

ITINERARY • MODICA

Modica in a day: from the Corso to the viewpoints, between staircases and chocolate

Ten stops between **Modica Bassa** and **Modica Alta**, from Corso Umberto I to the two cathedrals, from the castle to the viewpoints, with the staircases connecting the two towns and a break for chocolate. For each stop, find out what to see, how long to stay, and a practical tip.

DURATION**One day**

7-8 hours with breaks

STOPS**10 stops**

about 4.7 km

GETTING AROUND**On foot, with many staircases and climbs.**

Corso Umberto I is flat.

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STOP 1 OF 10

Corso Umberto I, the hidden river beneath the road

🕒 Recommended time: 20 minutes



Corso Umberto I, the main street of Modica Bassa, with the historic buildings

You start at the bottom of the valley, on **Corso Umberto I**, the main street of **Modica Bassa**. It is long and flat, with historic buildings, cafés with outdoor tables, and shops where chocolate appears in all its variations.

To understand where you are, look at the sides of the valley: Modica sits on a plateau carved by canyons, the cave, and is divided into **Modica Bassa**, at the bottom, and **Modica Alta**, on the hills, connected by hundreds of steps. The Corso follows the path of **two rivers that now flow covered**, just beneath the road.

Among the buildings, you can recognise the **Teatro Garibaldi**, neoclassical, built in the early 1800s.

A TIP

Today's tour is a continuous **up and down**: wear comfortable shoes and bring water. Leave your car outside the centre and watch for signs regarding restrictions and fees, which change.

STOP 2 OF 10

Palazzo della Cultura: the Civic Museum and the Chocolate Museum

🕒 Recommended time: 40 minutes



The entrance of the Palazzo della Cultura, home to the Civic Museum and the Chocolate Museum, in Modica

At number **149** on the Corso, you find the **Palazzo della Cultura**, in the former monastery of the Benedictines. It houses two museums: the **Civic Archaeological Museum**, with finds from the Iblei territory from the Paleolithic to the Hellenistic age, and the **Chocolate Museum**.

The chocolate of Modica is a unique product. It is made **cold**, with cocoa paste heated to about **forty degrees**: the sugar does not completely dissolve and remains in crystals, which is why you feel the grain under your teeth. Since **2018**, it has the European **PGI**, the first for chocolate in Europe.

The tradition links it to Spanish rule and tells of a recipe of Aztec origin; historians do not all agree on this last part. The museum helps you get an idea.

A TIP

Museum opening hours and closing days change: **check before you go**. If you buy a bar, look for the **PGI** label.

STOP 3 OF 10

Cathedral of San Pietro

🕒 Recommended time: 25 minutes



The staircase with the statues of the apostles leading to the Cathedral of San Pietro in Modica

A little further along, on one side of the Corso, a staircase leads up to the **Cathedral of San Pietro**, the cathedral of Modica Bassa. Along the steps are the statues of the **twelve apostles**, which direct your gaze to the façade.

The church was destroyed by the earthquakes of **1613** and **1693** and rebuilt in the 18th century in baroque style. The interior has three naves.

In Modica, there are **two** cathedrals: this one, below, and that of San Giorgio, above. It is worth visiting both, as they complement each other.

A TIP

Halfway up the staircase, **stop and turn around**: from there, you can see the Corso from above.

STOP 4 OF 10

The rock church of San Nicolò Inferiore

🕒 Recommended time: 25 minutes



The fresco of Christ Pantocrator in the rock church of San Nicolò Inferiore in Modica

On Via Clemente Grimaldi, the **rock church of San Nicolò Inferiore** is hidden, considered the **oldest in Modica**. It is carved into the rock and was rediscovered by chance in **1987**: it is said that a boy looking for a ball entered a cave used as a storeroom, and the scholar **Duccio Belgiorno** immediately recognised its value.

Inside, in a single hall, there are frescoes of Byzantine tradition. In the apse, the **Christ Pantocrator** dominates, enclosed in a mandorla. It is a rare example of architecture

A TIP

It is only open on **certain days and times**: check before you go.

STOP 5 OF 10

The house museum of Salvatore Quasimodo

🕒 Recommended time: 25 minutes



The courtyard of the Salvatore Quasimodo house museum in Modica

Climbing through the alleys of the Sbalzo district, you arrive at **via Posterla**, where the **house museum of Salvatore Quasimodo** is located, the poet born in Modica in **1901** and Nobel Prize winner for literature in **1959**.

