EXPLORE! Tour Notes

PRICE GUARANTEE 100% NO SURCHARGES

Classical Sicily (CS 2015)

CULTURAL DISCOVERY

TOURDURAT
8
DAYS

Tour Style: Classic
Tour Pace: Busy
Tour Type: Small Groups
Tour Comfort: Standard
tour Code: CS

Tour Highlights - Classical Sicily

- ✓ Syracusa - Discover the ancient sites of a city that once rivalled Athens in size
- ✓ Agrigento - Visit the Valley of the Temples, with its remarkable Doric architecture
- ✓ Palermo - Explore the cultural melting pot of Sicily's capital and visit the majestic Norman cathedral at Monreale
- ✓ Mozia Island - Take a boat trip to this tiny island, once one of the Mediterranean's most important Phoenician settlements
- ✓ Taormina - Soak up the atmosphere of this popular coastal resort and visit its famed Greek theatre, with its postcard views of Mount Etna

Tour Essentials

Accommodation:	7 nights Standard Hotel
Included Meals:	7 breakfasts, 0 lunches, 0 dinners
Start Point:	Join tour: Syracusa
End Point:	Tour ends: Catania airport
Transport:	Bus, Ferry
Countries:	Italy, Sicily

Classical Sicily

This all-encompassing tour takes in the highlights of Sicily as we travel to some of the most impressive and best preserved Greco-Roman sites in the Mediterranean. Along the way, we enjoy spectacular scenery, experience the relaxed island lifestyle and sample delicious Sicilian food and wine.

Suitability

We've given each of our tours a comfort rating and a tour pace, walking or cycling grade to give you a general idea about the level of activity on each tour and the standard of accommodation you will be staying in at the end of your day's adventure.

Often you'll stay in different styles of accommodation during your tour; so we make an average rating across the entire tour. For more information on where you'll stay each night, please refer to the day by day tour itinerary.

Tour Comfort: Standard

Our mid-range accommodation offers a good level of service often with other amenities such as a restaurant, bar, garden or swimming pool. Generally rooms will be comfortable with en-suite facilities.

Tour Style: Classic

Packed with adventure, these tours offer inspiring destinations and authentic travel experiences at a reasonable price. Using all kinds of transport and accommodation, we'll take you off the beaten track to discover the true heart of the people and places you visit.

Tour Pace: Busy

There may be early starts, long journeys and tiring days along the way, but you'll return home feeling you've really experienced as much as you possibly could.

Your tour itinerary

Tour itinerary notes

While our intention is to adhere to the day-by-day itinerary as printed below, a degree of flexibility is built in. Overnight stops may vary from those suggested.

Your Tour Leader

A Tour Leader is an integral part of any Explore tour and your tour will be led by one of our experienced Tour Leaders who have been handpicked and expertly trained. We believe that our Tour Leaders are the key to the success of our tours; they are passionate travellers who are bursting with first-hand local knowledge which they love to share. Your Tour Leader will also take care of all the planning and

organisation throughout your journey. Their passionate approach will make this tour fun and inspiring, bringing the destination to life whether you're travelling alone or with others.

DAY 1 Join tour in Syracusa

Starting our tour in Syracusa, we will meet up with the rest of the group in our hotel this evening. During the Greek Classical Period, this east coast city was the largest in the ancient world - even bigger than Athens. Now a UNESCO World Heritage Site, it is also notable as being the birthplace of antiquity's greatest mathematician, Archimedes.

Overnight: **Standard Hotel**
Single Room Available

Included Meals: None

DAY 2 See Syracusa's historic Neapolis and Ortygia Island

This morning we will visit the city's Neapolis Archaeological Park, with its famous Greek theatre hewn out of the hillside and the fine Roman amphitheatre where gladiators once fought. We then continue to Ortygia Island - a small island in the centre of the city which is home to many more historical landmarks. Leaving Syracusa, we drive for a couple of hours inland to Piazza Amerina, a charming market town set amid rolling countryside, which will be our base for the night.

