

Tour  
Information



# The Normans in Sicily





## Passports

Please ensure your 10 year British Passport is not out of date and is valid for a full three months beyond the duration of your visit. EU, Andorra, Liechtenstein, Monaco, San Marino or Switzerland valid national identification cards are also acceptable for travel to Italy.

## Visas

Visas are not required for British and EU nationals. For all other passport holders please check the visa requirements with the appropriate embassy.

Italian Consulate-General: "Harp House", 83/86 Farringdon Street, London EC4A 4BL.

Tel: (0)20 7936 5900. Fax: (0)20 7583 9425.

Email: [consolato.londra@esteri.it](mailto:consolato.londra@esteri.it)

Website:

[http://www.conslondra.esteri.it/Consolato\\_Londra](http://www.conslondra.esteri.it/Consolato_Londra)

Open Mon-Fri 0900-1200



## Tickets

Included with this documentation is an e-ticket, which shows the reference number for your flight. EasyJet have now replaced all of their airport check-in desks with EasyJet Baggage Drop desks. **Therefore you must check-in online and print out your boarding passes before travelling.** Checking in online also provides the opportunity for you to pre-book seats, if you wish, at a cost from £3.99 per seat.

Online check-in is available any time prior to travel using the reference number provided. Please see the enclosed e-ticket for more information or visit; [www.easyjet.com](http://www.easyjet.com)

Please check that the details on your documentation are accurate and that all names are spelt correctly and match the names on your passport. Your flight ticket is non-transferable and non-refundable. No refund can be given for non-used portions.



## Baggage allowance

We advise you to check the baggage allowances carefully as you are likely to be charged the excess if you exceed the weight limit. Maximum weights for single bags apply.

With Easyjet your ticket includes one hold bag of up to 15kg plus **one** cabin bag no bigger than 56 x 45 x 25 cm. Please note that personal bags (such as handbag or computer case) must be stored within you single piece of hand luggage and that on some busy flights you bag may have to go into the hold, at no extra cost. If you bring **one** piece of cabin baggage no bigger than 50 x 40 x 20 cm, it is guaranteed to always travel with you in the cabin, in the overhead lockers or under the seat in front of you.

Please contact the airline for further information

<http://www.easyjet.com/en/planning/baggage>

## Labels

Please use the luggage labels provided. It is useful to have your home address located inside your suitcase should the label go astray.

## Transfers

On arrival in Palermo, transfer to hotel for a three-night stay.

## Departure Tax

The departure tax is included in the price of your flight tickets.

## Special Requests

If you haven't already, please notify Travel Editions of any special requests as soon as possible to allow sufficient time to make the necessary arrangements. Please note that some airlines may charge for use of wheelchairs.



## Accommodation

### Mercure Hotel, Palermo

The four-star Mercure Palermo Centro is ideally located in the heart of Palermo, perfect for exploring this atmospheric city. The hotel's lobby bar offers an area to relax and unwind with a drink after a long day sightseeing. Free wi-fi is available in the public areas of the hotel. Rooms are modern and comfortable with private bathroom facilities, air conditioning, TV, telephone, and hairdryer.

For more information please visit the hotel's website: <http://www.accorhotels.com/gb/hotel-5932-mercure-palermo-centro/index.shtml>



## Food

Inspired by the many cultures that have settled on the island these past two millennia, Sicilian cuisine has a touch of Greek, Spanish, Arab, and of course Italian to it. The surrounding sea provides plenty of seafood, the rich, fertile soil of the island is perfect for growing olives, citrus fruit, aubergine, tomatoes, pistachios and almonds – the results are a varied, fresh, and mouth-watering combination.

Traditional dishes include *Caponata* (side dish of aubergine, capers and sweet balsamic vinegar), *Maccu* (Fava bean soup), *Arancini* (fried rice ball – a traditional snack), and *Sfincione* (Sicilian pizza, thick base with various delicious toppings).

