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Sunday · June 29th, 2025 - Sunday · July 6th, 2025

## Tastes & Sights of Sicily with Gabe & Katherine Thompson

### Pre Travel

Join Gabe & Katherine Thompson as they explore the Island of the Sun through its food, wine, history and people

### Sunday · June 29th

Arrival at Palermo Airport and Transfer to Foresteria Planeta  
La Foresteria Planeta Estate  
Aperitivo at Planeta Foresteria  
Dinner at Planeta Foresteria

### Monday · June 30th

Selinunte Tour  
Planeta Winery Tour, Lunch & Wine Tasting  
Beach Club Fun & Dinner Under the Stars

### Tuesday · July 1st

Cooking Class at Foresteria Planeta  
Mozia & Marsala's Famous Salt Pans  
Dinner at Mamma Caura

### Wednesday · July 2nd

Palermo City & Street Food Tour  
Donnafugata Contessa Winery

### Thursday · July 3rd

Walking Tour of the Valley of the Temples with Private Picnic at Diodoro's Garden  
Dimora Cottanera (3 Nights)  
Cottanera Winery & Dinner

Mt. Etna Jeep Tour & Santa Maria La Nave Winery Visit

Friday · July 4th	Culinary Experience at Santa Maria La Nave
Saturday · July 5th	Le Mamme del Borgo Culinary Experience Taormina Walking Tour
Sunday · July 6th	Departure for Catania Airport

## Pre Travel



Join Gabe & Katherine Thompson as they explore the Island of the Sun through its food, wine, history and people

## Sunday · June 29th



Arrival at Palermo Airport and Transfer to Foresteria Planeta  
Driver: Filorama +39 347 104 5396

Image credits: Pixabay

### Meeting Point After Baggage Claim

Arrive at Palermo Airport. Your driver will take you to Foresteria Planeta to check into your hotel (about a 30 minute drive).

## Notes

*Airport transfers are not included in the pricing. We would be happy to arrange private transfers or cluster you with other travelers arriving and/or departing on the same flight (or similar flight times).*



### La Foresteria Planeta Estate

+39 0925 195 5460

SP79 Km 91,  
Contrada Passo di Gurra,  
92013 Menfi

Jun 29 · 3:00 PM

Check In

11:00 AM

Check Out

La Foresteria stands on a green hill with a splendid view over the countryside near Menfi, representing the nature and style of the Planeta family's hospitality. The resort is immersed in a harmonious expanse of vineyards and olive groves, and welcomes those who wish to enjoy a holiday in a peaceful oasis between the beautiful Sicilian coast and the calm of the country. The scent of the herbs surrounding the wine resort enriches the dishes from the kitchen, a treasure house of flavors from a territory of excellent wine. La Foresteria Planeta lies at a strategic point of Sicily, between archaeological sites and nature reserves, and provides the perfect beginning for a journey of discovery of the island. The infinity pool lies between green vineyards and cool olive trees, ideal for a refreshing swim while enjoying the warmth of the Sicilian sunshine.

## Amenities

Breakfast is included each morning.



## Aperitivo at Planeta Foresteria

Meeting Point

Planeta Foresteria Pool

Meet your hosts--Gary, Sal, Peppe and Marcella--and fellow guests as we kick-off our spectacular seven day adventure poolside at Planeta Foresteria with Gabe & Katherine. Enjoy an aperitivo, Sicilian style, with some delectable bites to get you in the mood and atmosphere of Sicily: casual, very cool, and very delicious!



Dinner at Planeta Foresteria

Enjoy a sumptuous feast prepared by Chef Angelo Pumilia--your introduction to Sicilian cuisine--paired beautifully with topnotch wines from Planeta's portfolio produced in five different vineyards scattered across the island, representing different terroirs, indigenous and international grape varietals, and microclimates.

