

ITINERARY · 7-10 DAYS

Eastern Sicily in 10 days: from Etna to the Valley of the Temples to the Baroque of the South-East

Ten days by car in **Eastern Sicily: Catania, Etna and Taormina**, then **Caltagirone, Villa del Casale** and the **Valley of the Temples**, and the Baroque of the South-East with **Ragusa Ibla, Modica, Noto, Ortigia and Pantalica**. Each day you'll find things to see.

DURATION

10 days

STOPS

10 stops

about 626.7 km

GETTING AROUND

By car: renting one is the most convenient choice, as many stops are poorly connected by public transport.

Cities are best explored on foot.



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STOP 1 OF 10

Day 1 · Catania, the city of the volcano

🕒 Recommended time: One day



Piazza del Duomo in Catania with the Elephant Fountain and the Cathedral of Sant'Agata

The first day is all about **Catania**: it's compact and best explored **on foot**, but it has so many attractions that you won't see them all in one day. You'll be here for the first three nights, so you can catch up in the evenings of the following days.

Don't miss: **Piazza del Duomo**, with the Cathedral of **Sant'Agata**, the **Elephant** fountain and the **Amenano** fountain, and the **Badia di Sant'Agata**, where it's worth climbing to the **dome** for the view. Then **Piazza Università**, a stroll along **Via Etnea** and **Via dei Crociferi**, with many Baroque churches in just a few metres.

Visit the **Castello Ursino**, the **Roman theatre** with the **odeon**, hidden behind the facades of the houses, the **Porta Garibaldi** and the **Monastery of San Nicolò l'Arena** (best with a pre-booked guided tour). End in the **Giardino Bellini**.

A TIP

Avoid Catania's traffic during peak hours: in the centre, you move around on foot. You can rent a car **from the third day**, when you start the tour outside the city.

STOP 2 OF 10

Day 2 • Excursion to Etna

🕒 Recommended time: One day



The Silvestri craters on the southern slope of Etna with the lava landscape

Today you ascend **Etna**, the highest active volcano in Europe. From the south side, the most convenient from Catania, you reach the **Rifugio Sapienza**, at about **1,900 metres**: by car in about an hour, or by an **autobus** that departs from the station, to be **booked the day before**.

There are excursions of **various levels**. On your own, you can do the circuit of the **Silvestri craters**, formed in **1892** and now extinct, and take the **cable car** up to about **2,500 metres**; higher, to the **summit craters**, you can go **only with authorised alpine or volcanological guides**.

The volcano's activity dictates everything: at certain times some areas are closed. If it's not accessible, you can **spend more time in Catania** or ascend to lower altitudes, where you can see the lateral craters independently.

A TIP

Check the ordinance in force and the volcano bulletins the day before. Bring trekking shoes, sunglasses and layered clothing; if clouds close in at altitude, **descend**.

STOP 3 OF 10

Day 3 • Messina and Acireale

🕒 Recommended time: One day



The Orion fountain in front of the Cathedral of Messina

Take the car to **Messina** and **Acireale**: you won't need the whole day, so you can also relax on the beach or finish what you have left of Catania.

Messina occupies the north-eastern tip of the island. It's worth half a day for the **duomo**, of Norman origin and rebuilt after the earthquake of **1908**, and for the **Orion fountain**, from the **mid-1500s**, in front of the duomo. Then the **sanctuary of the Madonna di Montalto**, the **temple of Christ the King**, the **Galleria Vittorio Emanuele III** and the **Church of the Santissima Annunziata dei Catalani**.

In the mid-afternoon, return towards Catania and stop at **Acireale**, built on a plateau created by Etna, with cliffs overlooking the sea. Look at **Piazza Duomo**, the many **Baroque churches**, the **Villa Belvedere** with the view over the **Timpa** and the fishing village of **Santa Maria la Scala**.

A TIP

If you're short on time, choose **Acireale** at sunset: at **Santa Maria la Scala** you can see the boats returning to shore.

STOP 4 OF 10

Day 4 • Taormina, Alcantara Gorges and Aci Castello

🕒 Recommended time: One day



The ancient theatre of Taormina with Etna in the background and the sea

Arrive in **Taormina** early in the morning: from mid-morning the city fills with buses. After leaving the car in one of the car parks at the gates, walk along **Corso Umberto: Porta Catania**, the **Palazzo dei Duchi di Santo Stefano**, the **duomo**, the **Clock Tower**, **Piazza IX Aprile** and the **Palazzo Corvaja**.

