



SICILY

**A LAND WHERE
TOURISM AND ARCHAEOLOGY
LIVE IN HARMONY**

Introduction

The geographical position of the island acts as a bridge between Europe and Africa. It is, according to historians, the explanation of the historical and cultural events of which Sicily was in its past protagonist. The vastness, the climate and the diversity of the land, meant that man came to the island 300,000 years ago for these benefits. Of that era still existing today visible traces in the elegant paintings in the caves of the Genovese in Levanzo and Egadi, or in the prehistoric cave of Addaura, at the foot of Monte Pellegrino in Palermo, while the art of navigation has been around since the prehistoric age and is outlined by graffiti in the cave dell'Uzzo in Castellammare (Trapani). From the Neolithic period onwards, the signs of history have remained indelible characters on stones, ceramics, in cities and in the necropolises, the first to document human activities from hunting, fishing, agriculture until the construction of metal weapons. A journey through time between Elimi, Siculi, Sicani, Phoenicians, Morgeti, Greeks, Romans...



“La Grotta del Genovese”, located along the west coast of the island of Levanzo, in the archipelago of the Egadi, in an area of breathtaking views which testifies to the earliest human settlements dating back to about eleven thousand years ago. The graffiti of the late Paleolithic and Neolithic period cave paintings depict deer, horses, cattle, fish and human figures.





3⁵ km from the town of Sortino, in the Syracuse area, opens Pantalica still intact, the vast necropolis consists of more than 5000 rock-cut caves, between the thirteenth and the eighth century AC in one of the most beautiful natural sites of eastern Sicily, the valley with the river Anapo.



Today's Sant'Angelo Muxaro is situated on a hill that dominates the middle course of the river Platani. Here stood the ancient Camico according to some, where there are the typical tholos tombs carved into the rock, dating from the eighth, seventh century AC.



The Sicani were pushed inside Sicily by the Elimi who founded Erice. The city lies on Mount Erice, was long known for the cult of Venus Erice. Inhabited by the Elimi, dominated later by the Carthaginians and Romans, it can still be seen by visitors in its intact medieval state.



Around Monte Barbaro the Elymi founded Segesta, which soon became a flourishing commercial emporium. The site today is breathtaking for its beauty and integrity of the Doric temple, built in a secluded position on a hill, and which houses the theatre too.





The theatre on summer nights, in a particularly scenic spot, gives theatre performances and concerts relieving the long Sicilian summer.



Mozia, along with Palermo and Solunto, constituted by the Phoenicians the defensive bulwark for maritime trade in the Mediterranean. The area of the Lagoon and its islands, a flourishing bases for Phoenician ships, still returns treasures that were part of the commercial payloads of those ancient routes.

The small archaeological museum headed by the English archaeologist Joseph Whitaker holds much of the material found on the island, along with Giovine of Mozia, sculptural specimen of unspeakable beauty of the fifth century AC.



Greek colonization began in the eighth century AC when the island was already in contact with the Mycenaean world and Phoenicians. In less than two centuries gave rise to the thriving city of Naxos, believed to be the oldest on the island, founded by Chalcis along the Ionian coast of Euboea, in a splendid position between Mount Etna and the sea. But the rivalry with Syracuse decreed its destruction in 403 by the tyrant Dionysius the Elder.





Catania and Lentini 728 AC, Megara Iblea 727 AC, Milazzo 715 AC, Gela 688 AC, are some of the settlements that developed along the coasts of the island.



The archaeological greek wealth of Syracuse and its monuments, as well as path ways in the surrounding area of the old town, alone are worth a trip. In Sicily, maybe the classic theatres are the best testimony of the vitality of artistic and social development of Greek domination. The largest and most well-known is that of Syracuse dating back to the fifth century AC then rebuilt by Hiero II.

Around the greek theatre is the ancient Neapolis, a fascinating journey in which the old Stone Quarries and Orecchio of Dionysus, are set within a lush green area.







Selinunte, considered the stronghold for Doric Sicily and is one of the largest archaeological parks of the Mediterranean with its 270 hectares from the Acropolis to the sea. The ruins of the city have lied shrouded in mystery for centuries. Columns, decorated pediments, remains of temples, partly reconstructed later, express a unique charm.



Just 13 km from Selinunte, in the territory of Campobello di Mazara, you can visit the archaeological area of Cusa from which in ancient times they extracted large blocks of stone which were then used for the construction in Selinunte.





Not far from the Phoenician Soluntum well hidden among the heights of Mount Catalfano Himera stood on a plateau crossed by two rivers to the sea in front of Termini Imerese, where a coalition from Agrigento and Syracuse defeated the Carthaginian fleet in 480 AC. Little or nothing now remains of the temple of Victory incorporated from their homes, while the antiquarium is rich of finds of amphorae, with the necropolis discovered on the hill.

Agrigento, founded by colonists from Gela in 581 AC under the tyrant Tirone, reached particular splendor as evidence that still remains in the intact temples inside the archaeological park in the Valley of the Temples. Pindar called this "the most beautiful among those inhabited by mortals". Destroyed by the Carthaginians, it was conquered by the Romans who called it Agrigentum.





Today, the entire area is included in the world heritage protected by UNESCO.



On Mount Jato, in Palermo, archaeological excavations have brought to light the evidence of contacts between the Elimi and Phoenician-Punic populations.

The archaeological site of Morgantina, the city of the legendary king of Morgeti, in the province of Enna, preserves artifacts dating back to different historical phases: the oldest being Bronze Age and the more recent the greek-Roman age. The site is astonishing for its intact city plan, perfectly legible in the remains of the market, housing a mosaic of the restored theatre (third century AC) and the Agorà (main square) connected by roads and stairways.



It has been traced back to the first Punic War with the defeat of the Carthaginians, Romans rule the island which became a province under a pro-consul. Among the most flourishing urban centers was Catania. The strenght was the administrative impulse and dissemination of the grain estates, as well as the manufacture of vessels for trade.





The archaeological site of the Greek Tyndaris show to visitors an urban architectural technique typical for Roman streets, Agorà, basilica, spa and theatre, with the auditorium facing the sea. A few miles from the site, the Roman villa of Patti with its restored mosaics.



In the province of Siracusa, just a few kms from the baroque city of Noto, which has been returned to the public, the Roman villa of the Tellaro that preserves mosaics of extraordinary beauty.





The great ancient theatre of Taormina, which opens onto the spectacular view of the Gulf of Naxos, which is the center of cultural life in Sicily. On warm summer evenings it hosts concerts, ballets, events, and, not least, the Film Festival, which every year hosts the most famous Italian and international stars.



The mosaics of the Villa Romana del Casale, this is the greatest witness of Roman art in Sicily, dating from the early fourth century AD at the hands of North African workers. They have been subjected to a final restoration that has averted the decay and brought them back to their former glory.

In the heart of the villa, the quadrangular peristyle with its spa and garden, is well protected and illuminated under the new wooden roof, enhanced thanks to an internal path of great charm.



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Print

Officine Grafiche
Soc. Coop.

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Action funded by the European Union ERDF OP Sicilia 2007/13 line int. 3.3.1.Ab



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