**The best of SICILY - Palermo, San Vito Lo Capo, Erice, Trapani, Segesta, Marsala, Agrigento, Ragusa, Modica, Noto, Siracusa, Etna, Catania, Taormina – Messina, Tindari, Capo D’Orlando, Bronte, Cefalu, Palermo.**

**1ST DAY  -        PALERMO**

**Arrive Palermo, transfer from airport to hotel.**

**2ND DAY -       PALERMO**

**Full day city tour. Highlights: Royal Palace, Palatina Chapel, San Giovanni Delhi Eremiti Church, Zisa Palace, Monreale Cloister, Politeama Theatre, Jesus Church.**

**3RD DAY -    PALERMO**

**FULL DAY TOUR SAN VITO LO CAPO, ERICE AND TRAPANI**

**The Trapani Coast, one of the most impressive in Italy, comprises very valuable naturalistic spots, particularly the Gulf of Castellamare, with its seafront full of cliffs and stacks alternating with beautiful beaches. Part of this enchanting scenery is San Vito Lo Capo, with its white beaches and waters of the most brilliant hues.**

**In proximity with Trapani, the particularly breathtaking landscapes are composed of saline banks from which windmills arise. This is certainly one of the most important humid coastal zones, protected by the Trapani and Paceco Saline Natural Reserve.**

**Trapani Province is particularly renowned for the extraordinary cultural heritage spread all over its territory, as in the city of Erice and the Island of Mothia. The City of Trapani boasts its historic center and several splendid monuments dating to different epochs, a unique and fascinating collection.**

**4TH DAY – SEGESTA, MARSALA, AGRIGENTO**

**09:00 a.m. – Depart Palermo, visit Segesta - the old city is located on Mount Barbaro, in the municipality of Calatafimi Segesta, about ten kilometers from Alcamo and Castellammare del Golfo. Of particular beauty are the temple in Doric style, the theater, partly carved into the rock of the hill.**

**Visit MARSALA - internationally famous for wine. Its inhabitants, however, while being extremely proud of their amber nectar, are equally enthusiastic about their town’s long illustrious history.**

**Today, Marsala is a pleasant, relaxed place to visit and the lovely, recently restored, mainly Baroque old town centre is pedestrian friendly and easy to walk round. There are, however, other things of interest, including the aforementioned Cathedral, the “Baglio Anselmi” Archaeological Museum, complete with a Phoenician boat from the First Punic War and, nearby, the saltpans and nature reserve of Il Stagnone and the fascinating Phoenician island of Mozia. Arrive AGRIGENTO at 6:00 p.m. Overnight Hotel.**

**5TH DAY   -     AGRIGENTO**

**Meet guide and visit the Temple Valley for 2 hours. 1 hour free time for lunch (on your own)**

**At 2:30 p.m. depart from Agrigento to Piazza Armerina arriving 4:30 p.m. Meet guide and visit Villa del Casale for 2 hours. At 6:30 p.m. depart from Piazza Armerina to Ragusa 8:30 p.m. overnight Hotel.**

**6TH DAY           RAGUSA**

**FULL DAY TOUR RAGUSA AND  MODICA**

**Ragusa is divided into the newer Ragusa Superior and the older Ragusa Ibla. Ibla is a spectacular mix of narrow streets, steep winding steps, old churches, and fantastic views. In 1693 Ragusa was hit by a terrible earthquake that destroyed most of the town. When the ragusan had to decide where to rebuild their town they split into two groups. The San Giorgians (the nobles) that stayed in Ibla rebuilt the old town and the magnificent Duomo di San Giorgio, and the working class that moved onto the new site of Ragusa and built the Cathedral of San Giovanni and the new city. The old church of San Giorgio (XIV) was badly damaged and most of its stones were used to build the new Duomo (XVIII), only the Portal of the ancient church was spared by the earthquake and reconstruction. Ragusa is the capital of its province. Since 2002 it is part of the UNESCO World Heritage with 18 buildings in Ragusa on the list.**