Pasta dishes are also popular – try *Spaghetti ai ricci* (sea urchin pasta), the aubergine, tomato, basil and ricotta *Pasta alla norma* (originally from Catania), or *Manicotti* (similar to *cannelloni*, tubes of pasta filled and baked) – as is seafood, freshly caught, served simply grilled, boiled or fried. As for meat, the most frequently seen are lamb and goat. A result of the Arab control of the island in the 10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> centuries, apricots, melons, raisins, saffron and couscous often feature in dishes – such as *Couscous al pesce*.

Typical sweets include *Cannoli* (crusted tube filled with ricotta and sugar), *Cassata* (rich, creamy ricotta filled cake), *Gelato* (possibly invented in Sicily), and the lighter *Granita* (sweetened and flavoured crushed ice).

Table service is common in most restaurants and bars. Usually, a discretionary service charge is added to your bill in restaurants and bars, and no further tipping is required.



## Drink

The world's largest wine producer, Italy is home to some of the oldest viticulture regions. Named according to their grape variety or after their village or area of origin, excellent wines are produced throughout Italy and Sicily, with local wines offering great value and quality. With an ideal climate and soil (thanks to Mount Edna) grapes have been grown in Sicily since the Greeks first colonised the island. The dry white and rosé wines are excellent accompaniments to the seafood dishes, whereas the Nero d'Avola produces sumptuous hearty reds.

The most famous Sicilian wine, the fortified *Marsala*, is similar to sherry and port and comes in *oro* (golden), *ambra* (amber), or *rubio* (ruby), in a range from sweet to dry varieties. The golden, sweet, sometimes sparkling dessert wine *Moscato* is very pleasing.

Sicily also produces excellent liqueurs, such as *Ala*, *Averna*, *Fichera*, and some that can also be found on the mainland – *Limoncello*, *Grappa*, *Anisette* and *Amaretto*.

Meals included in the price of your holiday are:

**Breakfast** – daily

**Dinner** – Two dinners with wine at a local restaurant

**Lunch** – one lunch at a local restaurant



## Destination

After decades of Mafia domination, Sicily's chief city is re-emerging as one of Europe's great capitals. This dazzling city presents intriguing contrasts, from elegant, middle-class shopping quarters to the ancient and enchanting old city, divided by winding alleys lined with noisy outdoor markets. Its incredible mixture of cultures, architectural styles and culinary flavours is now infused with an optimism that is expressing itself in a frenzy of restoration, nightlife and cultural creativity.

### Places of interest included in your tour:

#### Chiesa di Santa Maria dell'Ammiraglio

Domed Norman-era church with ornate baroque remodelling known for its landmark Byzantine mosaics. Its official name is Santa Maria dell'Ammiraglio but it is better known as La Martorana. The church was founded in 1143 by George of Antioch, the admiral of the Norman King Roger. Dedicated to the Virgin Mary, it became known as Santa Maria dell'Ammiraglio, "St. Mary of the Admiral." The church's more common name comes from Eloisa Martorana, who founded a nearby Benedictine convent in 1194. The church has seen its share of history over the years: it was in La Martorana that Sicily's noblemen convened to offer the crown to Peter of Aragon. The facade and interior were altered considerably in 1588, during the baroque period, but thankfully the glorious mosaics survive intact and on full display.

#### Chiesa Capitolare di San Cataldo

This 12th-century church in Arab-Norman style is one of Palermo's most striking buildings. With its dusky-pink bijou domes, solid square shape, blind arcading and delicate tracery, it illustrates perfectly the synthesis of Arab and Norman architectural styles. The interior, while more austere, is still beautiful, with its inlaid floor and lovely stone-and-brickwork in the arches and domes. The building was founded in the 1150s by Maio of Bari (William I's emir of emirs, or chancellor), but Maio's murder in 1160 meant it was never finished – hence the lack of additional adornment within.

#### Palazzo dei Normanni

On a plateau above the incessant traffic and hubbub of the modern city, the Norman Palace,

Palermo's stronghold, rises skyward. This piece of architecture offers a taste of the rich variety of art, the simplicity and the poised style of the Norman Sicilian kings' court. The fortress was rebuilt by the Arabs in the Ninth Century and was known by the Arabic name, Càssaro (which now refers to an area of Palermo). An ancient Punic-Roman stronghold on the site became foundations for the new castle. The Normans, under Roger II embellished it, rendering the then four towered castle the royal mansion. At the heart of this splendid residence, is the Aula Regia, or Royal Hall, reserved for hearings and banquets.