The **ancient theatre** is the jewel of the city, overlooking Etna. If you have the energy, climb to the sanctuary of the **Madonna della Rocca**; then descend to **Isola Bella** for a swim.

In the mid-afternoon, reach the **Alcantara Gorges** in about half an hour, carved by the river in the lava of Etna: walls up to **25 metres** high and **2 to 5 metres** wide. In summer, you can even enter the cold water and ascend the river.

Conclude the day at **Aci Castello**, with the **castle on a rocky spur** and, about twenty minutes on foot, the **faraglioni of Aci Trezza**. For the **fourth night**, it's best to stay **between Aci Castello and Acireale**: you avoid Catania's traffic and tomorrow you can set off already in the direction of Caltagirone.

A TIP

For the Alcantara Gorges, **check how to access** (park or public access) and the river conditions before you leave.

STOP 5 OF 10

Day 5 · Caltagirone, Piazza Armerina and Enna

🕒 Recommended time: One day



A mosaic from the Roman villa of Casale in Piazza Armerina

Today you leave the coast and head inland, towards Agrigento, where you will spend one night. Set off early.

Caltagirone, about an hour from Catania and a UNESCO heritage site, is famous for its ceramics: in the workshops and also in the urban decor. Look at the public villa, Piazza Umberto I and especially the Scala di Santa Maria del Monte, a 17th-century staircase of 142 steps with the risers decorated with majolica.

Then the Villa Romana del Casale, near Piazza Armerina: a large villa from the late imperial era, a UNESCO heritage site, with over 3,000 square metres of mosaics. Don't miss the Great Hunt corridor. It takes about two hours.

After lunch, take a stroll in Piazza Armerina (Piazza Garibaldi, the Cathedral and the Commenda dei Cavalieri di Malta), then in half an hour to Enna, with the Castello di Lombardia, the Fountain of the Rape of Proserpina and the Tower of Frederick II. Then about an hour's drive to Agrigento.

A TIP

It's the **longest day by car**: keep **water and a snack** and aim to arrive in Agrigento **before evening**.

STOP 6 OF 10

Day 6 · Agrigento: Valley of the Temples and Scala dei Turchi

🕒 Recommended time: A day



The Temple of Concordia in the Valley of the Temples in Agrigento

A morning and an early afternoon in **Agrigento** are enough for its two most famous destinations. The **Valley of the Temples** has been a UNESCO heritage site since **1997**: actually a hill, where the temples of the ancient **Akragas**, founded in **582 BC**, remain, including the Temple of **Concordia**. Allow **two to three hours**: everything is exposed to the sun, so go **early in the morning** or at the end of the day (the sunset is beautiful but crowded).

In a few minutes, reach the **Scala dei Turchi**, a white cliff of **marble**, shaped by natural elements. Today it is **no longer possible to climb it**: you can view it up close from the hill and then from the beach, where you can also take a swim.

If you still have time, stroll through the **historic centre of Agrigento**: **Via Atenea**, the **Belvedere Arancio**, the **Cathedral** of San Gerlando and the **Scala degli Artisti**. Then, in the afternoon, head to **Modica**, where you will spend the next two nights: it takes a couple of hours by car.

A TIP

With only one night in Agrigento, **start early** at the Valley of the Temples to leave by early afternoon. If you want a **nine-day trip**, you can **skip Agrigento** and continue from day 5 to Modica.

STOP 7 OF 10

Day 7 • Ragusa, Scicli and Modica

🕒 Recommended time: A day



Ragusa Ibla seen from above with the Cathedral of San Giorgio and the roofs of the baroque city

You return east, to the **Val di Noto**, where after the earthquake of **1693** the towns were rebuilt in **Baroque** style and are now a **UNESCO** heritage site. Last night you stayed in **Modica** and you will stay there again tonight.

Ragusa has two centres on two hills: **Ragusa Ibla**, the old town, and **Ragusa Superiore**. Start from the Cathedral of **San Giovanni Battista**, descend to the Church of **Santa Maria alle Scale** and **Palazzo Cosentini**, then climb back to Ibla: **Piazza Duomo** with the **Duomo di San Giorgio**, **Piazza Pola** and the **Giardino Ibleo**.

Then **Scicli**, the set of **Commissario Montalbano**, with its **Baroque palaces** (Spadaro, Bonelli Patanè, Beneventano), the **town hall** and the Church of **San Giovanni Evangelista**. Finally, **Modica**, with its **chocolate** and the **two cathedrals**: San Pietro below and San Giorgio at the top of a staircase, the rock church of **San Nicolò Inferiore** and the viewpoints.

