

*Educational Tour & Workshop in Sicily  
21-25 September 2004*



## EDUCATIONAL TOUR

&

## WORKSHOP

21-25 September 2004



REGIONE SICILIA  
Assessorato al Turismo  
Comunicazione e Trasporti

### *Culture: Tourism without seasons*

*Sicily is a microcosm: a composite world in which peoples of different race, religion and language have clashed and met, leaving a stratification of extremely significant traces on the island. This, combined with a variegated territory, the generally mild climate, the outgoing character of its inhabitants, the excellence of its food and wines, make Sicily one of the most interesting destinations for a holiday, for special holidays... Not only in summer, when people can enjoy bathing in the beautiful turquoise sea near white sands or jagged coasts, but the whole year round, enjoying both the sea and the thousands of sites of archaeological, historical and artistic interest.*

*This educational tour is aimed to promote Sicily to operators who give their customers something more than "a holiday": the pleasure of enjoying a visit to places where the past has left impressive and significant marks, where the past is still breathing, day and night, 365 days a year.*

*The Educational tour & workshop "Culture: tourism without seasons", Sicily 2004 takes place in an area that is particularly rich in art and history, which is growing in terms of tourist flows and structures. Here we present the areas involved in this event, which takes place during the famous and lively Couscous Fest, held yearly at San Vito Lo Capo.*

### Province of TRAPANI

#### TRAPANI

Trapani lies directly opposite the Aegadean Islands providing them with regular communication links with the main island. Beside the ferry traffic, the well-protected harbour handles large consignments of salt gathered in the saltpans just south of the town and tuna fish processed at the important local canning factory. Each morning, on the shore a picturesque fish market is held.

The most exciting time to visit Trapani is undoubtedly over Easter when the old town is thronged with multitudes of people participating in the processions and festivities held during Holy Week.

These celebrations culminate in the Mystery Procession on Good Friday as 20 groups of sculpted figures are borne round the streets all day and the following night.

The town is rich in Baroque mansions and churches. Point of interest is the large Carmelite institution known as the Annunziata, housing the town's main museum (Pepoli Museum) which contains archaeological materials, sculptures, important paintings and interesting coral items bearing witness to the heights of artistic skill attained by the local craftsmen. The saltpans of Trapani, now a nature reserve, with their quaint old windmills deserve a visit.



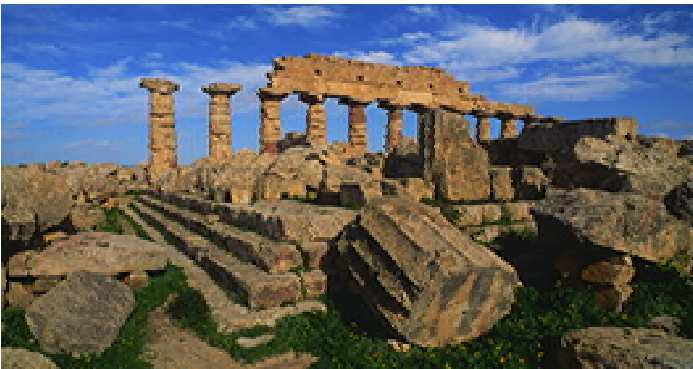
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## ERICE

Erice is one of those magical places which maintained the charm of the old medieval village throughout the centuries. Entering the town, you are immediately struck by the extraordinary street layout – a labyrinth of winding lanes, inner courtyards and cobbled streets which together bestow a serene, ancient and mystical atmosphere. The Cathedral (14 C), with the *portico* added to the façade in the 15th century, and the majestic Castle (12-13 C) built on an impressive crag from which you enjoy an enchanting view of the coast, are the two monuments that visitors want to see first.

## SELINUNTE



The Archaeological Park in the territory of Castelvetro contains the ruins of Selinunte, the Greek colony founded in 6C BC. Scattered over an almost deserted area completely abandoned since its downfall, the ruined temples continue to point their impressive great columns towards the sky, while other buildings, reduced to heaps of rubble, probably by an earthquake, inspire a tragic air of utter desolation. The fine metopes which once adorned several of the

temple friezes are displayed in the Archaeological Museum in Palermo. The sight of the ruins from up the hill, overlooking the sea, is really impressive, especially during the flowering of the local colourful and scented vegetation. To complete the picture, it is well worth visiting the quarries the stone was brought from (Cave di Cusa).