Overnight: **Standard Hotel**
Single Room Available

Included Meals: Breakfast

DAY 3 Villa Romana and Agrigento's Valley of the Temples

Just a short hop from our hotel, we will start our day by visiting the Villa Romana del Casale - a magnificent country mansion containing some beautiful Roman mosaics. Continuing to the west coast, we reach Agrigento - once one of the most prosperous cities in Sicily. The ancient acropolis, now the modern city, overlooks a southern ridge, misleadingly named the 'Valley of the Temples'. Visiting these temples, we walk around the ruins of the largest Doric temple ever constructed - the Temple of Zeus. We will also explore the well-preserved and perfectly-proportioned Doric columns of the Temple of Concord, as well as the oldest temple in the complex, honouring Hercules. Later this afternoon, a two-hour drive takes us north along the spectacular coastline to tonight's hotel in the town of Marsala.

Overnight: **Standard Hotel**
Single Room Available **Swimming Pool Available**

Included Meals: Breakfast

DAY 4 Mozia Island, Erice and the Greek ruins of Segesta en route to Palermo

This morning we take a short boat ride out to the tiny island of Mozia. With a history far transcending its diminutive size, it was one of the Mediterranean's most important Phoenician settlements. Our visit will take in Mozia's unique museum and the ruins of a remarkable civilisation including its harbour. Back on the mainland, we continue to Erice, where we can enjoy the ambiance of this beautiful walled medieval town. At 750 metres above sea level, we hope to have impressive views of the valley and sea below. It is also worth noting that Erice is home to Sicily's most famous cake shop - Maria Grammatic. Early afternoon will see us travelling on to Segesta - one of the best-preserved ancient Greek sites in existence. Here, the Doric temple and the amphitheatre sit on the slopes of Mount Barbar in a stunning natural setting. No modern day structures mar our appreciation of the site. On leaving magnificent Segesta, we drive an hour along the north coast to our hotel in Sicily's capital, Palermo.

Overnight: **Standard Hotel**
Single Room Available

Included Meals: Breakfast

DAY 5 Palatine Chapel and Monreale Cathedral; free time in Palermo

Before departing Palermo this morning, we will visit the Palatine Chapel - the royal chapel of the Norman kings of Sicily, packed with spectacular Byzantine mosaics. Driving into the hills just a short distance out of the capital, we go on to visit the majestic Norman Cathedral of Monreale. Founded in 1174 by William the Good, the cathedral is also famous for its extensive mosaics, as well as its beautiful cloisters showing both Romanesque and Islamic influences. Returning to Sicily's capital, our afternoon is free to enjoy Palermo at our own pace. The city stands at the foot of Monte Pellegrino, with the fertile valley of Concha d'Oro behind. It was one of the richest cities in Europe from the 9th to the 12th centuries AD when Islamic culture, Byzantine magnificence and the vigorous world of medieval Europe were merging into a fascinating civilisation. Today, the city maintains a sense of cultural diversity and is famous for its art, music and food.

Overnight: **Standard Hotel**
Single Room Available

Included Meals: Breakfast

DAY 6 Cefalu and coastal scenery en route to Giardini Naxos

Leaving Palermo, we drive along the spectacular northern coastline to the picturesque fishing village of Cefalu. Here we stop to visit the Norman Cathedral, with its stupendous mosaic of Christ Pantocrator. We take a scenic drive along the coast via Messina, stopping briefly for an optional visit to the Museum. Our base for the next two nights is the small beach resort of Giardini Naxos, just outside Taormina on the north east coast.

Overnight: **Standard Hotel**
Single Room Available

Included Meals: Breakfast

DAY 7 Chance to travel to Mount Etna; afternoon in Taormina

This morning, you have the opportunity to join a tour to explore the lunar landscape, craters and lava fields of Mount Etna - one of the most active volcanoes in Europe. Alternatively, you might prefer to enjoy a more sedate morning enjoying the coastal location of Giardini Naxos. This afternoon, we travel the short distance to Taormina, Sicily's most famous resort. Once a favourite haven for the likes of D. H Lawrence and Oscar Wilde, Taormina is still today a tourist honeypot. After a walk around this chic and beautiful town, with its pretty medieval churches and charming streets, it's easy to understand why. We'll visit the Greek Theatre in Taormina. Here, snow-capped Mount Etna acts as a spectacular backdrop to the remarkably preserved columned stage. It's easy to see why this is possibly the most famous view in Sicily, it makes for a superb photograph.

