

ITINERARY • SCICLI

# Scicli in a day: between the three canyons, the palaces and the set of Montalbano

Ten walking stops in the baroque centre of **Scicli**, where three canyons meet: from **Piazza Italia** to **via Mormina Penna**, from Montalbano's police station to **Palazzo Beneventano**, up to the hill of **San Matteo**. For each stop, find out what to see, how long to stay and a practical tip.

**DURATION****One day**

6-7 hours with breaks

**STOPS****10 stops**

about 1.9 km

**GETTING AROUND****On foot.**

The centre is mostly flat: the only challenging ascent is to the hill of San Matteo.

**ONLINE VERSION WITH MAP**[www.marzamemi.com/itinerari/scicli-in-un-giorno](http://www.marzamemi.com/itinerari/scicli-in-un-giorno)

## STOP 1 OF 10

## Piazza Italia, where the three canyons meet

🕒 Recommended time: 25 minutes



*Piazza Italia in Scicli, the long rectangular square with the Mother Church*

You start from **Piazza Italia**, a long rectangular square that **covers the San Bartolomeo stream**. To understand where you are, look at the sides of the city: **Scicli** stands where three valleys carved into the Iblean plateau meet, called cave: that of **San Bartolomeo**, that of **Santa Maria la Nova** and that of the **Modica-Scicli** stream.

Surrounding it are three hills: **San Matteo**, **la Croce** and **Monte Campagna**. The baroque city was born in this intertwining of rock and water.

On the square face the **Chiesa Madre** and, a little further on, **Palazzo Fava**. At the end of May, the feast of the **Madonna delle Milizie** takes place here.

### A TIP

The centre is easy to explore **on foot**: leave your car outside the pedestrian zone and watch for signs regarding restrictions and fees, which change.

## STOP 2 OF 10

# The Chiesa Madre and the Madonna delle Milizie

🕒 Recommended time: 30 minutes



*The façade of the Mother Church of Sant'Ignazio di Loyola in Scicli*

On the long side of the square is the **Chiesa Madre**, dedicated to **Sant'Ignazio di Loyola**. Built in the Seventeenth century and rebuilt after the earthquake of **1693**, it became the mother church of the city in **1874**, replacing the ancient church of San Matteo on the hill.

Inside is the statue of the **Madonna delle Milizie**, the **Madonna on horseback**. Tradition tells that in **1091**, the Virgin appeared on a white horse to help the Normans of Ruggero d'Altavilla, who were about to be defeated by the Saracens. The sanctuary dedicated to the Madonna is located in **Donnalucata**, where tradition places the battle.

Every **last Saturday in May**, the square hosts the **sacred representation** of the battle, with a medieval parade. For the occasion, **Teste di Turco** are prepared, large cream or ricotta-filled pastries.

## A TIP

Check the times: churches are visited **between services**. If you happen to be here at the end of May, **ask about the festival programme**.

## STOP 3 OF 10

## Via San Bartolomeo, Palazzo Fava and the canyon

🕒 Recommended time: 25 minutes



*The balcony of the Grifi at Palazzo Fava, on Via San Bartolomeo in Scicli*

From Piazza Italia, take via San Bartolomeo. **Palazzo Fava** is one of the first large baroque palaces of the reconstruction and has a famous balcony, the **balcony of the Griffins**: the brackets are carved with griffins and bearded faces.

Further along, the road enters the **cava di San Bartolomeo**, an urban canyon enclosed between the hill of San Matteo and that of la Croce. At the bottom, in front of the rock face, is the **church of San Bartolomeo**.

This corner has also been a **set of Montalbano**: the canyon and the church appear in several episodes.

### A TIP

The light is better **in the afternoon**, when the sun illuminates the church façade and the rock face.

## STOP 4 OF 10

## The Town Hall, the Vigàta police station

🕒 Recommended time: 30 minutes



*The façade of the town hall in Scicli, the Vigàta police station from the Montalbano series*

Return to the centre and take **via Francesco Mormina Penna**, the most elegant pedestrian axis, which widens into a small square in front of the Town Hall. The **Town Hall**, built in the early Twentieth century, has an eclectic façade that many recognise immediately: in the series, it is the **Vigàta police station**.

Scicli has been the **main set of Commissioner Montalbano** since **1999** and of Young Montalbano since **2012**. On the ground floor, you can visit the original set, with Montalbano's office; the mayor's room serves as the questor's office.

Even without entering, it's worth stopping in the small square: it's in front of the Town Hall that Montalbano parks his Fiat Tipo in the series.

### A TIP

The hours and opening of the **set** change: check before you go. Fans of the series can combine this stop with the **Montalbano Experience** audio guide route from marzamemi.com.