**Modica, like the other towns in the Val di Noto, was badly damaged in the 1693 earthquake and largely rebuilt in Sicilian Baroque style. It is divided into two parts, “higher” Modica and “lower” Modica, which are connected by numerous flights of steps. Palazzi and houses rise from the bottom of the gorge seemingly stacked one on top of the other. Magnificent churches, with their inspiring domes, bell towers and intricate facades, punctuate the red-tiled roofs and one is struck by the uniform beauty of the whole. The centerpiece is undoubtedly the beautiful Church of San Giorgio, though the “Castello dei Conti”, surveying the town from atop a rocky outcrop, is also very impressive. Modica is custodian of a 400 year tradition of Sicilian chocolate-making. Being part of the Spanish kingdom for so many years meant that Sicily was often one of the first recipients of the new foodstuffs being brought back from South America. Cacao was one of these and today Modica still specializes in making granulous chocolate, often flavoured with chilli pepper, cinnamon or vanilla, that is based on Aztec methods and recipes. Chocolate shops abound and, for the real chocoholic, it is sometimes possible to watch the “chocolatiers” at work.**

**7TH DAY - NOTO, SIRACUSA**

**09:00 a.m. Depart from Ragusa to Noto arriving 10:30 a.m. Meet with guide and city tour 2 hours.**

**Situated in the south-eastern corner of Sicily, Noto is famous for its Baroque architecture, and since 2002 it has been part of the UNESCO World Heritage Site 'Late Baroque Towns of the Val di Noto'. Generally listed as one of the 'must-see' tourist attractions of this part of Sicily, Noto is a pleasant and attractive little town, with a historic centre that is composed almost entirely of crumbling Baroque palaces, churches and houses. The town's striking architectural coherence is due to the major earthquake that struck Sicily in 1693. The old town of Noto was almost completely destroyed, and it was decided to to reconstruct a splendid new town several miles away. Thus Noto was rebuilt on its present site, carefully designed for functionality and architectural harmony. The principal tourist activity in Noto is simply a wander around the narrow streets, admiring the golden-coloured stone buildings, the fantastical facades and balconies. Noto Cathedral is a Roman Catholic cathedral in Noto in Sicily, Italy. Its construction, in the style of the Sicilian Baroque, began in the early 18th century and was completed in 1776. It is dedicated to Saint Nicholas of Myra, and has been the cathedral of the Diocese of Noto since the diocese's establishment in 1844. The cathedral collapsed in 1996 as a result of unremedied structural weakening caused by an earthquake in 1990, to which injudicious building alterations in the 1950s may have contributed. It has since been rebuilt, and reopened in 2007.**

**12:30 p.m. Depart from Noto to Siracusa arriving 1:15 p.m. Check-in at hotel Antico de La Roma 4\* or similar and free time for lunch. 3:00 p.m. meet guide at hotel for Siracusa City tour: visit the Archeological area, Aretusa Fountain, and Ortigia Isle.**

**Siracusa (Syracuse) is a window into the ancient history of the Mediterranean and Europe. Its vast archeological site, on the edge of the modern city, is a rare treasure of temples, amphitheatres and an ancient castle. The island of Ortygia - a labyrinth of charming ancient and medieval streets - makes for a delightful holiday of sightseeing and shopping. This was a center of Greek, Byzantine and Judaic civilization. Physical evidence of these three cultures can still be seen today, making Ortygia a fascinating place to visit for anybody curious about the historic patrimony we have inherited from classical mythology, early Christianity and medieval Judaism. Its older residential quarter is an island, Ortigia (or Ortygia), from the Greek for quail, probably named for that bird's abundance in this area. Ortygia is known for, among many other things, the freshwater Spring of Arethusa. In the Neapolis Archeological Park on the Terminite Hill a clear distinction can be made between the Greek and Roman structures. Siracusa has a large Greek amphitheatre (literally carved out of the rock) and also a Roman one, both well preserved. In conformity to tradition, the Greek Theatre is semicircular and open, the Roman one oval and enclosed. This archeological park has some charming surprises, such as the Altar of Geron II and the Ear of Dionysius, formerly a limestone quarry. Overnight in Siracusa.**

