## 3rd day

**09:00**

Departure by bus to the marvellous bay of Mondello

This is commonly known as Palermo's beach, famous for its elegant Liberty-style villas, its white sand and its crystal-clear water.

**10:30**

Visit to Botanical Garden

This wonderful, charming garden was laid out at the end of the eighteenth century and is still one of the largest, most important gardens in Europe today. The Orto Botanico in Palermo stands on about eleven hectares and it is possible to see plants from all over the world, including some very rare, valuable ones. The gardens contain 12.000 vegetable species, including tropical,

aquatic, medicinal and carnivorous plants, and many others too. The giant species of ficus magnolioides are not to be missed.

**11:45**

Visit to Martorana Church

Saint Mary of the Admiral is its official name. This church was built in 1143 at the behest of George of Antioch, who was a famous Admiral during the reign of King Roger II. The Martorana's original Norman Arab construction was unfortunately altered in the 17th century . The main nave and a good part of the mosaics were torn down and replaced with Baroque construction and frescoes.

**12:30**

Light lunch in the city centre. After lunch Departure to Palermo airport.



PALERMO – Mondello beach in spring time