#### The Cuba

On the south side of the main street Calatafimi lies the Cuba, a fine rectangular-shaped building, tall and compact, which stands on the place where a huge Arab Norman pavilion once stood, which was ordered by William II. The name of the building probably comes from the Arab world Ka'aba (cube). Later in centuries the building was used as a lazaret and as headquarter of the Bourbon chivalry. Inside the building are visible in various points the mugarnas, which are wall decorations made with chalk. Originally the palace was supposed to be surrounded by an artificial lake, as a model present in one of the halls proves.

#### Castello della Zisa

Castello della Zisa is one of the only remaining monuments to the decadence of Moorish Palermo. With muqarnas vaults, latticework windows, fountains and even a wind chamber to protect the emir's family from the scirocco (the hot African wind), the villa deserves its name which comes from the Arabic al aziz, meaning 'magnificent'. Today it houses a museum of Arabic crafts, the main features of which are some superbly crafted screens and a gorgeous 12th-century bronze basin.

#### Duomo, Cefalu

Begun in 1131 by the Norman king Roger II and not completed until 1240, the Duomo of Cefalù was intended as the principal religious seat in Sicily. Though it failed to fulfill this function, it is still a magnificent building. The Duomo's splendid Norman-Byzantine mosaics (1148), which feature a huge image of Christ Pantocrator in the apse, are remarkable. Since this was a Norman church, Christ

is depicted as a blond; but his nose and mouth look Greek, his brows and beard black like a Saracen's.

### **Caronia, Norman Castle**

This fortress is one of the most remarkable examples of Norman architecture in Sicily. The present castle was built in the years when Roger I (1031-1101) and Roger II (1095-1154) ruled. The building, placed in the walls of the fortified complex, was probably used by the court as a summer residence, and equipped with all amenities.

### **Abbey of San Filippo di Fragala**

San Filippo di Fragalà is one of the first Basilian-Norman centres, which has undergone considerable transformations over time. The Abbey was founded in 1090 by Queen Adelaide, the wife of Roger I, Count of Sicily.

### **Duomo di Monreale**

Famed for its glorious golden mosaics, Monreale Cathedral is perhaps the finest Norman building in Sicily. It was built in the 12th century as part of a grand royal complex a few miles outside of Palermo. Monreale Cathedral was built from 1174 to 1185. It was commissioned by William II (1154-89), the Norman ruler of Sicily, who wished to demonstrate the magnificence of his kingdom and outdo the splendid Palatine Chapel built by his grandfather, Roger II. The project employed both Sicilian and Byzantine craftsmen, resulting in a magnificent fusion of eastern and western influences.

For more information please visit:  
<http://www.cattedralemonreale.it/>

### **Cattedrale di Palermo**

The Duomo (Cathedral) of Palermo, Sicily, is an impressive 12th-century cathedral encompassing a wide variety of architectural styles. In 1184, during Sicily's Norman period, Archbishop of Palermo Gualtiero Offamiglio founded the cathedral on the site of a Muslim mosque, which had itself been built over an early Christian basilica. The archbishop's main aim was to surpass the glory of the magnificent cathedral of nearby Monreale, and the Palermo Duomo became an architectural battleground for "The Battle of the Two Cathedrals." For most visitors, Monreale Duomo remains the winner, but Palermo's cathedral is still well worth a visit.

For more information please visit: (Italian only)  
<http://www.cattedrale.palermo.it/>

## Tour manager

Your tour manager will be on hand throughout the tour to ensure that everything operated according to plan. If you have any problems or questions please see him or her immediately – it is often possible to resolve complaints or problems very quickly on the spot, and do everything to help you enjoy your holiday.

