

Sicily – a fusion of culture, romance and southern sunshine

The volcanic Aeolian Islands are a short ferry ride from Milazzo, the port town on the northeast tip of Sicily. The seven islands each have their own charm, not least of which is Stromboli, the island volcano in permanent eruption. Salina is the most green and fertile of the islands, and is covered in vineyards and caper plants. The location for the 1995 film "Il Postino", it is perhaps the most beautiful of the archipelago and the perfect place for a relaxing or romantic holiday "à deux". Spend time at the stunning bay at Pollara or explore the verdant countryside. The tiny Island of Panarea overlooks the azure Mediterranean, with the smoking volcano of Stromboli beyond. The whole island is a "hippy chic" secret retreat for well-heeled Italians and foreign royalty. Spend time sightseeing and shopping in the boutiques of San Pietro, wandering amongst the Bronze Age ruins at Punta Milazzese or simply soaking up the sun on the beach.

Sicily's eastern Ionian Coast holds some of the Island's most exciting sights. Taormina is the island's most chic resort, with its remarkable Graeco-Roman theatre. The town's breathtaking views of snow capped Etna and azure coastline, combined with its flower decked streets of medieval palazzi and castle make it an ideal base for a cultural or beach holiday in Sicily. Climb Europe's highest active Volcano, Mount Etna, to marvel at the bleak lava wilderness or take the Circumetnea railway around the lava-strewn base.

In the southeastern corner of the island is Siracusa, with its offshore Island, Ortigia. Once one of the most important and beautiful cities of Greek world, it is a treasure trove of historic sites and is an essential stop on a tour of the Island. Spend the day taking in 2,500 years of history and soaking up the atmosphere. Nearby is Catania, Sicily's second largest city. It was rebuilt in the Baroque style, in lava, after a devastating earthquake. Take a break from the remarkable architecture, with a walk in the Alcantara Gorges amongst the woods and cooling waterfalls.

The southern coast of Sicily, with its golden beaches, has a softer, gentler landscape, sprinkled with the honey toned baroque towns of Ragusa, Modica and Noto. No holiday to Sicily would be complete without a trip to The Valley of the Temples, just outside medieval Agrigento. The eight temples built by the Greeks in 5th Century BC sit on rocky crests, south of the city overlooking the sea. The historic spa town Sciacca, with its fusion of Arabic and Norman architecture, is ideal for a day trip. Travel into the Sicilian hills to Piazza Armerina, where you'll find the famous 4th Century hunting lodge, Villa Romana del Casale. The Villa is home to some of the best-preserved and extensive examples of Roman mosaics, including a well-known picture depicting ladies exercising in their bikinis.

It is worthwhile making a day trip to Trapani, which sits at the west of the Island. Famous for its salt production the medieval town centre is directly linked to its more famous mountainous neighbour, Erice, by cable car. At 751m above sea level and often a citadel above the clouds, Erice is a wonderfully preserved mediaeval town steeped in history, offering the most breathtaking views.

The north of the Island is dominated by Palermo, from where ferries leave to the Aeolian Islands and the Amalfi Coast on the mainland. Capital city and strategic port, its blend of cultures makes for an exciting experience. A heady mix of elegant baroque facades, Spanish palazzi and Arabic cupolas, combines with a jumble of narrow medieval streets. The Norman Cathedral and nearby Palazzo dei Normanni, with its stunning mosaics, are a "must-see".

Getting There

Fly direct from the UK to Palermo or Catania with Ryanair, BA or Air Malta. Take ferries from Milazzo or Palermo to the Aeolian Islands.

Combine With

Each other! Stay on Sicily itself and then move on to the Aeolian Islands for a varied trip with plenty of culture and relaxation. You can also travel to the Amalfi Coast by ferry (a day long journey) or fly to most other areas of Italy's mainland.

For more images & hotel details see www.c-boutiquehotels.com

To book call **08717 500070**

Sicily, the largest island in the Mediterranean, is ideal for authentic holidays in Italy and romantic honeymoons. A gateway between Europe and Africa, Sicily is a fusion of the influences of its rulers, all of whom have left their mark on this cosmopolitan island. The food is different and spicier. The architecture and culture is exciting and vibrant. Holidays in Sicily offer breathtaking cities and exciting sights, combined with secret corners, beautiful countryside and relaxing beaches. The Mediterranean climate ensures holidays in Sicily are a year round affair, with summer sunshine and festivals at Christmas and Easter packed with tradition and folklore.

Our Recommended Hotels on Sicily & the Aeolian Islands

The Aeolian Quarter
The Salina Lighthouse
The Granary
The Sicily Priory