Inside, you find furniture, photographs, special editions of his books, and a video of the Nobel award ceremony. One room reconstructs the Milanese study where he wrote.

There is also an interesting fact: according to various reconstructions, the poet was neither born nor lived in this house, which however tradition and the city indicate as his birthplace. The fact remains that Quasimodo belongs to Modica.

A TIP

The museum is small: **twenty minutes** is enough. Check opening hours and days before you go.

STOP 6 OF 10

The Castle of the Counts and the Clock Tower

🕒 Recommended time: 40 minutes



The Clock Tower above the Castle of the Counts, symbol of Modica

Above the houses, on a **rock spur** with two sheer sides, stands the **Castle of the Counts**. It was a fortress, prison, and residence of the Counts of Modica; today, only a few parts remain: the polygonal tower, the ancient prisons carved into the rock, and the famous **Clock Tower**.

The tower, built in **1725** on the remains of a medieval watchtower, has a large dial visible from almost the entire city. The counterweight mechanism **still works**.

The visit is also worth it for the **caves** at the base: Modica originated as a rock settlement, and even today many houses are built in front of old caves.

A TIP

Access and ticket prices change: **check opening hours and openings** before you go up. The climb is steep: take it easy.

STOP 7 OF 10

The Cathedral of San Giorgio and its staircase

🕒 Recommended time: 45 minutes



The tower façade and the staircase of the Cathedral of San Giorgio in Modica

The **Cathedral of San Giorgio** is the symbol of Modica and one of the most striking monuments of Sicilian Baroque. It stands atop a **monumental staircase**: guides count from **164 to 250 steps**, depending on where you start. Next to it runs the hanging garden known as **Orto del Piombo**.

The tower façade is **62 metres** high. It was built starting from **1702** and only in **1842** was the iron cross placed on the spire. The design is attributed to **Rosario Gagliardi**, the same architect of San Domenico in Noto and San Giorgio in Ragusa Ibla.

Inside the church, there are **five naves**. Stop: after the climb, it's the right moment to catch your breath.

A TIP

If the steps weigh you down, **go up Via San Giorgio**: it's the classic and less tiring route.

STOP 8 OF 10

Belvedere San Benedetto

🕒 Recommended time: 20 minutes



The Cathedral of San Giorgio and the staircase viewed from the Belvedere San Benedetto in Modica

In front of the cathedral, along Via San Benedetto da Norcia, there's the **Belvedere San Benedetto**. From here, you see everything together: the **tower façade**, the staircase descending, and the town stretching out beneath you.

It's one of the most photographed views of Modica, and there are some benches to stop and rest. It can be reached on foot with about ten minutes of climbing, or by car, as it is outside the centre.

A TIP

Stop here calmly: it's the best spot to **understand the layout of the town**.

STOP 9 OF 10

San Giovanni Evangelista and Santa Maria del Gesù

🕒 Recommended time: 30 minutes



The staircase and the neoclassical façade of the church of San Giovanni Evangelista in Modica

In the highest part of Modica Alta, a staircase with statues leads to the church of **San Giovanni Evangelista**, in **neoclassical** style, with the façade redone between the 19th and 20th centuries. It's an exception among the Baroque churches of the town.

Just beyond is the complex of **Santa Maria del Gesù**, one of the few **late Gothic** parts remaining after the earthquake of **1693**, from the late 15th century to the early 16th century. Look at the portal and the cloister, among the original parts.

A TIP

The interiors are open at variable hours: if you find it closed, **the façade and the staircase are still worth the climb.**

STOP 10 OF 10

The sunset from Pizzo Belvedere

 Recommended time: 30 minutes

Modica Alta and Modica Bassa viewed at sunset from Pizzo Belvedere

Descend through the alleys towards the lower part and end the day at **Pizzo Belvedere**, a terrace that looks over Modica from another hill. From here, you see **Modica Alta** with the cathedral tower and, further down, **Modica Bassa**, split in two by Corso Umberto I.

The best time is at **sunset**, when the warm light bathes the façades of the high town.