## Your Guide

**Gerald Deslandes** will be your guide for the duration of this tour. Gerald studied Art History at Cambridge University and in London. He now teaches BA students and gives lectures to many different art societies. He has accompanied many cultural tours to more than 25 different locations in the UK and abroad. Gerald is a former curator who has organised numerous exhibitions of contemporary art in the UK and is a NADFAS approved lecturer. He has lectured to NADFAS and Art Fund groups on a wide range of subjects from Constable to the art of World War I.

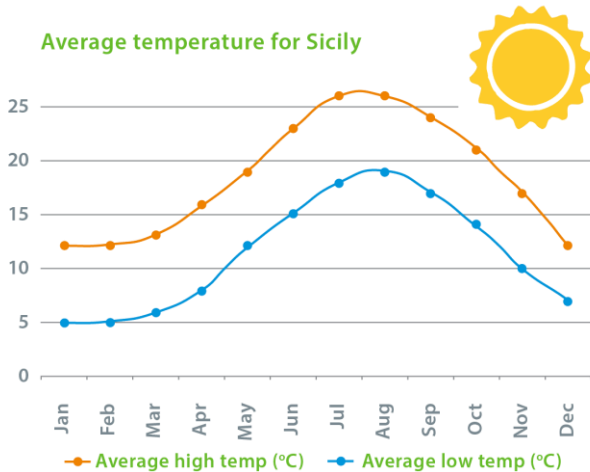
Gerald will give the following lectures during the tour:

*'The Normans in Sicily: Mosaics from the Martorana to Monreale'*

*'The Normans in Sicily: Abbeys, Castles & Palaces'*

# The Basics

**Climate** – The weather in Sicily at this time of year should be warm and pleasant, with temperatures higher than in the UK. But there is always the chance of the odd shower, so our best advice is to come prepared.



**Time** – GMT +2 hours (Summer time Apr-Oct);  
GMT + 1 (Standard time Nov-Mar)

**Language** – Italian

**Religion** – predominantly Roman Catholic

**National holidays** – New Year's Day (01 Jan); Epiphany (06 Jan); Easter Monday; Liberation Day (25 Apr); Labour Day (01 May); Republic Day (02 Jun); Assumption of Mary (15 Aug); All Saints' Day (01 Nov); Immaculate Conception (08 Dec); Christmas Day (25 Dec); St Stephens Day (26 Dec).

**Currency** – Euro. €1 = 100 cents. Notes are in denominations of €500, 200, 100, 50, 20, 10 and 5. Coins are in denominations of €2 and 1, and 50, 20, 10, 5, 2 and 1 cents.

**Banks** – Cashpoints compatible with international banking networks are located in all towns and cities, as well as airports, major train stations and other spots. They usually offer an attractive exchange rate. Those banks that still exchange foreign currencies into local money will always charge a transaction fee, so withdrawing money from an ATM usually represents the most logical means of obtaining euros.

**Credit cards** – American Express, Diners Club, MasterCard and Visa are widely accepted across the country. If you're eating at a restaurant, check prior to the meal that your card will be an acceptable

form of payment. Even in cities, it's advisable to carry a supply of cash with you at all times. Varying amounts of commission can be charged.

**Electricity** – 220 volt, two-pin continental plug.

**Drinking water** – Tap water is safe to drink. (Although you'll find plenty of bottled water for sale too)

**Shops** – Department stores and supermarkets are open Mon-Sat 0830-1930. Most small shops close between 1230 and 1600. Please note that most shops close on Sundays.

Although very common in tourist towns in Italy, please note that street vendors selling all kinds of designer knockoffs are illegal and could land you with a hefty fine. Care should also be taken when buying antiques since Italy is renowned for skilled imitators.

**Clothes & Shoes** – You may like to bring a warm sweater for cool evenings. Light rain wear for the occasional storm and good grip/flat walking shoes are recommended.

**Camera** – Bring plenty of memory cards/film and any spare camera batteries as these are not always available. Please check with your guide before photographing people.