STOP 5 OF 10

## San Giovanni Evangelista

🕒 Recommended time: 25 minutes



*The concave-convex façade of San Giovanni Evangelista with the staircase, in Scicli*

Next to the Town Hall stands the church of **San Giovanni Evangelista**, rebuilt in the eighteenth century after the earthquake. The **concave-convex façade**, in three tiers, has a **wrought iron grille** on the second level, and a staircase that follows its curve.

The façade seems almost to jut out towards passers-by, and alongside the sobriety of the Town Hall, gives the small square a striking effect.

### A TIP

View the façade **from a distance, from the beginning of the street**: from there, you can see how the curve of the church and the staircase move together.

## STOP 6 OF 10

## San Michele, Palazzo Spadaro and the Gruppo di Scicli

🕒 Recommended time: 35 minutes



*The wrought iron balconies of Palazzo Spadaro on Via Mormina Penna in Scicli*

A little further on is the **church of San Michele Arcangelo**, with its Eighteenth-century façade, nestled between two noble palaces: **Palazzo Spadaro** and **Palazzo Bonelli Patanè**.

**Palazzo Spadaro** is recognised by its **eight wrought iron balconies** and rococo geometric decorations. It houses a **pinacoteca** with works by the **Gruppo di Scicli**, the artists linked to the city, including **Piero Guccione**, **Franco Polizzi** and **Franco Sarnari**. The palace also has a small bridge, called the **lovers' bridge**.

The street is a gallery of Eighteenth and Nineteenth-century façades: for UNESCO, together with Palazzo Beneventano, it is a masterpiece of late baroque.

### A TIP

Look up: **balconies, brackets and portals** are the most beautiful part of the palaces.

STOP 7 OF 10

## Palazzo Bonelli Patanè, the Ancient Pharmacy and the Costume Museum

🕒 Recommended time: 30 minutes



*A detail of the frescoed interiors of Palazzo Bonelli Patanè in Scicli*

**Palazzo Bonelli Patanè** is from the 19th century, but the interior is entirely frescoed between the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century and retains **original furnishings and tapestries**. It is one of the last testimonies of an aristocratic and bourgeois world.

On the same street is the **Antica Farmacia Cartia**, from **1902**, and the **Museum of Costume and Cuisine**, in the former monastery of San Michele, with garments and fabrics from the Iblean tradition.

These are three small visits just a few steps from each other: you can choose just one.

### A TIP

Entries are **often timed and by reservation**: check in advance, especially on weekends.

STOP 8 OF 10

## Palazzo Beneventano

🕒 Recommended time: 20 minutes



*The sculpted corner of Palazzo Beneventano with Moorish heads and masks, in Scicli*

From Via Nazionale, in a side street, you find **Palazzo Beneventano**, from the 18th century and considered one of the most beautiful examples of late Sicilian Baroque. According to the English art historian **Anthony Blunt**, it is the most beautiful Baroque palace in Sicily.

It has **two façades joined by a sculpted corner**, with **mask heads**, **Moorish heads** and fantastic animals on the brackets, and balconies with bulging railings. It is a palace to be viewed calmly, walking around the corner.

This is the point where you understand why Scicli is on the UNESCO list.

### A TIP

**Turn the corner:** the most unusual decorations are found on the balcony brackets.

## STOP 9 OF 10

## Santa Maria la Nova and the cave

🕒 Recommended time: 30 minutes



*The three-storey façade of Santa Maria la Nova that closes the quarry, in Scicli*

At the eastern end of the centre, you enter the **cave of Santa Maria la Nova**, a narrow urban corridor between the rock and the houses. At the end, the **church of Santa Maria la Nova** closes the cave with its three-tiered façade and bell tower. Its origins date back to the **Byzantine** era.

Inside, there is a **wooden statue of the Risen Christ**, by the Catanese sculptor **Francesco Pastore**, whom the people of Scicli call the **Uomo Vivo**.

A little higher, via a staircase leading to a paved forecourt, is the **church of Consolation**, from the 17th century, with a **mosaic marble flooring**.

### A TIP

If you have little time, **choose Santa Maria la Nova**: the cave is worth the detour even if the churches are closed.

STOP 10 OF 10

## The hill of San Matteo and Chiafura

 Recommended time: 45 minutes

*The church of San Matteo on the hill above Scicli, with the historic centre at its feet*

nd the day with the climb to the **hill of San Matteo**, about **five hundred metres** of uphill walking. At the top, the **church of San Matteo** was the oldest in Scicli and the main one in the city until **1874**. Today it is in poor condition and often not open, but from here the centre can be seen in its entirety, with the three caves at its feet.

