

# Il Gran Tour della Sicilia

The Grand Tour of Sicily



VIP Tours of Italy

CONNECTITALIA   
<https://www.connectitalia-nz.com>



Come with us

[info@connectitalia-nz.com](mailto:info@connectitalia-nz.com)

# ABOUT CONNECTITALIA-NZ LTD

Our company's mission is to promote greater liaison between Italy and New Zealand, reflecting the different but complementary backgrounds of the company's two directors, Beniamino Petrosino and Anne Scragg. Our principal focus is planning and escorting exclusive small group tours in Italy offering a cultural experience with a difference. Our tours are most definitely not of the whistle-stop "Today is Tuesday so it must be Belgium" kind. We pride ourselves in providing you with the time and comfort to really enjoy what you are seeing and doing and you will never feel rushed. Our tours start and finish in Italy so you are most welcome to join us from anywhere in the world. Whether you are travelling on your own or with others, you can expect individual care and attention from two escorts who are willing to go the extra mile to ensure you have an unforgettable time. We also encourage travellers wanting to visit New Zealand from overseas to contact us and we will be very happy to provide you with a New Zealand tour package tailored to meet your particular needs and interests. We use accredited tour operators to ensure our tours are trouble free and we insist on the highest standards of customer service in all situations throughout our tours. Your comfort and security are of paramount importance to us. Whether you are planning a trip to Italy, New Zealand or anywhere else with us, it will be our pleasure to look after you throughout your tour. We are confident you will enjoy a unique cultural experience and a lot of fun along the way.

## OUR AMBASSADORS

Richard Scragg



*"In 2017 and 2019 I travelled with Connectitalia-NZ throughout the north and south of Italy and had an absolutely marvellous time. Every day produced a new highlight.*

*If you want to enjoy the Italy the Italians know, Connectitalia-NZ has the tours for you. Your principal tour escort Beniamino comes from the Mezzogiorno and you will be immersed in Italian culture in all its varied aspects.*

*You will stay in carefully chosen first class accommodation in out of the way places and travel in a comfortable private vehicle with your own driver. You will see some amazing historical sites and stunning countryside. As you enjoy local food and wine, you will learn the fascinating history of what you are eating and drinking. I am proud to promote Connectitalia-NZ tours, which offer visitors to Italy the experience of a lifetime."*

Richard Scragg began his working life as a practising barrister and solicitor, joined the Institute of Professional Legal Studies as a Senior Instructor and then embarked on an academic career at the University of Canterbury where he became Dean and Head of Law. He subsequently lectured at the University of Auckland for several years before retiring to focus on his publications.

Robert Watson



*"I'm drawn to visit Sicily by its landscape, its architecture and its cuisine. Nowhere else has there been such a convergence of civilisations and cultures over the last several thousand years. There are Phoenician, Greek and Roman ruins, buildings of Renaissance and Baroque splendour and contemporary architecture, the dramatic landscape and the cuisine which, like all of its arts, expresses this island's rich social and cultural heritage.*

*If all you have heard about Sicily is that it is a busy and hectic island off the toe of Italy - and run by the Mafia - then you should join me on Connectitalia-NZ's tour in May 2026" 😊*

Robert Watson, co-escort of "Il Gran Tour della Sicilia", is a landscape architect based in Christchurch and he has been involved in a wide variety of major projects around New Zealand over the last 35 years. He is a Fellow of the NZ Institute of Landscape Architects and an Assessor

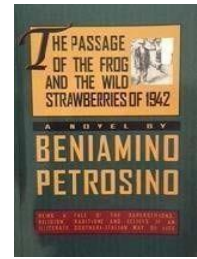
for the NZ Gardens Trust. Robert's work has won numerous prizes including a Gold award at the 2009 Ellerslie Flower Show for a garden he designed for the Canterbury Horticultural Society. Another of Robert's projects is the renowned Broadfields Garden, a NZ Garden Trust Garden of International Significance, for which he was a finalist in 2015 NZILA Awards. Since 2019, Robert has escorted four very successful garden tours for us, two in Italy and two in Canterbury.