Overnight: **Standard Hotel**
Single Room Available

Included Meals: Breakfast

DAY 8 Tour ends at Catania airport

We drive to Catania Airport where the tour ends.

Included Meals: Breakfast

Accommodation and Meals

Food & Drink

Included meals: 7 breakfasts, 0 lunches,0 dinners included in the price of this tour. Please be prepared to pay for non-included meals. Please note that costs for drinks and meals can vary depending on location.

Budgeting for your Tour

You will need some extra money to cover meals and drinks not included in the tour price, any optional sightseeing, souvenirs and items of a personal nature such as laundry.

Food

The costs for meals may vary depending upon location, type of restaurant and number of courses eaten and so the prices given are an average guide.Local restaurants located off the beaten track may be less expensive, whereas an upmarket restaurant located in the centre of a major city may charge more.

Italy

Lunch £: 8 - 10

Dinner £: 15.00 - 20.00

Sicily

Drink

The prices for drinks can vary greatly depending upon location and the prices detailed below are an average guide. In general you would expect that drinks purchased in a supermarket or local bar to be less expensive, whilst drinks in an upmarket bar or restaurant may be more expensive.

Italy

Bottle of Beer £: 2.00

Water £: 1.00

Sicily

Other Sightseeing & Activities

The following excursions and/or activities are usually available and may be arranged locally. Estimated costs are provided below for guidance only, are on a per person basis unless shown otherwise, and may depend on the number of participants. Prices quoted are correct as of the date these tour notes were originally issued but may change at any time due to currency fluctuations.

Please note: These activities are booked and paid for direct with the supplier and do not form part of your Explore holiday contract.

Optional Excursions

Palermo - Puppet Theatre approx 15 Euros
Giardini Naxos - Mount Etna tour - Cable car to 2,500 metres is 30 Euros or full tour - cable car and then four-wheel drive coach up to 2,900 metres to view the craters is 60 Euros. Due to the volcanic dust and sulphur fumes on Mt Etna, we ask asthma sufferers or customers with heart conditions of any kind to take these factors into consideration when deciding if this optional excursion is right for you.
Regional Museum at Messina - 8 Euros

Tipping - Tour Leader

At your discretion you might also consider tipping your Tour Leader in appreciation of the efficiency and service you receive.

Tipping - Local Crew

Although entirely voluntary, tipping is a recognised part of life in this region of the world. Some local staff will look to members of the group for personal recognition of particular services provided. Accordingly, you should allow £20.00 for tipping.

In order to make things easier for you, the Tour Leaders may organise a group's tips kitty and if this is the case, they will account for it throughout the tour.

Foreign Exchange

Italy

ATM Availability: Major towns.

Credit Card Acceptance: Larger hotels and restaurants.

Travellers Cheques: Only in major towns. Please note, the exchange rate for cash and Travellers Cheques is poor.

Local Currency: Euro.

Recommended Currency for Exchange: GBP.

Where to Exchange: We recommend that you change any currency into Euros prior to arrival. Bureau de Change are generally only found in major cities and large airports.

Sicily

Joining your Tour

Flight Information

You are able to book this tour on a 'land only' basis or as a ‘flight inclusive’ package. Your flight inclusive package will be fully protected by the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) ATOL protection scheme.

Booking a land only package with Explore

Customers who have chosen to book on the ‘Land Only’ arrangements of our tour, please ensure that you have checked your tour specific ‘Joining Instructions’ prior to booking your own travel arrangements. Your joining instructions can be found on our website at www.explore.co.uk, in the tour specific dates and prices section.

You may also be eligible for the Free Explore Transfer. For more information please refer to https://www.explore.co.uk/transfers.

Joining Tour Abroad

Customers booked on the ‘Land Only’ arrangements will now receive a Free Transfer, provided you arrive and depart on the tour only itinerary start and end dates. The transfers will be from the Explore designated airport or train station to the joining point of your tour, and then back from the ending point to the designated airport or train station. The exception to this rule is customers who are booked on a tour where the joining and ending point is at the designated airport or train station.

If you are not eligible for the Free Transfer then you will need to make your own way through to the joining and ending point. On a majority of our tours Explore will be able to provide a private transfer at an additional cost. Please ask for a quote at the time of booking.

For more information regarding the Explore Free Transfer please refer to https://www.explore.co.uk/transfers.