A TIP

On this site, you will find three itineraries: «**Ragusa Ibla in half a day**», «**Scicli in a day**» and «**Modica in a day**». In one day, choose the main points of each.

STOP 8 OF 10

Day 8 • Noto, Vendicari, Isola delle Correnti and Marzamemi

🕒 Recommended time: A day



The Cathedral of San Nicolò at the top of the staircase, with the square and the sky

Today you explore the **south-east** of the island: many stops, but almost all quick. Start with **Noto**, the «capital of Baroque», with almost everything along **Corso Vittorio Emanuele**: the Church of **San Domenico**, the **Tina Di Lorenzo Theatre**, the **Cathedral** at the top of the staircase, **Palazzo Ducezio** (you can go up to the terrace), **Palazzo Nicolaci di Villadorata** with the ballroom, the Church of **Montevergine** and the **Porta Reale**.

Then the **Vendicari Nature Reserve**, half an hour away: the **tonnara**, the **Torre Sveva** and the paths through the **marshes**, with beaches for a swim. For those still wanting the sea, another half hour and you reach the **Isola delle Correnti**, the southernmost point of Sicily, where the **Ionian** and **Mediterranean** meet.

Conclude in **Marzamemi**, the fishing village that grew around a **large square**, with the tonnara, the two churches and the warm light of the sunset. Here you can stay overnight.

A TIP

On this site, you will find the itineraries «**Noto in a day**», «**Vendicari in a day**», «**Isola delle Correnti in half a day**» and «**Marzamemi in half a day**». If you wish, **skip a stop**: not everything fits into one day.

STOP 9 OF 10

Day 9 • Ortigia and Siracusa

🕒 Recommended time: A day



Interiors of the Maniace Castle at the tip of the island of Ortigia

The penultimate day is for **Ortigia**, the historic centre of Siracusa, a UNESCO heritage site, connected to the city by two bridges. Explore it on foot: the **remains of the Temple of Apollo**, **Piazza Archimede** with the **Fountain of Diana**, **Piazza Duomo** with the **Cathedral** built inside a **Greek temple dedicated to Athena**, the **Foro Vittorio Emanuele II**, the **Fonte Aretusa** with the papyrus, the **Castello Maniace** and the **Giudecca**. In summer, you can swim in one of its small beaches.

In the mid-afternoon, reach **Siracusa**: the **Church of San Giovanni alle Catacombe** with the crypt of **San Marciano** and the **catacombs** (guided tour), and the **Archaeological Park of Neapolis**, with the **Greek theatre** and the **Roman amphitheatre**. For your last night, stay in **Siracusa** or in **Ortigia**: Pantalica is three-quarters of an hour away.

A TIP

On this site, you will find «**Ortigia in a day**» and «**Siracusa in a day**». If you arrive by car, **park in Siracusa**: there is a ZTL in Ortigia.

STOP 10 OF 10

Day 10 • Pantalica and Augusta

🕒 Recommended time: A day



The rock-cut tombs carved into the walls of Pantalica

The last day has two lesser-known stops. From Siracusa, in about **three quarters of an hour**, you arrive at the **Pantalica necropolis**, a UNESCO heritage site: you enter **on foot** and discover thousands of **tombs carved into the rock** of a canyon, from two periods, between the **13th and 11th centuries BC** and between the **9th and 8th centuries BC**.

You can take a **loop of about 8 km**, in two and a half hours, that descends to the Anapo river and ascends, or just cover a section.

Then, on the way to Catania airport, **Augusta**: you can visit in about an hour. See the **Spanish Gate**, the **Swabian castle**, the **Spanish bridge**, and offshore, the **Garsia and Vittoria forts**.

A TIP

On this site, there's «**Pantalica in half a day**»: bring **water, a hat, and a torch**. If your flight is in the afternoon, **allow some time** for the return to the airport.

Frequently asked questions

How many days are needed for Eastern Sicily?

With **ten days** you see everything, including Agrigento. If you **remove Agrigento**, **nine days** are enough. With less time, there's the **seven-day** itinerary (Catania, Etna, Taormina, and the South-East).

Do I need a car?

Yes, it's the most convenient choice: public transport doesn't work well and many stops require many more hours without a car. Allow a bit more time for traffic and the scarcity of motorways. In central Catania, traffic is difficult, so **avoid peak hours**.