# VACANZE ITALIANE – Come with us!

Beniamino Petrosino



I am the founder of CONNECTITALIA-NZ. I came from Italy to live in New Zealand in the 1980's and have worked as a chef, restaurateur and consultant in the hospitality industry in New Zealand, Australia, Malaysia and the United States of America. I have taught Italian in schools and privately and also English to refugees. In 2003, Hazard Press published my novel "The Passage of the Frog and the Wild Strawberries of 1942" set in the magical Mezzogiorno regions of Italy where I grew up.



In late 2015 I met Anne Scragg when she became one of my Italian language students. In 2016 we ran a successful cultural programme in Christchurch showcasing many special Italian foods and wines and introducing our guests to delightful Italian locations off the beaten track. Our company was formed at this time and in 2017 and 2019, we led our first exclusive small group tours to Italy, travelling with our own driver throughout my homeland. In 2021 and 2022, because of Covid we were sadly unable to visit Italy, so we organized local garden tours in our home region of Canterbury with great success. In 2023 we returned to Italy with two groups. With our first group we visited the magnificent gardens and villas on Lake Como and Lake Maggiore. With the second group we proceeded from Lombardia on a journey through Piemonte, Emilia Romagna and Toscana soon after the grape harvest. In 2026 we will travel to Sicily for our grand tour of the Island, the land of the Cyclops.

Anne Scragg



I initially trained as a lawyer and worked in private practice for some years. I had a few years off work while my family was young and then returned to work as an adjudicator and mediator. Over time I became involved in designing and establishing specialist dispute resolution schemes in the public and private sectors. In 2015, I retired from a senior management role with the intention of doing something entirely different. One day my husband came in from the letterbox with one of Beniamino's business cards and I thought Italian language lessons might be just what I needed!

I have been to Italy several times and have loved every visit. I am confident I know what non-Italians need and want when travelling and I want to share my passion for Italy with others. I also want to show our guests from other countries the treasures that my homeland, New Zealand, has to offer. In 2025, in addition to our Sicilian tour, we have planned a new special interest tour in England, "A Literary Pursuit," and I am greatly looking forward to that. Wherever we travel, we guarantee our clients will enjoy a unique and memorable experience with us.

## Exclusive Tours of Italy

*"Over the last few years, we have got together to bring people a genuine glimpse into Italian culture and customs. Now our intent is to take you there for an experience unlike any other."*

For any queries email  
[info@connectitalia-nz.com](mailto:info@connectitalia-nz.com)

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# IL GRAN TOUR DELLA SICILIA the jewel of the Mediterranean

with Beniamino and Robert



Il Gran Tour della Sicilia – 13 days (12 nights)

NZ\$ Price TBA - small group max 10 people (single supplement may apply)

On this tour, you will:

- Traverse the land of the Cyclops in absolute comfort
- Stay in high quality accommodation in attractive settings
- See the world famous “bikini ladies” depicted in stunning Roman mosaics
- Find the ancient tomb of Archimedes but not the soap (or the ‘death ray’)
- Visit the fabulous food market “La Vucciria” so lusciously painted by Renato Guttuso
- Marvel at the monumental Doric temples standing proud against the sky
- Practise your oratory skills in ancient Greek theatres
- Tempt your palate with delicious Sicilian desserts
- Unwind in the shade of giant tree roots in secluded gardens, letting the scents of autumn work their magic
- There will be surprises along the way that you will want to tell all your friends about when you get home and MOST IMPORTANTLY you will have fun! -👍



## Tour Outline

Start Date: TBA

End Date: TBA



*Note: The tour package is a land package only. Flights to suit your individual needs can be arranged for you through us or you can make your own flight arrangements if you prefer. Palermo has an international airport for your inward and outward air travel.*