Monday · June 30th



Selinunte Tour

**After breakfast, meet your hosts. Today you will visit the Archaeological Park of Selinunte.**

Selinunte is the largest archaeological park in Europe with more ruins and temples than you've ever seen. Selinunte was one of the most important of the Greek colonies in Sicily. The archaeological site contains five temples centered on an acropolis. Of the five temples, only the Temple of Hera, also known as "Temple E", has been re-erected. At its peak before 409 BC the city

may have contained up to 30,000 people, excluding slaves. You will visit the temples, ruins and, time permitting, get to walk through the ancient streets arranged in a surprisingly modern grid pattern.

After the visit of Selinunte, we will head to Planeta Dispensa for a wine tasting and lunch.



Planeta Winery Tour, Lunch & Wine Tasting

At around noon, we will depart Selinunte and head to Planeta Dispensa winery.

Hidden within the Menfi Hills and with 160 hectares of vineyard, the Dispensa estate is the beating heart of all of Planeta's activities. The family's houses are within the Baglio (the Sicilian word for estate), while around them lie the production, administrative and planning offices of the Planeta enterprise. The greatest part of the company's production takes place here, and they have built two wineries: the large and the small. The Infernotto, inside the small winery, is the family caveau (literally, crypt), with a collection of the family's favorite labels from all over the world and all the Planeta vintages. The library holds hundreds of Italian and foreign books, from 1700 to the present day, all dedicated to vines and wine.

Enjoy a tasting of Planeta's fabulous wines along with a delicious light lunch. After the tour, we will head back to the resort.



Beach Club Fun & Dinner Under the Stars

Image credits: The Travel Nook on Unsplash

We will depart for Planeta's nearby beach club, Insula, located about 10 minutes from the resort. This is a private beach club, with all the amenities to make for a very relaxing evening. Bring your bathing suit and an appetite as we will dine under the stars this evening, enjoying a Sicilian style BBQ *al fresco*.

## Notes

*Insula has changing rooms and showers. You are welcome to use any of the amenities available. The beach club is well shaded under trees and you are also welcome to lie in the sun on lounge chairs in the dunes. The beach is public and has a sandy beach, but the dunes area and club are private. We will shuttle the group in waves to go to the club and for the return.*

Tuesday · July 1st



After breakfast, get ready for your cooking class with Chef Angelo and Chefs Gabe & Katherine!

Learn about Sicilian cuisine and what's in season. You'll be working in small groups today and will enjoy lunch based on the dishes you helped to create.



In the mid-afternoon, we will head towards the Marsala area, famous for its namesake wine and Sicily's world-famous sea salt. You will be taken to Lo Stagnone, the Lagoon.

Lo Stagnone is off the beaten path—a nature reserve surrounded by Sicily’s famous salt pans, where the centuries old tradition of harvesting sea salt continues until today (sea salt is harvested in June/July so you will be able to see the process!). You will get to Lo Stagnone and cross the shallow lagoon while admiring the Medieval windmills that were used to transfer the water from pan to shallower pan until nothing was left but sea salt (due to the water evaporation).

At the salt pans of Marsala, and in the center of the lagoon, you will find evidence of the oldest Phoenician settlement in the Mediterranean on the museum-island of Mozia. The ancient town of Mozia is on the island of San Pantaleo. You will arrive by boat, enjoying a short trip around the lagoon. Once there, you will start your visit by following the ancient walls.

Since ancient times, Mozia was a very important commercial center for trade between East and West. The Phoenicians were aware of its strategic position. At low tide, you can still see the ancient causeway on the shallow, marshy seabed. This causeway connected the small island with the cape of Birgi on the mainland.

After your visit of Mozia, head back towards the mainland for a tour of the Salt Museum of Infrersa, including a salt tasting performed by a Salt Sommelier and a demonstration of how the windmills worked to grind the salt and move water from one pan to the next. If you are lucky, you'll get to meet the workers who harvest the sea salt, right in front of our eyes! It's an authentic spectacle!



