

ITINERARY · RAGUSA

Ragusa Ibla in half a day: from the steps to the garden, between palaces and the cathedral

Eight stops on foot between **Ragusa Superiore** and **Ragusa Ibla**: from the steps with the view to **Piazza Duomo**, from the palaces with the grotesque masks to the **Giardino Ibleo**. For each stop, find out what to see, how long to stay, and a practical tip.

DURATION**Half a day**

3-4 hours with breaks

STOPS**8 stops**

about 2.6 km

GETTING AROUND

On foot: you descend from the high part and ascend to Ibla.

There are many steps and climbs.

ONLINE VERSION WITH MAPwww.marzamemi.com/itinerari/ragusa-ibla-in-mezza-giornata

STOP 1 OF 8

The Cathedral of San Giovanni Battista, in the upper town

🕒 Recommended time: 15 minutes



The baroque façade of the Cathedral of San Giovanni Battista in Ragusa Superiore

Ragusa has a **double soul**. **Ragusa Superiore**, where you start, is the new part, built on the hill after the earthquake of **1693**. **Ragusa Ibla**, on the opposite hill, is the old town, rebuilt on the medieval layout. The centre almost has the shape of a **saddle**: you descend from one hill and ascend to the other.

The **Cathedral of San Giovanni Battista** is the most important church in the upper part. Baroque and from the 18th century, it stands atop an elevated forecourt with a wide and decorated façade and the bell tower on the left side.

Since **2002**, Ragusa has been part of the UNESCO sites of the late Baroque towns of Val di Noto.

A TIP

If you **stay in Ibla**, you can skip this descent and start from stop 5. If you arrive by car, you can leave it in the upper part and do the rest on foot: check the signs for restrictions and fees.

STOP 2 OF 8

Santa Maria delle Scale and the view of Ibla

🕒 Recommended time: 25 minutes



The view of Ragusa Ibla from the steps of Santa Maria delle Scale

Descending towards Ibla, you encounter the church of **Santa Maria delle Scale**, named after the **steps** that connect the upper and lower parts of the town. It is among the oldest churches in Ragusa and preserves parts from different eras, some even predating the earthquake.

The reason to stop is **the view**: from the steps, you can see Ibla spread out on the opposite hill, with its roofs, domes, and bell towers. It is one of the most photographed views of Ragusa.

A TIP

The descent is **steep and stepped**: keep your hands free and wear shoes with a good sole.

STOP 3 OF 8

Palazzo Cosentini and Salita Commendatore

🕒 Recommended time: 25 minutes



The balconies of Palazzo Cosentini with the mask brackets, in Ragusa

Further down, the route reaches **Palazzo Cosentini**, built at the end of the 18th century for Baron **Raffaele Cosentini**. It is located at the junction of two important streets: **Salita Commendatore**, which connects the lower part with the upper part, and the road that led out of town.

Its pride is the **balconies**: the brackets are carved with **grotesque masks**, musicians, and figures of abundance. The balcony on the staircase has **five masks** holding symbolic animals in their mouths, including a snake and a scorpion.

A TIP

Look up and see the brackets: each mask has a different expression.

STOP 4 OF 8

Santa Maria dell'Itria and its bell tower

🕒 Recommended time: 20 minutes



The bell tower with the decorated top of the church of Santa Maria dell'Itria in Ragusa Ibla

Climbing back towards Ibla, you find **Santa Maria dell'Itria**, recognizable from afar by its **bell tower** with a decorated top. It is one of the most photographed churches in the town.

It has 14th-century origins: it was founded by the Counts of Modica from the **Chiaramonte** family and belonged to the Commandery of the **Knights of Malta**, from which the Salita Commendatore takes its name. The Baroque appearance comes from a reconstruction in the early **18th century**.

A TIP

If the church is open, go in to see the **carved stone altars**. The hours vary: check in advance.

STOP 5 OF 8

Piazza Duomo and the Cathedral of San Giorgio

🕒 Recommended time: 35 minutes



The tower façade and dome of the Cathedral of San Giorgio in Ragusa Ibla

You arrive in the heart of Ibla, in **Piazza Duomo**, a long square with a slight slope. The **Cathedral of San Giorgio** stands atop a staircase: it is a masterpiece of Sicilian Baroque by **Rosario Gagliardi**, designed in **1738** and completed in **1775**.

The tower façade has a dense play of columns. Gagliardi oriented it **slightly askew to the square**, so that the **dome** would be clearly visible from afar. The dome is neoclassical, from **1820**, and **43 metres** high.

The cathedral stands where there was previously another church of San Giorgio, destroyed by the earthquake of **1693**: only the portal remains, which you will see at the end of the route.

A TIP

Sit on a bench in the square: from there, **the façade and dome can be seen together**. The hours for entry vary: check.

STOP 6 OF 8

The Circolo di Conversazione and the Arezzo palaces

🕒 Recommended time: 25 minutes



The neoclassical façade of the Circolo di Conversazione in Piazza Duomo in Ragusa Ibla

In the same square, there is the **Circolo di Conversazione**, also known as Caffè dei Cavalieri. It is a low neoclassical building from the **19th century**, originally a meeting place for the local nobility. The ballroom has a ceiling frescoed in the late 19th century.

The Circolo also appears in the series of **Commissario Montalbano**, and **Piazza Duomo** is, in the series, the meeting point for the main characters.

Not far away are **Palazzo Arezzo di Donnafugata** and **Palazzo Arezzo di Trifiletti**, two residences of the Arezzo family.

A TIP

The interiors of the palaces are visited **only at certain times or with guided tours**: inquire in advance.