**Tour starts and ends in Palermo**

*"To have seen Italy without having seen Sicily is not to have seen Italy at all, for Sicily is the clue to everything."*  
**Johann Wolfgang (von) Goethe**

Trinacria is the ancient Greek name and minted in Siracusa from the 4<sup>th</sup> Century coat of arms of the region today. winged head of Medusa symbolizes and acts as a protective talisman that The precise significance of the three described as emblems of the However, some scholars have also suggested they might represent time or the cycle of nature. The ears of wheat celebrate the fertility and agricultural richness of the island. They were added to the Trinacria by the



symbol of Sicily seen on coins BC and still present on the flag and According to Tiziana Manzetti, "the wisdom, protection and freedom wards off evil and brings good luck. bent legs is uncertain. They are usually promontories or endpoints of Sicily. However, some scholars have also suggested they might represent time or the cycle of nature. The ears of wheat celebrate the fertility and agricultural richness of the island. They were added to the Trinacria by the



Romans, as Sicily was then considered the granary of their empire."

We will start and end our tour in Sicily's capital Palermo, one of the largest cities in the Mediterranean and home to one of the region's seven UNESCO Heritage Sites.

On Day 1, after being collected from our accommodation, we will set off with a local guide for our introduction to this 2,758-year-old city noted for its history, culture, architecture, and gastronomy. Major highlights include the 12th-century Palermo Cathedral which houses royal tombs and the huge neo-classical Teatro Massimo, which is the third largest theatre in Europe and internationally known for its opera performances. Also in the centre of the city are the Palazzo dei Normani, a royal palace started in the 9th century, and the Cappella Palatina, with its glittering Byzantine mosaics. While in Palermo, readers and film buffs will be delighted to see the recently restored 18<sup>th</sup> Century villa that inspired the Prince of Lampedusa to write his masterpiece "Il Gattopardo" (The Leopard), immortalised in Visconti's famous film of the same name.



In the afternoon, we will travel to the Museo Guttuso at Bagheria, a short distance from Palermo. Here we will be able to see some of the stunning art created in the 20<sup>th</sup> century by the Sicilian artist, Renato Guttuso, whose art conveys the vibrant lights and colours of his homeland so effectively. We will spend tonight and the next two nights at leisure in the Palermo area.



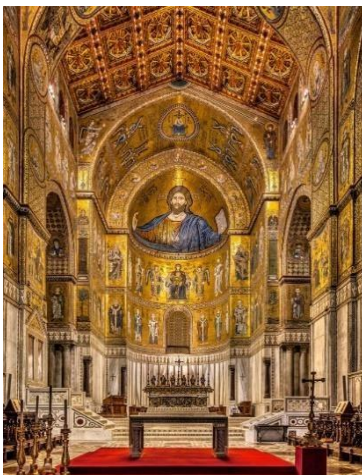
On Day 2 we will set off for a series of garden visits in Palermo and neighbouring Bagheria. Robert will be keen to show us the magnificent parks and gardens at Villas Malfitano, Cataldo and Palagonia as well as the renowned Botanical Gardens in the centre of Palermo. These gardens are lush, exotic and a little wild containing giant ficus, and forgotten statues. At Villa Palagonia we will be greeted by a surreal assortment of mythological monsters, distorted dwarves and crazy caricatures.



On Day 3 we will visit the famous street food markets of Palermo. As Plato said more than two thousand years ago, "Sicilians build things like they will live forever and eat like they will die tomorrow." Dating back to the ninth-century Saracen rule of the island, Sicily's outdoor markets share many characteristics with Arab souks. Meat, fish, fruit, and vegetables are piled high on the market stalls along



with tantalising sweet and savoury dishes to tempt the locals, the visitors, and the gods! Among some of the highlights will be Caponata, Arancini, Pasta alla Norma, Cannoli with ricotta combined with a variety of fillings, and Cassata with pistachio and chocolate, all of which have their roots in Palermo.