## Dinner at Mamma Caura

After our salt experience, cross over to Mamma Caura for a delightful meal as the sun sets over Lo Stagnone. The dramatic sunset will not disappoint!

Return to the resort after dinner.

**Wednesday · July 2nd**





## Palermo City & Street Food Tour

After breakfast, meet your hosts to discover Palermo, Sicily's capital and largest city, and Monreale, located above the hills of the city.

Palermo is a city that's a mix of fascinating influences thanks to its location at the crossroads of the Mediterranean. It's a city with amazing food, friendly people, and a cultural and religious history stretching back for millennia and reflecting the many occupiers that have left their mark over the centuries. The city has passed from one dominating power to another with remarkable frequency. Its strategic position at the heart of the Mediterranean brought wave upon wave of invaders, including the Phoenicians, the Carthaginians, the Greeks, the Romans, the Arabs, the Normans, the Swabians, the French, the Aragonese and the Bourbons. The result of this quilted history is evident today in the vast range of architectural styles, the intriguing fusion of ingredients used in many local dishes, and in the many place names whose etymology bypasses Italian linguistic traditions.

The city was conquered by Arabs in 831, and a period of immense prosperity commenced. You will be enchanted by the city's wide boulevards, traditional Sicilian Old Quarter, and Baroque palaces. You will then visit the city's main sights, including the Norman section, Quattro Canti di Citta (the Four Corners of the City), Palermo's extravagant Baroque square and the twelfth-century Duomo. Much of what you see today belongs to UNESCO's World Heritage!

You will visit Capo market, the oldest market in Palermo, where you will see and taste famous Palermo Street Food such as "panelle", "arancine", "crocchette" and "PaniCaMeusa". Admire colorful stalls featuring an abundance of fruit, vegetables, seafood and meats as the sellers' cry for our attention.

**You will then visit the city's main sights.**

The tour includes the Norman section, Quattro Canti di Citta (the Four Corners of the City), Palermo's extravagant Baroque square and the Twelfth-Century Duomo (Cathedral).

One of the highlights of today is a visit of Monreale, about 10 miles from the center of Palermo, overlooking the city. Discover the Arab-Norman splendor of the Cathedral and Cloister. This nearby treasure dates from the 12th century and shows the diverse architectural influences of both the Normans and the Arab population. Enjoy a private organ concerto once the doors of the Cathedral close to the public.