A TIP

Check the time of sunset and **arrive a little early**: the light changes quickly, and in the dark, the staircases require attention.

Frequently asked questions

How much time is needed to see Modica?

To see the two cathedrals, the Corso and the belvederes, **half a day** is enough at a brisk pace. With museums, the castle, and breaks, you need **a whole day**, as there are many climbs between the lower and upper town.

How do you move between Modica Bassa and Modica Alta?

On foot, with steep staircases and alleys, or by car along Corso San Giorgio. The two parts are close, but the elevation difference is felt: wear comfortable shoes.

Why is Modica chocolate grainy?

Because it is made **cold**, around forty degrees: the sugar does not completely dissolve and remains in crystals. Since **2018**, it has had IGP status.

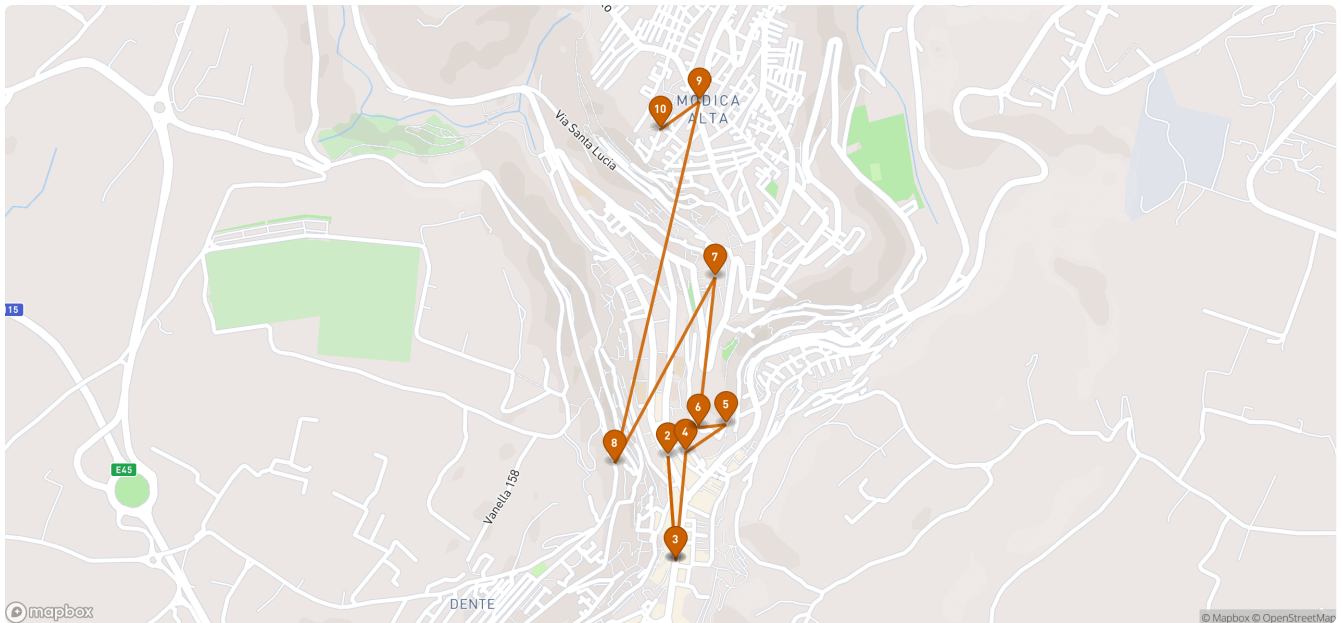
Can you visit Modica in summer?

Yes, but it's best to go **early in the morning** and in the late afternoon: the climbs in the hot hours are tiring. End the day with the sunset from Pizzo Belvedere.

What to see with more time available?

You can add the church of Santa Maria di Betlem, the Town Hall (former convent of San Domenico), Palazzo Polara, and Palazzo Napolino Tommasi Rosso, all in the historic centre.

Route map



The numbers follow the order of the stops. The map shows no commercial businesses.

Practical information

DURATION

One day (7-8 hours with breaks)

GETTING AROUND

On foot, with many staircases and climbs. Corso Umberto I is flat.

BEST TIME

Spring and autumn. In summer, it's best to visit early in the morning and return to the heights for sunset.

TOTAL WALKING

about 4.7 km

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