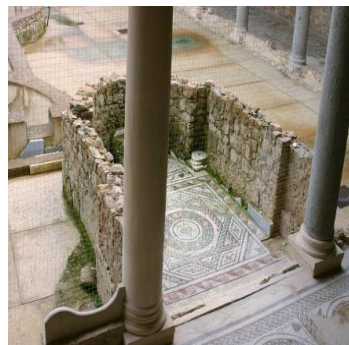
Later in the day we will visit the nearby hill town of Monreale located on the slope of Monte Caputo, overlooking the fertile valley called 'La conca d'oro' (The Golden Shell), where many varieties of citrus fruit including the thick skinned cedro are grown. We will visit the 12th century Duomo, which is one of the finest examples of Norman architecture and one of the most important attractions of Sicily. The town is also famous for its locally made jewellery and mosaics.



On Day 4 we will leave Palermo driving first to the picturesque coastal town of Cefalu, which has been designated one of the 100 most beautiful villages in Italy. The town is dominated by a monumental rock which was known to the Phoenicians as the promontory of Hercules, on which stands the Temple of Diana and a cistern dating from the 9<sup>th</sup> Century BC. The town boasts an exceptionally fine Sicilian Romanesque Duomo dating from the 12<sup>th</sup> Century AD, which, like the Cathedral in Monreale, is a UNESCO heritage site.



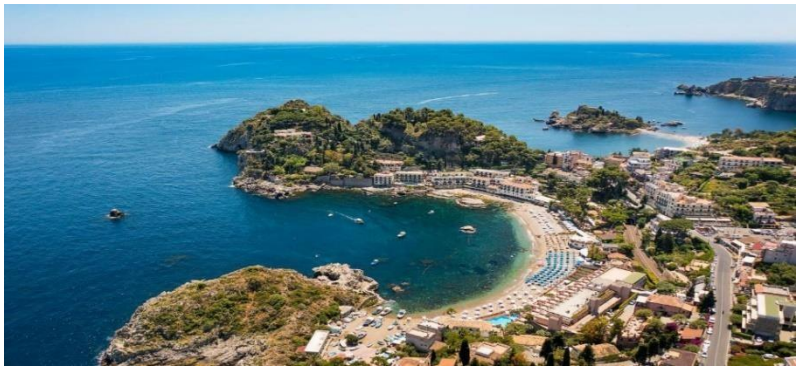
When we leave Cefalu, we will go hunting for “manna from heaven”. This will take us into the area around Pollina and Castelbuono, which is where this precious sap is harvested to produce a spectacular sweetener and medicinal aid. You can read more about it in Anne’s Blog. From here we will continue inland to the centre of the island to reach our destination for the night near Piazza Armerina. The purpose of our stay here is its proximity to the magnificent Roman villa, Villa Romana del Casale, which we will visit at the start of Day 5.





The Villa Romana del Casale is a large and elaborate Roman villa which was constructed in the early 4<sup>th</sup> Century AD. The site has been designated a UNESCO World Heritage site because it contains an extraordinarily beautiful collection of mosaics that have been excellently preserved due to the landslide and floods that covered the property until excavations began in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. We will have a lot to see here before we head back to the highway and then along the coast of the Ionian Sea to Taormina, which will be our base for three nights.

On our way there, we will have a brief stop at the coastal town of Aci-Trezza to see the three rocky islands that are the result of stones thrown at Odysseus by the Cyclops in the book 'the Odyssey.'



The famous 19th Century French writer Guy de Maupassant had this to say about Taormina: "Were a man to spend only one day in Sicily and ask, "What must one see?" I would answer without hesitation, "Taormina." It is only a landscape but a landscape where you find everything on earth that seems made to seduce the eyes, the mind, and the imagination."



