

Palermo Revealed



Palermo Cathedral

Friday 23 - Friday 30 April 2027

In the ninth century AD, when Byzantine rule was supplanted by that of Muslim Arabs, Palermo became the leading city on the island and famous throughout Europe for the beauty of its hillside position, its tradition of craftsmanship and its enlightened administration. In the eleventh century Arab rule was swept aside by conquering Normans.

The unique artistic blend of this golden age survives in Romanesque churches with details of Norman, Saracenic, Levantine and classical origin. Byzantine mosaicists were extensively employed, and more wall and vault mosaics survive here than in all of Byzantium. The tour includes not only the Norman buildings in Palermo but also the cathedral at Monreale.

The prosperity and power of Sicily began to wane from the later Middle Ages, but pockets of wealth and creativity remained, as Gothic and Renaissance creations demonstrate. Artistically, however, a final flourish was reached in the Age of Baroque when churches and palaces were erected in Palermo and throughout the island which are as splendid and exuberant as anywhere in Europe.



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FRIDAY 23 APRIL 2027

Independent travel arrangements to Edinburgh airport.

We will depart from Edinburgh airport on a flight to Palermo. *(Please note that flights are **not included** in the tour price and the schedule is yet to be released for 2027).* On arrival we will be met by our local coach and transfer to the centre of Palermo. On arrival we will check into the 4-star **Hotel Plaza Opera** for 7 nights' bed and breakfast accommodation. **Dinner** will be served in a nearby local restaurant this evening.

SATURDAY 24 APRIL 2027

After breakfast at the hotel, we will walk to some of the key sites in the centre of **Palermo**, in the company of a local guide. The city enjoys a marvellous setting against the harbour of La Cala, and its exotic flavour is evident everywhere in its mix of oriental and European architecture. Visits in Palermo will include the magnificent **Cathedral**, built by the Archbishop of Palermo in the late 12th century on the former site of a Mosque. The cathedral boasts several different architectural styles, including an impressive neoclassical interior, and houses a collection of Royal tombs and a fine treasury. The **Palatine Chapel**, located inside the **Norman Royal Palace**, displays a dazzling blend of mosaics and marble inlaid with gold, stone and glass, traditional Orthodox iconography and a painted Arabic ceiling. This visit will be followed by a visit to two of the most important churches in Palermo, La Martorana and San Cataldo. The church of **La Martorana**, also called Santa Maria dell' Ammiraglio (St Mary's of the Admiral), was constructed by Admiral George of Antioch in 1140, and the church's interior is decorated with stunning mosaics, most notably the *Mosaic of Christ with Four Angels* in the dome of the church.

The nearby tiny church of **San Cataldo**, distinguished by its three pink cupolas, was erected in 1154 by Maio of Bari, who was the *Emir* (Prime Minister) of King William. The church has remained largely unchanged since the 12th century and is a religious seat of the knights of the Holy Sepulchre.

This afternoon we will continue to the **Cathedral of Monreale**. Monreale, from 'Mons Regalis' (Royal Mountain), is a town of some 25,000 residents located on the slope of Mount Caputo (764 metres), approximately 7 kilometres south of Palermo's centre. Its spectacular Cathedral is a striking mixture of Arab, Byzantine and Norman artistic styles framed by traditional Romanesque architecture, all combined in a perfect blend of the best that both the Christian and Muslim worlds of the 12th century had to offer. The beautiful mosaics in Monreale Cathedral are said to be one of the world's largest displays of this art, surpassed only by Istanbul's famous Basilica of St Sofia, once an Orthodox church. Also of note is the splendid colonnaded **Benedictine Cloister** of the adjoining Abbey, combining Arab and Norman architecture. Relationships between Sicily and England during the Norman period were strong and the mosaics in the apse of the Cathedral depict one of the first representations of Saint Thomas Beckett. At the end of the afternoon we will return to our hotel for an evening at leisure.

SUNDAY 25 APRIL 2027

Today will be spent at leisure. Members will be free to make their own arrangements. *Please note that today is the anniversary of the liberation of Italy, and also a national holiday.*

MONDAY 26 APRIL 2027

After breakfast at the hotel we will transfer towards the western province of Trapani and visit the Archaeological site of **Segesta**. Segesta's centrepiece is its remarkably well-preserved **Doric Temple**, dating from around 430 BC. We will also continue to the 3rd century BC **Greek Theatre**, offering fine temple views (*please note that there a walk of approximately 30 mins back down to the coach from here*).

This afternoon we will continue to the medieval hilltop town of **Erice**, which watches over the port of Trapani. The walled 12th century village is perched 750m above sea level and features sweeping views of the coastline below. There will be free time here to explore the town before we return back to the hotel in Palermo for an evening at leisure.

TUESDAY 27 APRIL 2027

After breakfast at the hotel, our trip will continue along the south coast to **Selinunte**. The ancient Greek metropolis of Selinunte was built in the 7th century BC on a promontory overlooking the sea, and over two and a half centuries, became one of the world's richest and most powerful cities. Destroyed by the Carthaginians in 409 BC, it finally fell to the Romans around 250 BC, after which it rapidly declined. Archaeologists brought to light not only several temple ruins, but also the remains of the acropolis and the ancient city. At the end of the afternoon we will return to our hotel for an evening at leisure.

WEDNESDAY 28 APRIL 2027

After breakfast at the hotel, we will transfer to **Marsala**, famous for its dessert wine production. We will enjoy a local winetasting before continuing to **Mozia** by boat. Located on the tiny island of San Pantaleo, ancient Mozia (also known as Motya) was one of the Mediterranean's most important Phoenician settlements. Established in the 8th century BC and coveted for its strategic position, Mozia is today the world's best-preserved Phoenician site.

The entire island was bought by the ornithologist and amateur archaeologist Joseph Whitaker (1850–1936) in the early 20th century and bequeathed to the Joseph Whitaker Foundation by his daughter Delia on her death in 1971. Joseph, who was a member of an English family that gained great wealth from the Marsala trade, built a villa here and spent decades excavating the island and assembling a unique collection of Phoenician artefacts, many of which are now on display in the **Mozia Museum**, belonging to the Whitaker Foundation. At the end of the afternoon we will return to the hotel for an evening at leisure.

THURSDAY 29 APRIL 2027

Today will be spent at leisure. Members will be free to make their own arrangements. **A final dinner** will be served in a local restaurant this evening.

FRIDAY 30 APRIL 2027

We will check out of our hotel after breakfast. We will transfer by coach to Palermo Airport for a return flight to Edinburgh. *(Please note that flights are **not included** in the tour price and the schedule is yet to be released for 2027).*

Independent onward travel arrangements.

Please note as this tour has been planned many months in advance, the final itinerary may vary slightly from the above.



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