**8TH DAY – Siracusa / Etna - CATANIA**

**09:00 a.m. depart from Siracusa to Etna, arrive Etna 11:30 a.m.**

**Visit Mount Etna until the top approximately 2 hours. 1 hour free time for lunch on your own.**

**2:30 p.m. depart from Etna to Catania arriving 4:00 p.m.**

**Meet guide and city tour 3 hours. Visit: Via Dei Crociferi, St. Agata Cathedral, Elefante Palace, Biscari Palace, Toscano Palace, Bellini Garden.**

**Catania is also well known for its particular baroque architecture and urban design (the downtown area is a World Heritage Site, along with all the Val di Noto), consequences of the great earthquake of 1693 after which the city had to be rebuilt, like most of eastern Sicily. The baroque Piazza del Duomo is attractive, lively and contains the Elephant Fountain - the symbol of the city and the entrance to the elegant via Etnea, the main shopping street. The adjacent Norman Cathedral (Duomo) is imposing and worth a visit. Via Etnea - the main shopping avenue, running North from the Piazza del Duomo has most of the city's imposing building and is busy throughout the day and evening. Lots of churches. This road is the equivalent of Las Ramblas in Barcelona, so in the evenings the local people put on their Sunday clothes and walk at a relaxed pace along this avenue. Palazzo Biscari, the most beautiful baroque palace of Catania. The Villa Bellini, a great urban park of the 19th century. Overnight in Catania.**

**9TH DAY   - CATANIA**

**DEPARTURE AT 09:00 FROM CATANIA,TRIP THROUGH THE RIVIERA DEI CICLOPI (CYCLOPS COAST) AND ARRIVE TIN TAORMINA AT 12:00 APPROX. – FREE TIME FOR LUNCH (ON CLTS OWN) MEETING WITH THE GUIDE AT 15:00 AND 2 HRS CITY TOUR.**

**The North Coast was literally drawn by Etna, with its lava flows created in the rocks centuries with twisted shapes and steep cliffs to guard coves with clear water. The extending between Aci Castello and Acireale is the Cyclops Coast, suggestive name under which they tied some of the most famous Homeric myths which attributes the birth of 8 spectacular cliffs of the Cyclops Polyphemus that blind off these rocks from Etna and hurled Odysseus and his companions escape from the Cyclops.**

**Taormina 'the Mediterranean Pearl', is sited on a natural terrace sheer above the sea.**

**The Greek theatre is one of the most suggestive spots, sited on a fantastic position and dipped into the blooming nature of this land. It is hard to say if the audience, today as well as at that time, attend the performances without sustaining the fascination of the wonderful view that it is possible to admire from the ancient stalls. The view goes straight across the sea and reaches the Calabria coasts, the town of Siracusa and the Etna's peak. Overnight in Taormina Caparena Hotel 4\* or similar.**

**10TH DAY   - TAORMINA**

**FULL DAY TOUR OF MESSINA (2 HRS), TINDARI, CAPO D’ORLANDO AND BRONTE.**

**Messina sits across the Strait of Messina, that divides the Region of Calabria from the Island of Sicily. Mother Nature has created a masterpiece here, painting the gorgeous sea into its background.**

**Nature also one of this area's biggest highlights, extraordinary under a limpid sky and sitting above marine depths where another world waits to be explored. So much like a kaleidoscope of hues, the sea changes from nocturnal blue to crystalline defined by slight blue veins.**

**As in the past, Messina is the main portal to Sicily. Greeks, Romans, Byzantines, Arabs, Normans and Swabians landed on its coasts and had a heavy influence on culture here and throughout the Island.**

**By exploring the small provincial towns as Tindari, Bronte or Capo D’Orlando, one can discover precious works of art in its churches and palaces, and important traces of great and faraway civilizations. Overnight Taormina.**

**11TH DAY - TAORMINA to CEFALU for visit and off to PALERMO**

**Built in the times of the Norman king Federico II, the cathedral of Cefalu is similar to the Duomo of Monreale. The two imposing towers are enhanced by lancet windows and blind windows in the Arabian style. On the parvis we can admire the elegant balustered stairway, the statues and the details of the facade.**

**12TH   - October 07                 PALERMO**

**Transfer to airport for return flight.**