**Bath plugs** – The hotel has plugs for basins, but it is useful to carry a 'universal' one with you.

**Telephones/mobiles** – You should be able to use your mobile phone in Italy, depending on your operator and contract.

**Tipping** – To keep our tours affordable, we do not increase the tour price by adding in tips. However, in the tourism industry, there is a certain level of expectation that when receiving a good service, one does award with a tip. Tour Managers, Representatives, Guides and Drivers appreciate a tip at the end of their involvement with the tour, but this is entirely at your discretion. We believe in allowing you to tip according to your level of satisfaction with their services, but for your guidance about £2-3 per person per day for the tour manager is the norm. We would like to reiterate that tipping is an entirely optional payment and this information is given purely to answer any questions you may have about it.



## Health

### Doctor/Dentist/Chemist

Please talk to your tour manager if you are feeling unwell and they will organise for you to see a doctor.

**Keep receipts for insurance claims.**



### Hospital

Your tour manager/hotel reception will arrange hospital transport.

**Keep receipts for insurance claims.**

### General Health Advice

We suggest you take a good supply of your own individual medicines with you and always keep some in your hand luggage in case you get delayed or your luggage goes astray. General-purpose supplies for bites, stings, or scratches, and your usual medication for headaches, or stomach upsets are always recommended. Oral re-hydration sachets are excellent for topping up salt and glucose levels.

Visit the NHS Fit For Travel website for more generally information specific to the country you are visiting – [www.fitfortravel.nhs.uk](http://www.fitfortravel.nhs.uk)

### Sun Protection

Always ensure you take sufficient sun protection and moisturiser. A sun hat and sunglasses are also advisable.

### Mosquitos

Like most Mediterranean islands, you might get a few mosquitos about in the evenings so it is worth taking some repellent.

### Inoculations

You should check with your own doctor and take their advice as to which inoculations are required for the country you are visiting, as only they know your medical history and recommendations are liable to change at short notice.



## Insurance

To be covered under your Travel Insurance Policy, if you become ill, it is essential that you contact a local doctor and also telephone the emergency number of your insurance company. You will **NOT** be covered for any claim unless this procedure is carried out. Your insurance company will then decide on the best course of medical attention.

### European Health Insurance Card (EHIC)

The EHIC replaced the old E111 in 2006. Valid in all EEA countries, the card lets you get state healthcare at a reduced cost or sometimes for free. It will cover you for treatment that is needed to allow you to continue your stay until your planned return. It also covers the treatment of pre-existing medical conditions.

Please note that the EHIC **is not** an alternative to travel insurance. It will not cover any private medical healthcare or costs such as being flown back to the UK, or lost or stolen property. Therefore, it is important to have both an EHIC and a valid private travel insurance policy. It is also important to note that each country's healthcare system is slightly different, so the EHIC might not cover everything that would be generally free on the NHS.

We strongly recommend that you take out an appropriate travel insurance policy when you travel abroad.

For more information about the EHIC please visit:

<https://www.ehic.org.uk>





## Emergencies

**Should an emergency arise, please call our offices on:**

00 44 20 7251 0045

Outside office hours (Mon-Fri 0900-1700), telephone our emergency staff on:

00 44 20 7431 8201 or

00 44 7899 796542 or

00 44 7831 133079 or

00 44 1235 850720

**PLEASE USE THESE NUMBERS ONLY IN THE EVENT OF A GENUINE EMERGENCY.**

If you find that you are in need of consular assistance during your holiday:

British Consulate Rome

Via XX Settembre 80/a

00187 Rome

Italy

Email: [italy.consulate@fco.gov.uk](mailto:italy.consulate@fco.gov.uk)

Tel: +39 06 4220 2431

Fax: +39 06 4220 2334

Open Mon-Fri 0900-1700.

Outside these hours, emergency consular assistance is available on +44 (0) 207 008 1500.

Travel Editions

3 Young's Buildings, London EC1V 9DB

Tel: 02072510045

Email: [info@traveleditions.co.uk](mailto:info@traveleditions.co.uk) [www.traveleditions.co.uk](http://www.traveleditions.co.uk)

PLEASE NOTE: THIS INFORMATION IS CORRECT AT THE TIME OF PRINTING. IT IS MEANT AS A GUIDE ONLY  
AND WE CANNOT ACCEPT RESPONSIBILITY FOR ERRORS OR SUBSEQUENT CHANGES.