On the hillside extends **Chiafura**, an ancient neighbourhood of **cave houses** inhabited until the 1960s. On the ridge are the **Castellaccio**, a Norman tower, and the **castle of the Three Cantons**, which controlled the meeting point of the three valleys.

Chiafura is now **only visitable on special occasions**, with guided tours.

### A TIP

Go up **in the late afternoon**, with suitable shoes and water: the light is beautiful and the heat decreases.

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## Frequently asked questions

### How much time is needed to see Scicli?

You need **half a day** for **Via Mormina Penna, Piazza Italia and the palaces**. With the museums, the Santa Maria la Nova quarry and the San Matteo hill, you will need **a full day**.

### Is Scicli really the set of Montalbano?

Yes: it has been the **main set** of the series since 1999. The **town hall** is the Vigàta police station and on the ground floor you can visit the set, with varying hours.

### Where is Montalbano's house?

In **Punta Secca**, by the sea, in the municipality of Santa Croce Camerina. Among the audioguides on marzamemi.com is the **Montalbano Experience** route, which touches Modica, Ragusa Ibla and Punta Secca.

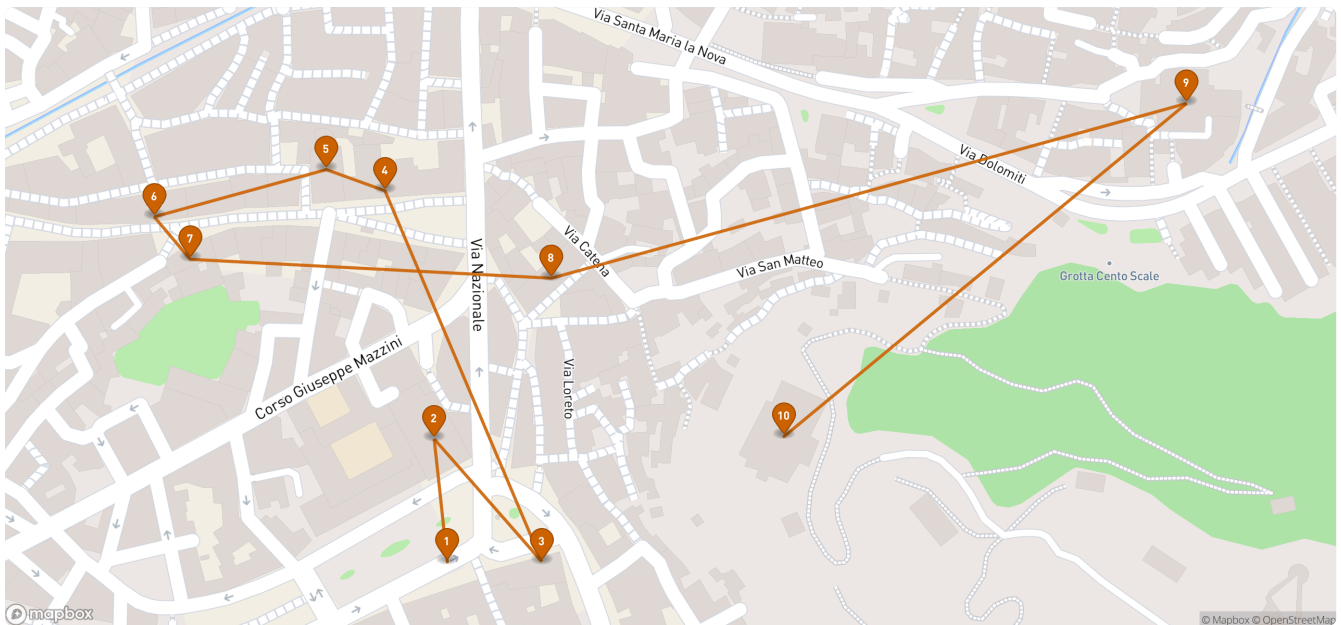
### When is the feast of the Madonna delle Milizie held?

**The last Saturday of May**, in Piazza Italia, with a medieval parade and sacred representation. The dates and programme change every year: check the town hall's calendar.

### What to see with more time available?

You can add the **hill of the Cross** with the convent of Santa Maria della Croce, one of the few complexes that survived the earthquake of 1693, with Gothic elements, **Monte Campagna** with the Rosary, Palazzo Porcelli Battaglia and, if there is a guided tour, **Chiafura**.

## Route map



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

## Practical information

### DURATION

One day (6-7 hours with breaks)

### GETTING AROUND

On foot. The centre is mostly flat: the only challenging ascent is to the hill of San Matteo.

### BEST TIME

Spring and autumn. In summer, it's best to visit early in the morning and late in the afternoon. The last Saturday in May is the feast of the **Madonna delle Milizie**.

### TOTAL WALKING

about 1.9 km

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