On Day 6 we will spend the morning exploring the many attractions of Taormina in the company of a local guide. Often described as the pearl of the Mediterranean, Taormina has been the most popular tourist destination in Sicily for over 200 years, ever since it became an integral part of the Grand Tour. Perched on a rocky promontory with dramatic views of Mt Etna, this town has beautifully restored medieval

buildings and a network of winding streets full of shops, bars, and restaurants to attract the visitor. A major highlight is the famous Greek-Roman theatre, which started its life in the 3<sup>rd</sup> century BC and is still home to all manner of events including plays, concerts, fashion shows, and cinema festivals. The afternoon can be spent at leisure or swimming at Isola Bella or you may want to take a half day tour to see Mt Etna up close!



On Day 7 we will head off for a day trip stopping first at Savoca, the location of the unforgettable Godfather films, where we will enjoy some refreshments at the famous Bar Vitelli. Regrettably we cannot confirm that Al Pacino will be there! We will then move on to the port city of Messina, commonly referred to as the Gateway to Sicily because of its proximity to the Italian mainland. From its mythological beginnings as the home of



Scylla, one of the monsters that almost ended Odysseus' fated voyage, like the rest of Sicily it was settled by the Greeks, dominated by the Romans, invaded by the Byzantines, subjugated by the Arabs, and occupied by the Normans!



The historic centre of Messina is home to many architectural jewels, including the 12th-century Church of the Santissima Annunziata dei Catalani, the reconstructed Norman cathedral with its spectacular bell tower and astronomical clock, and the nearby Fountain of Orion.

The Regional Museum houses some magnificent Renaissance and Baroque art and two dazzling works by Caravaggio: *"The Adoration of the Shepherds"* and *"The Resurrection of Lazarus"*. With a plethora of places to enjoy an excellent dinner in this fine city, we will not be hungry as we make our way back to



Taormina.



On Day 8, we will leave Taormina and have our first stop for coffee at the attractive seaside town of Giardini Naxos. We will then travel on to the 8<sup>th</sup> Century BC port city of Catania, which is home to the stunning Cattedrale di Sant'Ágata, the elegant Elephant Fountain and raucous fish markets. Tonight, we will stay near Catania, so we are ready for our exploration of some wonderful local gardens on Day 9. Robert will be particularly keen to show us the gardens at Villa San Giuliano and the beautiful Giardini del Biviere. At the end of the day, we will make our way along the coast towards Siracusa, where we will be based in the area for two nights.

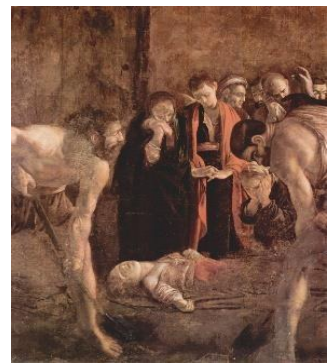
Siracusa was founded in 733 or 734 BC by Greek settlers from Corinth and Tenea. Described by Cicero as "the greatest Greek city and the most beautiful of them all," Siracusa equalled Athens in size during the 5<sup>th</sup> Century BC. It later became part of the Roman Republic and was the capital of the Byzantine Empire in the 7<sup>th</sup> Century AD. The city is mentioned in the Bible in the Acts of the Apostles book as a place where Paul stayed.



On Day 10 we will explore Siracusa and Ortigia island with a local guide, visiting the Greek theatre, the Temple of Apollo, and the Ear of Dionysus. We will also visit the Necropolis where the tomb of Archimedes is located. Siracusa was the birthplace of this legendary mathematician and engineer heralded for his famous scientific discoveries and (mistakenly) for his invention of a death ray machine utilising mirrors.



Lovers of Caravaggio's paintings will also be very keen to see his work, "*The Burial of St Lucia*," in the Chiesa di Santa Lucia alla Badia, located close to the Duomo in the old city.