Where is it best to sleep?

To reduce changes: **three nights in Catania** (days 1-3), **one** between **Aci Castello and Acireale** (day 4), **one in Agrigento** (day 5), **two in Modica** (days 6-7), **one in Marzamemi** (day 8), and **one in Siracusa or Ortigia** (day 9). At the bottom of this page, you'll find some accommodations from the site.

Where to sleep in Modica?

Modica Bassa, along **Corso Umberto I**, is the most modern and convenient part: you can walk around with fewer hills. **Modica Alta** is older and more charming but has **many staircases**: it's tiring with luggage. **Scicli** (about **9 km**) is small and quiet, ideal for fans of Montalbano. **Sampieri** (about **15 minutes** from Modica) and **Marina di Modica (20-25 minutes)** are by the sea. **Ragusa Ibla** (about **10 km**) is also a good base. Always ask **where to leave the car**.

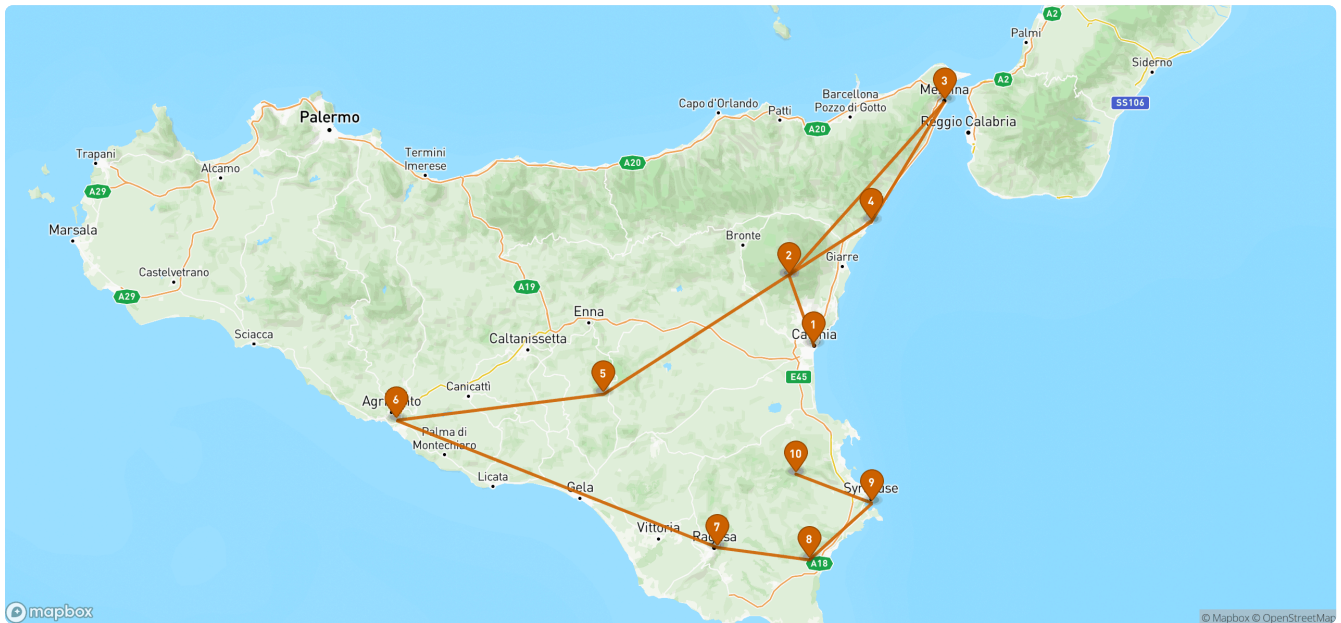
What if Etna is closed?

The volcano's activity changes: **check the ordinance and bulletins** the day before. Alternatively, dedicate that day to Catania or the **Alcantara gorges**.

Can I change the order of the days?

Days **7, 8, and 9** are in the South-East and can be swapped. Days **1-4** are more convenient if done from Catania, and **day 5** takes you to Agrigento.

Route map



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

Practical information

DURATION

10 days

GETTING AROUND

By **car**: renting one is the most convenient choice, as many stops are poorly connected by public transport. Cities are best explored on foot.

BEST TIME

Spring and autumn. In summer it gets very hot, especially in Agrigento and Piazza Armerina: **set off early** each morning. In winter, Etna may be snow-covered or closed.

TOTAL WALKING

about 626.7 km

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