## MARSALA

The town is known the world over for the sweet nectar (Marsala wine) produced in the area, appreciated and exported by English merchants since the 18<sup>th</sup> century for its similarity to the liqueur wines of Spain and Portugal. Marsala nestles on the headland which continues to bear the town's ancient name, *Lilybaeum*. Its modern name probably derives from the Arabic *Marsah el Ali*, meaning "port of Ali", which would indicate that it has been a sea town of considerable importance since its early history. Later, the harbour witnessed one of the most important events in the history of Sicily: the landing of Garibaldi's Thousand in Sicily. The ethnic diversity (including a large Tunisian minority), the harbour and the city's web of narrow streets combine to suggest that the visitor has been inadvertently catapulted into some African town. A tour of Marsala can be enriched by a visit to the wineries, which provide the opportunity of comparing old techniques and installations with the new ones.

## **SEGESTA**

The Temple of Segesta is one of the most perfectly preserved monuments to survive from antiquity. It stands in majestic solitude on a hill surrounded by a deep valley. Built in 430 BC, the temple is a Doric building of remarkably harmonious proportions. The 36 columns of the peristyle are almost completely intact, their gloriously mellow golden-tinged limestone flattered by their smooth finish. The mystery surrounding the purpose such a construction would serve is exacerbated by the lack of any indication as to which deity it might have been dedicated to.



The road up to the theatre provides fabulous views back over the temple.

## **PANTELLERIA**

Pantelleria is the largest of Sicily's satellite islands with a surface area of 83 square kilometres; it is also the most westerly, lying a mere 84 km from the African continent, at the same latitude as Tunisia. Its warm climate, however, is constantly tempered by ever-present strong winds blowing in from the sea. The island is endowed with a jagged coastline bathed by clear blue sea, which hides a wealth of varied marine life: its rocky slopes, fashioned by dry-stone walling into terraces fit for cultivation, together with the local *dammusi* (peculiar houses) combine to confer exceptional and unique beauty on the place. The distinctive colours of the soil and base rock, which for the most part are basaltic, have earned the island a nickname, namely "the black pearl of the Mediterranean". A scenic coastal road (round trip about 40 km) provides glorious views of the landscape. The island is also renowned for an excellent dessert wine, *Passito di Pantelleria*.



## **ZINGARO NATURE RESERVE**

The Zingaro is an environment of great interest for its flora and fauna. This nature reserve stretches between Scopello and Capo San Vito. It was the first reserve established in Sicily and features wild vegetation, unexpected glimpses of the sea and cliffs rising high.



## **AEGADEAN ISLANDS**

Favignana, Levanzo and Marettimo are the three islands that form a mini-archipelago off Trapani. They count some 4,600 inhabitants. All three are blessed with lovely coastlines immersed in glorious crystal-clear water. The islands, which are known to have been inhabited since prehistoric times (charcoal and animal fat paintings are still visible in some caves), witnessed a very important event in antiquity: it was in these waters that the treaty putting an end to the First Punic War (241 BC) was signed, whereby Carthage assigned Sicily to the Roman Empire.



## **SAN VITO LO CAPO**

Sunny, welcoming, colourful, rich in folklore and traditions. This is San Vito Lo Capo, the pearl of the district of Trapani, between the two nature reserves of the Zingaro and the Monte Cofano. A kilometre of pure white beach, lapped by crystalline sea. This town still retains a strong Arab flavour in its low white houses and the maze of little streets and alleyways, always adorned by bougainvillea. And it is San Vito Lo Capo, a town that could not be more Mediterranean, that has been confirmed by food connoisseurs around the world as the “Couscous Capital”.



## **MOTYA**

This tiny island in the middle of a lagoon was chosen by the Phoenicians as a suitable site for a vital and later prosperous colony. It was coveted as a strategic trade-post as much by the Carthaginians as by their Syracusan antagonists. In the end, this was to be its undoing: besieged by the Syracusan forces, Motya was completely destroyed and abandoned until it was rediscovered at the end of the 19C by Joseph Whitaker, an English nobleman. As the island is approached, a profusion of colour and smells seems to emanate from it like a warm welcome: in spring the typical Mediterranean vegetation is especially lush, a perfect excuse in itself for inspiring a visit. Footpaths run along the perimeter of the island and lead in and among the vestiges of the Phoenician town. In the centre there stands the lovely 19<sup>th</sup>-century house built by the Whitakers, now a museum.



### **MAZARA del VALLO**

Mazara del Vallo has always been a seaport of great importance because of its privileged position on the coast. Even today its fishing fleet is the biggest in Italy. In spring 1998, 500 m. below sea level, a wonderful bronze statue was recovered: a Dancing Satyr, a demon who belonged to the orgiastic cortege accompanying Dionysus, the Greek divinity of wine. It may be an original Greek statue, dating from the 4th century BC, or a replica made later, between the 2nd and 1st centuries BC. After careful restoration, it is now on display at a museum in Mazara and it is one of the biggest cultural attractions in Sicily.