## Donnafugata Contessa Winery

+39 0925 195 5465

Contrada Ulmo, 92017

Sambuca di Sicilia

**Meeting Point**  
Hotel Lobby

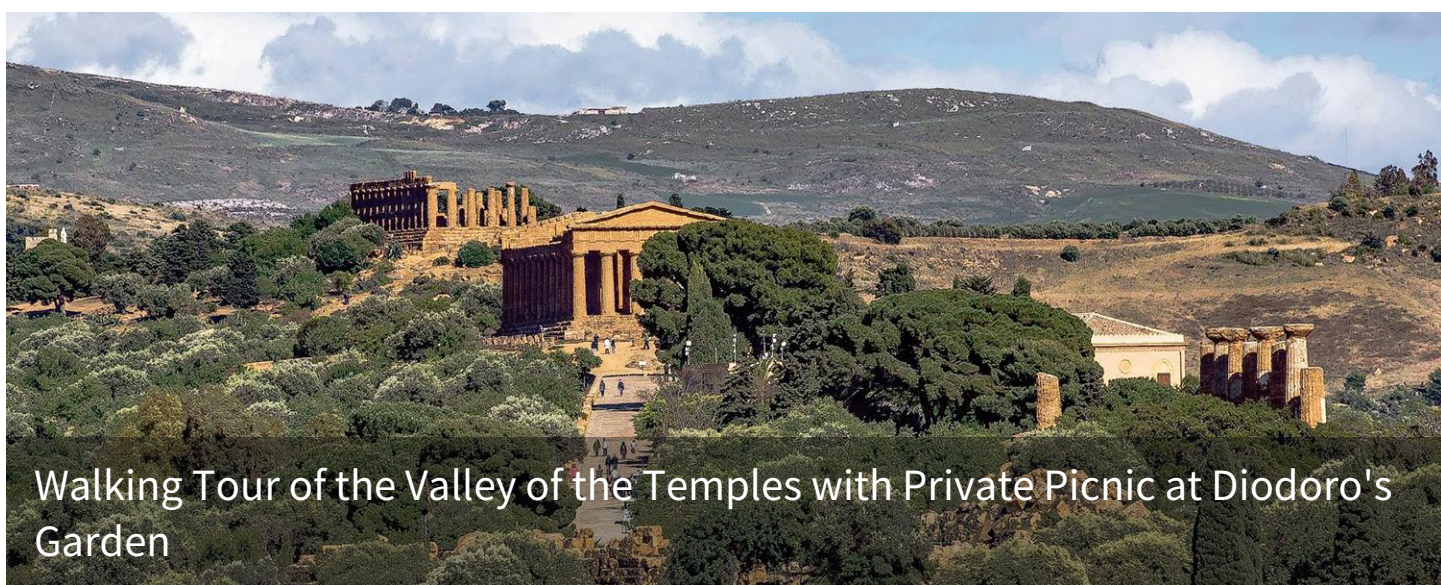
After our day in Palermo, we will head to Donnafugata's ancestral home--one of the most important winemaking families in Italy.

What makes this experience different from other winery experiences? Here, you will find yourself in the home of the **Donnafugata** family: the **Rallo** family. This is no factory or workplace: you will find yourself, in the family's historic villa, the very core from which the great Donnafugata realities unfold! Here too, you will find the **winery** and the **vineyard**: we are at the estate of one of the most important families in Sicilian wine and food! In addition to the bucolic visit, you will enjoy an extraordinary tasting and lunch, in an absolutely warm, welcoming atmosphere, where you can enjoy a moment of total immersion in the flavors of wine (including two Donnafugata Iconic Wines, **Mille e una Notte** and **Ben Ryé Passito di Pantelleria DOC**), extra-virgin oil (the special **Milleanni**), their famous couscous, nature, family and Sicilian tradition.

A unique experience of its kind, in which a mix of varied sensations coexist harmoniously!

After dinner, you will be taken back to Planeta Foresteria.

Thursday · July 3rd



Check out of your hotel after breakfast. Your hosts will meet you in the hotel lobby and take you to Agrigento on your way to your final destination on Mt. Etna.

As one of the premier Italian destinations, it is easy to forget that Sicily was once a thriving Greek colony. Thought to be some of the best Greek ruins in the world, the Valle dei Templi (Valley of the Temples) near the western Sicilian town of Agrigento is an amazing sight, especially when lit up during the evening. Most of the seven temples date from the 5th century B.C., with the best-preserved being the Tempio della Concordia (Temple of Concordia), and the oldest the Tempio di Ercole (Temple of Hercules), from the 6th century B.C. You'll need a few hours to wander through the archaeological zone

Join Marcella to explore one of the best-preserved relics of the island's Magna Graecia--Greater Greece. As English author and historian **Douglas Sladen** once said, "*If you want to understand ancient Greece, come to Sicily*". Indeed, history tells us that there were once more Greeks living in the colonies of southern Italy and Sicily known as Magna Graecia than there were in Greece. You will hear the amazing story the 8 temples tell: from the almost entirely intact **Temple of Concordia** to the **Temple of Hera** that suffered in a medieval earthquake and from the **Temple of Juno** on its hilltop perch to the unfortunate **Temple of Zeus**, dismantled by greedy builders over the centuries for its stones.