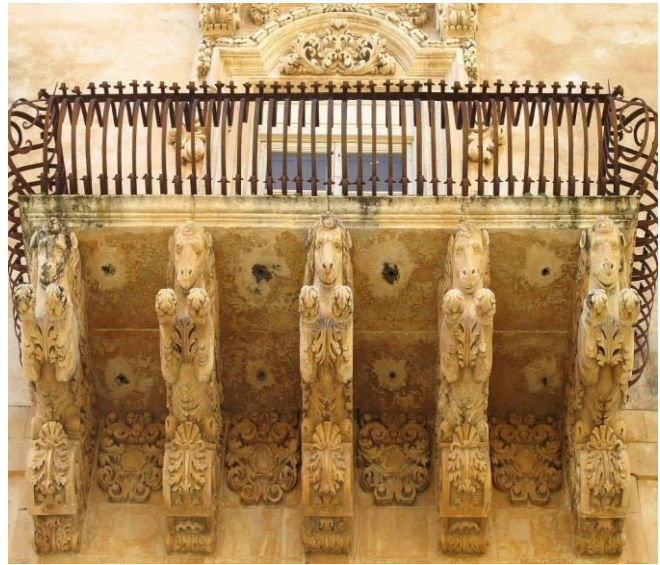


While in Siracusa, we will also look out for the famous Sicilian ceramics, the Testa di Moro, known as "Grasta", depicting ancient Moorish art from around 1100 AD.



Siracusa is also famous for its Sicilian Puppet shows. Hopefully there will be a performance on when we are there as attendance at one of these will be a must for us too. So will experimenting with some new gelato flavours as well as old favourites! We have the Sicilians to thank for inventing a machine for making and preserving gelato – in the late 1600's.

On Day 11, we will leave Siracusa and set off for Agrigento but we will stop off on the way to have a look around the Baroque towns of Noto and Ragusa. These two towns are part of a group of nine towns of medieval or pre-medieval origin located in south-eastern



Sicily that were all rebuilt in a unique late Baroque style after the devastating 1693 earthquake that partly or totally destroyed them.

Noto was described by the art historian Cesare Brandi as the "garden of stone". Its honey-coloured limestone buildings ooze originality with the use of gargoyles, masks, ornate facades and balconies. Ragusa has a refined elegance of its own, found in its maze of narrow streets and many churches and palaces. While we are in this corner of south-eastern Sicily, we will also be certain to find time to sample the famous Nero d'Avola wine, which is produced locally.

Then we will continue along the coast and as we approach Agrigento, we may catch a glimpse of the well-preserved Doric temples in the Valle dei Templi. We will stay in this area overnight.



Day 12 will start with a wander around the seven temples in this world-renowned archaeological site at Agrigento, which Greek poet and writer Pindar described as "one of the most beautiful cities of those inhabited by mortals."



The best preserved is the Temple of Concordia, which was converted into a Christian Basilica in the 6<sup>th</sup> Century dedicated to the apostles Peter and Paul by the then Bishop of Agrigento thereby surviving the destruction of pagan places for worship.



When we leave the Valley of the Temples, we will leave Agrigento and head off along the coast to Selinunte which boasts its own collection of Greek temples on an acropolis looking out over the sea as well as significant archeological sites stretching further inland. This was the location where the famous bronze statue, the Ephebe of Selinus was discovered.



We will continue further west passing the fishing port of Mazara del Vallo and the small town of Petrosino on our way to Marsala in the heart of wine country.

This is the home of the world-famous fortified wine DOP, one of Sicily's most renowned wines. Its intense aroma with hints of vanilla, burnt honey and roasted hazelnuts

goes well with delicacies such as cassateddi with dried figs and mustazzoli in vino cotto. It sounds like a great place for dessert. Marsala itself is an elegant town with an attractive baroque historic centre. It is famous in Italian history for the Landing of the Thousand, which led to the overthrow of the Kingdom of the two Sicilies and the Unification of Italy. The dark side of this was the death of feudalism that was written about in *"Il Gattopardo"* (*The Leopard*) and the expansion of property ownership eventually leading to the development of the Mafia as the vehicle for resolving disputes.