Free transfers are not available for Self-Guided, Tailormade or Tours for Churches customers.

Booking a flight inclusive package with Explore

We have a good selection of flights not only from London but from many regional airports around the UK allowing us to compare fares between scheduled carriers as well as low cost and charter airlines. Our dedicated flights team will match the best flight options to your arrival and departure airport.

On our website we display a UK flight inclusive package guide price which is generally based on a London departure. To avoid paying supplements or to secure your preferred flight option, we recommend booking as early as possible, especially for peak travel dates.

Important Information

Travel Insurance

It is a condition of joining any of our tours that you must have valid travel insurance. It must indicate that you have cover for (at least) medical expenses and emergency repatriation in the event of illness or injury. Medical and repatriation insurance cover is not mandatory for UK residents who are travelling in England and Scotland. We also strongly recommend your policy includes curtailment, personal effects and cancellation protection as all deposits paid are non-refundable. You will also need to ensure your travel policy covers you for all activities you intend to do whilst on tour.

We are delighted to include FREE travel insurance **for all qualifying customers** who book an Explore trip from 01 January 2015.

For more information about Travel insurance and to check whether you are eligible to receive free cover, please visit www.explore.co.uk/insurance. Explore Worldwide Ltd are an Appointed Representative of Campbell Irvine Limited. who are authorised and regulated by the Financial Conduct Authority. The registration number can be checked by visiting the the FCA's website www.fca.gov.uk or by contacting them on 0800 111 6768.

Visa Information

Italy: Visas are not required by UK, E.U Nationals, Australian, New Zealand, US and Canadian citizens. Other nationalities should consult their local embassy or consular office.

All visa information is subject to change. You should confirm all visa related questions with the relevant Embassy prior to departure.

Vaccinations & Protection

Italy

Nothing required. Tetanus recommended. The above is not an exhaustive list. Further information regarding vaccinations and travel health advice can be found by following the NHS and NaTHNaC links at http://www.explore.co.uk/Travelhealth/ and from your local healthcare provider.

Sicily

Preparing for your Tour

Climate

Italy

April/May and October/November are pleasantly warm. June/September are the hottest months. Showers are common in Autumn.

Sicily

Clothing

Women should avoid bare arms and shoulders in churches (scarf or stole recommended). Dress for hot conditions although light rainwear and warm fleece/jacket for nights when temperatures can drop (especially in March and Oct/Nov). Anyone intending to visit Mount Etna should bring warm clothing as snow is a common occurrence (even in June). Wind and waterproof garments are strongly recommended for those wishing to visit the volcano.

Equipment

Sunhat and sunscreen are recommended. You should bring a 2 litre water bottle, torch, as well as insect repellent. You may wish to bring swimming costume.

Footwear

Comfortable walking shoes and sandals.

Luggage: On Tour

One main piece of baggage and daypack. Remember you are expected to carry your own luggage so don't overload yourself.

Luggage allowance on tour: 20kg

General Information

Country details

Italy

Population: 60,681,514

Size of Country: 301,338 Sq KM

Major Language: Italian

Religion: Roman Catholic

Time Difference to GMT: +1

Sicily

Electric Supply & Plugs

Italy

2 Pin Round

Sicily

Why Choose Explore

We've been creating award-winning pioneering adventure holidays for over 30 years, earning the trust of thousands of delighted customers, who feel safe in our hands. Our tour leaders have expert local knowledge and our tours are designed to take you off the beaten track to see the most exotic, inspiring and dramatic places in the world.

- With over 30 years' experience, we are passionate about what we do.
- Pioneering small group adventures, self-guided, private journeys & tailormade holidays.
- Award winning tour leaders who you can trust.
- Responsible travel is and always has been one the driving principles of Explore.

Our adventure holidays are full of exciting things to see and do, exploring in small groups travelling by bus, boat, plane, rickshaw, camel, elephant, or any number of unusual forms of transport . Often you will stay in family run hotels and village houses and enjoy authentic local cuisine. In this way, it's easy to discover the true heart of the people and the place you travel to – and make some new friends along the way. Each tour is uniquely different, so please feel free to browse through our tours to see what may whet your appetite.