## Province of AGRIGENTO

### AGRIGENTO

Agrigento occupies a magnificent panoramic position on a high plateau dominated to the north by two hills, which constitutes *the Acropolis* (the *Rupe Atenea* and the adjacent *Colle di Girgenti*), and ends to the south in the wonderful *Hill of Temples*, so called because on it, apart from other minor items, there stand the remains of 7 temples out of the original 10 or more, all erected in the course of a century (5<sup>th</sup> century BC ) in the original Doric style.

Felicitous circumstances of time and place allowed the city to have an exceptionally prosperous development. Thus Pindar in about 490 BC sings of it as "the most beautiful city of mortal men".

A visit to Agrigento is a sensational plunge into the glorious past of Greek civilization in Sicily: built of limestone tufa, the temples provide a particularly impressive sight at dawn, and even more so at sunset when they are turned a warm shade of gold.

A visit to Agrigento and the beautiful temples is a remarkable experience during the whole year but especially at the beginning of spring: as the road winds its way to the town, the almond trees gradually become more numerous. When they are in flower (January and February), their blossom appears like little clouds of white against the green fields and the bare earth of the hillsides; it is precisely at this time of year that the town comes to life and puts on its Sunday best for the *Sagra del Mandorlo in Fiore* (Almond Blossom Festival). Visitors approaching Agrigento from the coast will be treated to a glorious sight, particularly if arriving at sunset when the houses along the crest of the hill are coloured with pastel hues and the Temple of Heracles dominates the foreground from on high, illuminated by the last rays of sunlight.

The pleasure of the visit continues in the town centre, along the lovely *Via Atenea* with its many elegant palazzos, beautiful churches and interesting works of art: the 16C *Church of San Calogero*, dedicated to a saint who is particularly venerated in this area, *Palazzo Celauro*, where Goethe sojourned when on his Grand Tour, the 14C *Conventino Chiaramontano*, the *Town Hall*, formerly a Dominican monastery (17C), the *Church of San Lorenzo* (18C), which contains stuccoes by Giacomo Serpotta and a painting by Guido Reni, the *Santo Spirito Abbey* with its annexed convent (13C), the *Biblioteca Lucchiesiana*, founded in 1765 by Bishop Lucchesi Palli, which contains more than 45,000 ancient books and manuscripts, the *Cathedral*, which still bears traces of its Norman origin, and the *Regional Archaeological Museum*, with its superb collection of Attic vases, artefacts, votive statues, theatrical masks and other terracotta figures found during the excavations of the temples and various other sites in the province.



## SCIACCA

Sciacca is a lovely town showing a clear Arab impress, with striking white houses and buildings grouped on a flank of the Monte Kronio overlooking the sea. It is an outstanding fishing and thermal resort, drawing tens of thousands of tourists every year. Its majolica objects, available at the numerous pottery shops in town, are most renowned. Thermal treatment in this area dates back to ancient times, though a proper thermal plant was only established in the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, in the so-called *Valle dei Bagni* (Valley of Baths), currently under restoration. The new thermal plant is a large complex built in 1938 in art nouveau style, right in front of the sea and surrounded by a nice park. The sulphurous water which rises naturally is used for mud and bath treatments, (recommended for arthritis) and inhalation therapies, while the thermal springs are suitable for dermatological treatments.

## PELAGIE ISLANDS



The Pelagie Islands lie almost in the middle of the Sicilian Channel: for their position they are considered the southern most part of Italian territory. They are in fact far closer to Africa than to Sicily and most of their charm and beauty is due precisely to their position.

**Lampedusa**, the biggest of the three (20 sq km), is part of the African continent, to which it is firmly fixed. It is a calcareous island, has an elongated form stretching from east to west, and deep and dramatic coasts not easy to land on, with impressive turquoise water.

**Linosa** (just 5.4 sq km) is a pleasant volcanic island – hence its dark-grey colour – with three lofty cones that show a striking contrast with the intense blue of the sky. The volcanoes, now extinct, give the island a fairly sinister look. The only town consists of a collection of lovely pastel-coloured houses grouped around the island's small harbour. Tourists can enjoy excursions to the peaks or fascinating boating tours.

**Lampione** (180 m wide) is completely deserted; there is just a lighthouse that can be reached along a tiny path. It is the reign of birds that can nest here without anyone to disturb them, but it is also the paradise of scuba divers, who, here, can even meet the terrible grey shark

## ERACLEA MINOA

This historic town was a colony of Selinunte from the 6<sup>th</sup> century BC on, and its life was disturbed by the clashes between Selinunte and Agrigento, and between the Romans and the Carthaginians. Recent excavations have brought to light the outline of the boundary wall, a residential area, a sanctuary, tomb equipment and a beautiful theatre, built in about the 3<sup>rd</sup> century BC almost entirely in extremely friable blocks of marl-stone: it looks out towards the sea, as is the rule in nearly all Sicilian coastal theatres.