After the visit, you will reach **Diodoro's Garden** inside the Archaeological Park, where your heart and stomach will be nourished: among orange trees and aromatic hedges, the sumptuous beauty of the Valley of the Temples emerges, while enjoying a typical Sicilian picnic in an olive and lemon grove.

Here, the nature of Sicily has always expressed itself with intense scents and delicious flavors.

In this unique location, you can enjoy a unique and wonderful picnic. Experience the slow and regenerating rhythm of the nature that surrounds the Greek Temples and enjoy the authentic flavors of Sicilian cuisine, enhanced by the delicious wines of our land.

The citrus garden in which the picnic is served is part of the agricultural area of the Valley of the Temples Park, which covers 1,400 hectares. This citrus grove dates back to 1740, and it is in the historical record in ancient maps that the local Cistercian Monks wanted to plant the most colorful and productive trees on the island on this spot!

After lunch, we will head for Mt. Etna!

### Notes

*Today will be our longest day. Be prepared for long rides (and catch up on your napping!). Drive time from Planeta Foresteria to Agrigento is one hour and the driver from Agrigento to Cottanera is another 2 hours and 45 minutes.*



## Dimora Cottanera

+39 338 22 20 205

Strada Provinciale, 89 - Contrada Iannazzo, 95012 Castiglione di Sicilia CT

**Jul 03**

Check In

**Jul 06**

Check Out

**3 Nights**

Duration

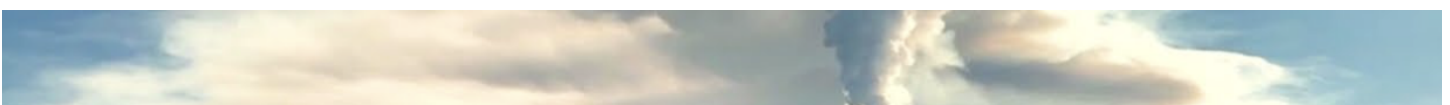
Dimora Cottanera is a new hospitality project that launched in August 2023. It is the Cottanera Family's way of living in the vineyard that they wish to share with all their guests.

It all starts with the memories of the country house, that safe place that speaks of summer holidays among the rows of the vineyard. Today, it is precisely that beauty that they want their guests to discover, softened by a contemporary vision of hospitality.

Surrounded by the scents and colors of the changing seasons, Cottanera will tell you about their passion for good wine and the flavors "from the place", the essential values and the design that harmonizes with the fine local craftsmanship.

Our country house, surrounded by the vineyards of Feudo di Mezzo, after a skilful restoration, offers 13 rooms distributed in different environments: the villa, the courtyard and the garden. Different in shapes, colors and furnishings, but linked by a single desire: to dress the countryside with understated elegance, without disturbing their essence but seeking contemporaneity.

Welcome to Dimora Cottanera.





For 60 years, the Cambria Family has lived and cultivated the volcanic land, difficult and generous at the same time, with passion and respect.

Entire families work for Cottanera, in particular the women who, according to the tradition of Etna, possess the right delicacy in the care of the vineyards and in the selection of the grapes. Knowledge is passed down from generation to generation.

The Family's aim is to create an innovative viticulture community on Etna that aims for quality and manages to translate the voice of the territory into wine, enhancing the differences that each individual parcel of land gives to the grapes.

Join Mariangela and her team as they showcase their wines in their lovely tasting room with Mt. Etna as our backdrop--the perfect way to be welcomed to the Etna region for the second part of our journey.

**Friday · July 4th**



**Meeting Point**  
Hotel lobby

**Today you will explore Mount Etna!**

Mt. Etna is an active volcano on the East coast of Sicily, close to the metropolitan city of Catania, Sicily's second largest city. It is the highest active volcano in Europe outside the Caucasus. The Mt. Etna excursion is one of the greatest adventures in Sicily, not only for the volcanic phenomena but also for the different kinds of vegetation, intriguing volcanic landscape with its

solidified “rivers” of lava, craters, lava caves, nature trails and stunning views of the countryside and the sea. Your tour today will take you through rarely-visited lava flows and craters based on the fact that you can't get to these sights without the help of a 4x4 vehicle, which you will be traveling in!