STOP 7 OF 8

Piazza Pola and the church of San Giuseppe

 Recommended time: 20 minutes

The curved façade of the church of San Giuseppe in Piazza Pola in Ragusa Ibla

From Piazza Duomo, you descend towards **Piazza Pola**, one of the most elegant in Ibla. The church of **San Giuseppe**, rebuilt in the 18th century and attributed to **Rosario Gagliardi**, has a **curved façade** rich in sculptures, with statues of the saints of the Benedictine Order. It was linked to the nearby monastery of the Benedictines.

A TIP

Climb the few steps and **turn around**: the square is better seen from the church entrance.

STOP 8 OF 8

The Portal of San Giorgio and the Giardino Ibleo

🕒 Recommended time: 40 minutes



The Ibleo Garden on the rock spur above the Irminio valley, in Ragusa Ibla

Before the garden, at the entrance, there is the **Portale di San Giorgio**: it is what remains of the ancient church destroyed in **1693**. It is a **Catalan-Gothic portal from the 14th century**, made of pink stone.

The **Giardino Ibleo** concludes the route. Created in the **19th century** with the contribution of the local nobility, it sits on a **cliff overhanging the Irminio valley**. It has tree-lined avenues, benches, a fountain, and three small churches: **San Vincenzo Ferreri**, **San Giacomo Apostolo**, and the **Cappuccini**.

From the viewpoints, the view opens up over the valley and the hills.

A TIP

It is the right place for a **break at the end of the route**: there is shade and there are benches.

Frequently asked questions

What is the difference between Ragusa and Ragusa Ibla?

Ragusa Ibla is the ancient city, rebuilt after the earthquake of 1693 on the medieval layout. **Ragusa Superiore**, or simply Ragusa, is the new part, built on the hill opposite. They are two districts of the same city, separated by a valley.

How much time is needed for Ragusa Ibla?

For this route, **three or four hours** are enough with breaks. With visits to the palaces and museums, it can take up to **half a day** or a little more.

Is it tiring?

Yes, because you descend from the high part and ascend to Ibla: there are **many stairs and climbs**. With comfortable shoes and a few breaks, it is within everyone's reach, but those who have difficulty walking can **start directly from Piazza Duomo**, in Ibla.

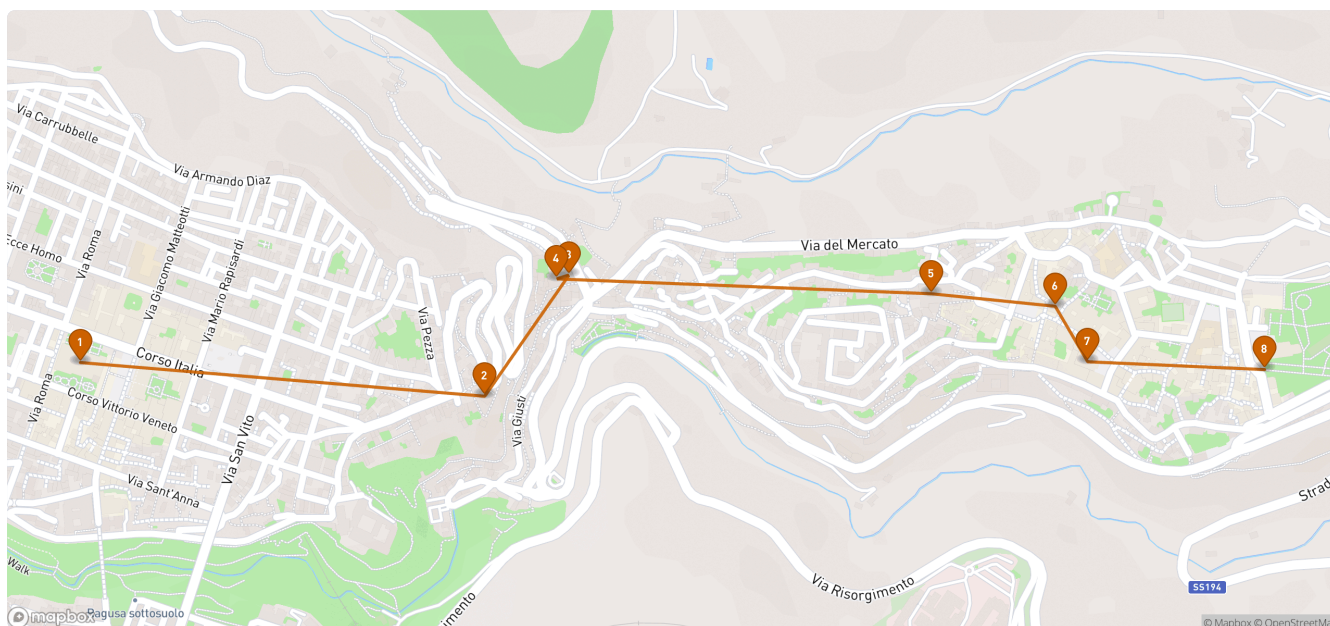
Is Ragusa Ibla a set for Commissioner Montalbano?

Yes: **Piazza Duomo** and the **Circolo di Conversazione** appear several times in the series. Among the audioguides on marzamemi.com, there is also the **Montalbano Experience** route.

What to see with more time available?

You can add **Palazzo Sortino Trono**, **Palazzo La Rocca**, **Palazzo della Cancelleria**, **Palazzo Zacco**, and **Palazzo Bertini**, all with balconies and carved brackets to admire at leisure.

Route map



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

Practical information

DURATION

Half a day (3-4 hours with breaks)

GETTING AROUND

On foot: you descend from the high part and ascend to Ibla. There are many steps and climbs.

BEST TIME

Spring and autumn. In summer, it's best to go early in the morning or late in the afternoon.

TOTAL WALKING

about 2.6 km

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