From Marsala we will not have far to go before reaching Trapani, where we will stay for the last night of our tour. Many important naval battles have taken place at Trapani from ancient times but for the last few hundred years it has principally been a major port for fishing, especially tuna, and salt production. Today it is a pleasant seaside town with a charming historic centre.





Day 13, the final day of our tour, will take us to Erice perched on a mountain overlooking Trapani. Erice, which has been designated one of Italy's 100 most beautiful villages, has very ancient origins. It was founded by the Phoenicians and later Hellenized, suffered badly at the hands of the Carthaginians and was under Arab control until Norman times, when it was renamed Monte San Giuliano. In 1934 the town retook its name of Erice.

Amongst the most visited sites are the two castles, Pepoli Castle and Venus Castle. The former was built by the Arabs while the latter was a Norman construction with imposing towers that derived its name from the fact that it was built on the site of the ancient Temple of Venus, allegedly founded by Aeneas. The medieval streets of Erice are a pleasure to wander around and the views are simply stunning.

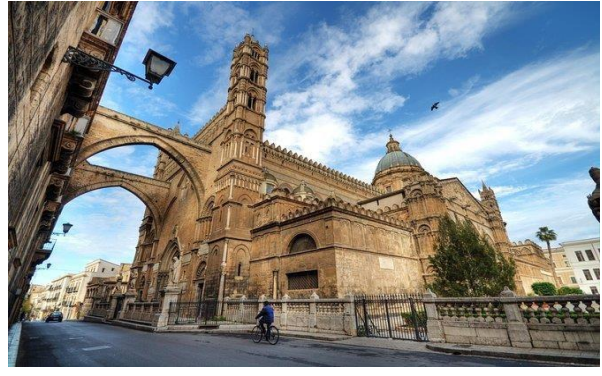


We must now make our return journey to Palermo. On the way there, however, we will make a slight detour to view the magnificent and unusually well-preserved Doric Temple of Segesta as our final farewell to this island's magnificent Greek heritage.

We will drive you to Palermo International Airport, or the railway station depending on your onward travel plans, or your accommodation in Palermo if you plan to stay in Sicily for a little longer. For those who wish to delay their departure there will be plenty more to see and do in this ancient city of Palermo.



It is always hard to reach the end of a tour, but we are confident this tour will have provided you with an unforgettable experience which we hope to replicate on our next adventure together. *Grazie e buon viaggio!*



### Tour inclusions

- All accommodation costs including breakfasts.
- All tour travel costs
- Daily sightseeing as outlined in this itinerary
- Pick -up and drop-off at prearranged locations in Palermo.
- One group dinner including beverages at a specially chosen venue.
- Expert local guides where appropriate.
- All entry fees



### Tour exclusions

- Meals and beverages other than those included
- City taxes, room service meals and mini bar refreshments
- Telephone/internet charges
- Porterage
- Gratuities
- Individual or optional sightseeing not undertaken as part of the tour
- Expenses incurred on sightseeing trips other than those provided as part of the tour including transport costs

**PLEASE NOTICE:**

WE DO NOT ARRANGE TRAVEL INSURANCE COMPREHENSIVE TRAVEL INSURANCE IS HIGHLY RECOMMENDED

For any queries email  
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Darryl has provided professional travel services since the 1990's. A widely travelled and fully accredited travel broker, Darryl has won many prestigious industry awards. Darryl is located in New Zealand but thanks to the wonders of modern technology it does not matter where he or his clients are located. As Darryl says, everything can be arranged remotely and he is available to his clients, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year if they experience an unforeseen event that affects their travel.

Our Broker Darryl will be delighted to work with you to ensure you have a trouble-free and truly memorable experience.