After the exciting ascent and visit of Etna, your guide will take you to Santa Maria La Nave one of Etna's world-class wineries for a wine tasting and dinner.



## Culinary Experience at Santa Maria La Nave

Join Sonja and Riccardo as they share their passion and story in how their unprecedented estate came to be.

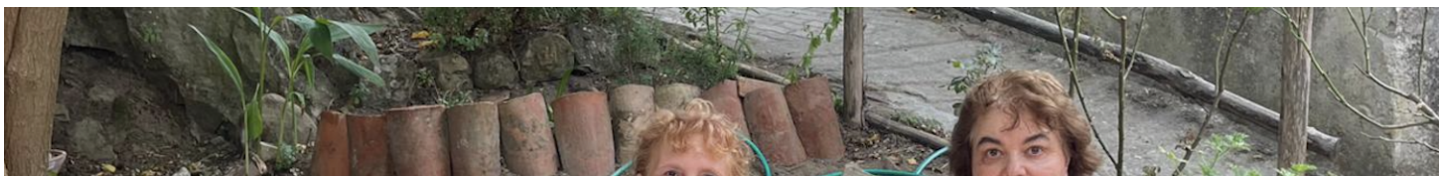
A short description of their ethos and history:

Our passion and our interest for the ancient local vine varieties of Mount Etna have grown during the years, so much that we reached the wildest and most extreme areas of the volcano looking for ancient **pre-phylloxera vines**, completely abandoned and at risk of extinction. In 2000 we started the wonderful adventure of creating a heroic vineyard at Contrada Nave, in order to safeguard some Etnean local vine varieties. Over 15 years, a local agronomist had performed an accurate mass selection of the best plants of **Grecanico Dorato** and **Albanello** that could be found in Contrada Nave. They were all ungrafted, many of them were abandoned and covered by brambles just a bunch was still thriving in small gardens, thanks to the loving care of the last old and stubborn farmers of the area.

In 2004, after a few years of researches, we managed to buy a series of small adjoining plots from some local farmers who could not keep cultivating the land. They were sunny and with a perfect exposure: patches of land that were ideal for a heroic viticulture, perfect to preserve a precious DNA that was at risk of extinction on the North-western slope of Mount Etna, at 1100 meters above the sea level. It's here that we grow the grapes with which we make our **Millesumare Sicilia Bianco DOC**, a monovarietal **Grecanico Dorato**, and we safeguard our 500 plants of the almost extinct **Albanello**. We created this wonderful vineyards respecting its environment and preserving the best varieties of the local plants that were already present in that area. Grecanico Dorato had the strength and the courage to grow and live for entire centuries on the top of Mount Etna, the highest active volcano in Europe.

Sonja and Riccardo's mission at SantaMariaLaNave is to bring these amazing gardens back to their original magnificence, in order to make wines of excellence that fully express this precious extreme *terroir*. And so, they will share this deep passion with us tonight.

**Saturday · July 5th**





## Le Mamme del Borgo Culinary Experience

As our grand finale, you will be taken to enchanting **Motta Camastra** for a walk through the small streets of the center of the village, discovering the beautiful nooks and crannies of the town. You'll eventually get to the house of the Mamme del Borgo, the "local mothers," who knead ancient flours and work them into *maccarruni*, a typical Sicilian pasta. The fruit of their labor will then be served to you, with the added value of being pampered by the Mamme! You will enjoy the conviviality and environment of a typical Sicilian family in their home.

Return to your hotel after dinner.