Our commitment to the environment

We are passionate about sustainable travel and work hard to create tours where your holiday delivers real benefits to the local communities. We minimise our impact by travelling in small groups, respecting local cultures and traditional, reducing waste and offsetting 100% of the CO2 from our flights.

When you travel with Explore, you are directly contributing to local economies and helping empower the people you meet. We currently support a range of charities and good causes, including: Toilet Twinning (helping to flush away poverty), Lone Buffalo Foundation (a community project based in Laos providing creative skills for young people), Dekamer (a turtle rescue centre in Turkey) and Kids Saving the Rainforest (a wildlife rescue centre in Costa Rica supported through the LATA foundation). We also care passionately about the world's wildlife. We are patrons of the Born Free Organisation and Friends of Conservation.

Cool Earth

Explore are proud to support Cool Earth in their effort to reduce global carbon dioxide levels through the prevention of deforestation in the South America rainforest. Cool Earth focus on areas in immediate danger of deforestation, supporting local communities to be forest guardians. To date 350,000 acres of rainforest has been protected. Saving rainforest also protects rare animals and plants, allows local forest communities to maintain their way of life, and protects a major source of oxygen and fresh water. When you travel on an Explore holiday we make a donation to Cool Earth that exceeds the impact of our customers flights each year.

Earth Matters

- The Travel Foundation

  Explore are active members and supporters of the Travel Foundation which has established a variety of sustainable tourism projects in destinations and works with industry to improve practice. Visit their website www.thetravelfoundation.org.uk

- Tourism Concern

  Explore support the work of Tourism Concern who campaign for fairly and ethically traded tourism, and are part of its Ethical Tour Operator Group www.tourismconcern.org.uk
- For further information on responsible travel go to http://www.explore.co.uk/ResponsibleTourism/

Know before you go

We strongly recommend that you check your government's travel advisory for up-to-date information and advice about your destination: safety andÂ security, entry requirements, health, local laws and customs. ForÂ UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office Advice follow the link atÂ http://www.explore.co.uk/essential-travel-information/travel-resources/travel-safety

Booking Your Holiday

Peace of mind - book with confidence

You can book your Explore holiday with confidence, as all monies paid to us for your trip are fully protected. Explore is a fully bonded tour operator licensed by the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) and by ABTOT.

The air holiday packages (Tours including flights) that we advertise are ATOL protected, since we hold an Air Travel Organiser's LicenceÂ granted by the Civil Aviation Authority.Â Our ATOL number is ATOL 2595. In addition, As a member of the Association of Bonded Travel Organisers Trust Limited (ABTOT), Explore has provided a bond to meet the requirements of the Package Travel, Package Holidays and Package Tours Regulations 1992. Please note that packages booked outside the UK are only protected when purchased directly with Explore.

Reserving your place

To reserve your place on this tour you will need to check availability on the Explore website or through our dedicated call centre based in the UK where you can. Our tours can fill up quickly so you are advised to book as early as possible. If your chosen date is ‘Available’ or ‘Guaranteed’ we will be able to provisionally hold you a space for up to 48 hours.

For Self-Guided holidays and Private Journeys simply choose your date of travel and let us know so we can confirm all ground services.

The easiest way to confirm your booking is through our website. When you are ready to book, we normally require a 10% non-refundable deposit, but for some holidays this may be more to cover such items as permit fees, internal flights or other non-refundable services. If your travel starts within 60 days of booking, full payment will be required at the time of booking

100% No Surcharge Guarantee

The price paid for our holidays is no longer subject to change. Once booked and confirmed we will guarantee the price you pay will not increase, whatever the circumstances. You will not be approached to pay fuel surcharges unlike the vast majority of other adventure tour operators. The price guarantee applies to all new bookings departing between 1st January 2014 and 31st December 2015.

Tour Itinerary Versions

Itinerary details may vary depending on departure date and alternative itineraries for this tour may exist. Please refer to the dates and prices page on our website to check which itinerary operates on each departure date.

Please ensure that you have an up-to-date copy of these tour notes immediately before you travel, as from time to time our itineraries may be amended, either for operational reasons or in response to feedback from customers. You will be informed of any major changes to your tour but small changes may just be added to these tour notes.

Please note: 2015 itinerary versions are applicable to tours departing in 2015. 2016/17 itinerary versions are applicable to tours departing from 1st January to 31st December 2016.

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