## Taormina Walking Tour

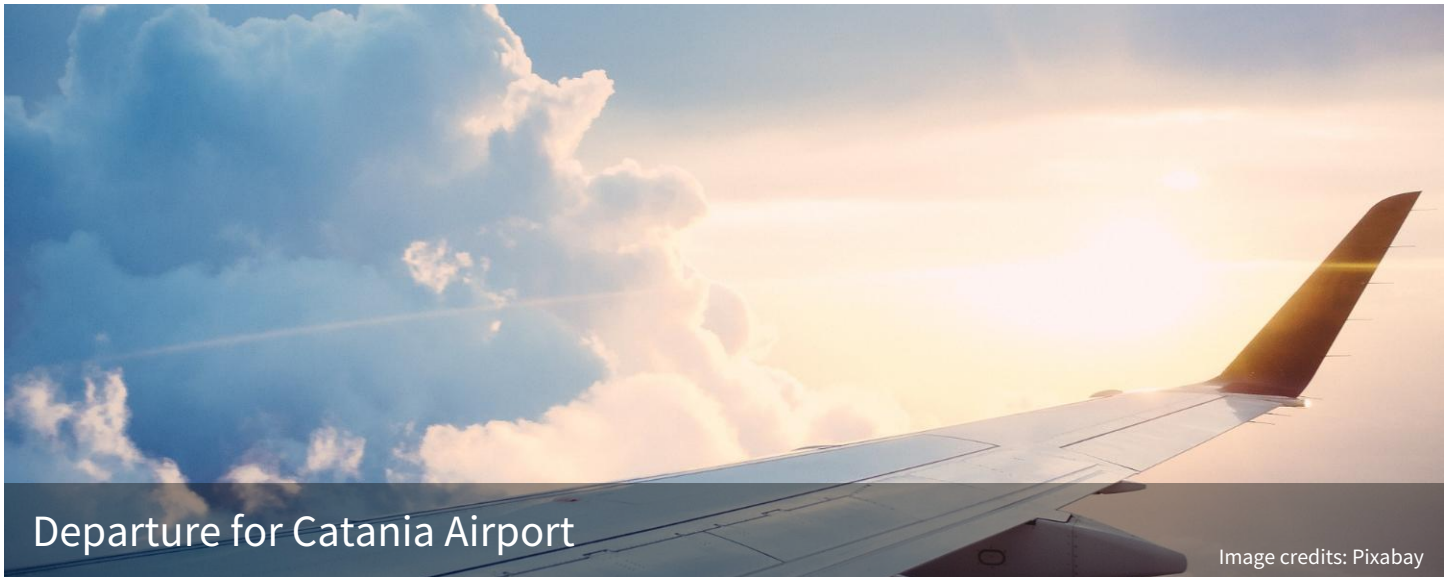
After breakfast, you will be taken to nearby Taormina!

Enjoy a walking tour of Taormina, a quaint little town located on the East coast of Sicily, overlooking the Ionian Sea.

The Greeks founded Taormina in 358 B.C. Later, it was occupied by the Romans before into Byzantine hands. The little town is located on the East coast of Sicily, overlooking the Ionian Sea. Taormina is called the "Pearl of the Mediterranean" for several reasons: nestled on Mount Tauro, it offers the beauty of Mediterranean architecture while surrounded by endless magnificent views of both sea and mountains. Thanks to its high position, Taormina offers visitors a breathtaking experience through its surreal panoramic views and overall atmosphere. From its Greek theatre you can admire the bay of Giardini Naxos and Mount Etna.

After your exploration of the town's sights, you will have free time to stroll through the cobble-stoned streets and alleys, stop by at a local café for an aperitivo or browse through the many shops of local crafts and high end brand.

**Sunday · July 6th**



## Departure for Catania Airport

Image credits: Pixabay

### **Meeting Point**

Hotel Lobby

Authentic Explorations would be happy to arrange for your airport transfer to Catania Airport for your flight home.

### **Buon Viaggio!**

### **Notes**

*Airport transfers are not included in the pricing. We would be happy to arrange private transfers or cluster you with other travelers arriving and/or departing on the same flight (or similar flight times).*