

## SICILY 4. - 18. OCTOBER 2022



Sicily is an island located in the very south of Italy. It is the Mediterranean's largest island and it has over 5 million inhabitants. In older times, in the Nordic countries Sicily was called Sikilyø. The volcano Etna near Catania is Sicily's highest mountain (3263 m). Sicily is almost free of lakes and rivers with year-round flow.

For two millennia, Sicily has been considered one of Italy's most important grain producers. Other important agricultural products are olives and wine.

The earliest known people of Sicily were tribes called by Greek writers the Elymians, the Sicanians, and the Sicels. Sicily was colonized by Phoenicians, Punic people from Carthage and Greeks from the 8th century BC. From 242 BC all of Sicily was under Roman control. From 440, Sicily has been conquered and ruled by the Vandals, the Ostrogoths, the Byzantines, the Arabs, the Normans, the Hohenstaufen, the Holy See, Aragon, Spanish kings, Savoy, the Habsburgs, the Kingdom of Naples. In 1860, Sicily was incorporated into Italy.



This is the regional flag.



We drove to Gardermoen and parked the car at Gardermoen Parkering.



The plane departed from Oslo Airport Gardermoen.



The flight was with Norwegian and left at 15:45.



We arrived at Catania-Fontanarossa Airport at 19.20.





When we got our luggage, we took a taxi to the hotel. We had booked at the [Le Dune Sicily Hotel](#), which is located right next to the airport.



The following day, October 5, we took a taxi back to the airport to pick up the car we had ordered. We had booked it through [Rentalcars](#) and the rental company was [Sixt](#). This time we got an [Audi A3](#) diesel automatic.



Here I stand at the Sixt counter and get a description of where I have to go to get the keys and the car handed over. The map we got was bad, so we had to do some searching.

[Catania](#) is the second largest city in [Sicily](#) with just under 312,129 inhabitants, and is also the provincial capital of the province of the same name. The city is the second largest in Sicily (after Palermo) and the tenth largest in Italy. [Italyheaven](#)



Here we have arrived in the center of Catania. We see the towers of the cathedral, [Duomo di Catania](#). It has been destroyed and rebuilt several times due to earthquakes and eruptions from nearby Mount Etna.





This is [Castello Ursino](#), which was built between 1239 and 1250, as one of the royal castles of Emperor Frederick II, King of Sicily. After the move of the capital away from Catania and the development of gunpowder weapons, the castle lost its military role and was used as a prison. It is one of the few buildings in Catania that survived the earthquake of 1693.

The castle was bought by the city of Catania in 1932, and has been restored.



From the streets around Castillo Ursino.



This is the train station of Catania.



Then we drive further north along the coast.



Church of Saint Matthew Apostle in Rovettazzo.



Someone is watching us when we get to [Giardini Naxos](#). Until the 1970s, Giardini Naxos was a sleepy fishing village. Now it is a very popular resort.





Looking up towards [Taormina](#) from Naxos.

[Italyheaven](#)



The statue of Teocles is located along the promenade of Giardini Naxos. According to legend, it was the first Greek who landed here in 735 BC. and founded Naxos.



The road runs along the beach promenade.



This is the train station in Giardini Naxos.



Lido Stockholm.



Taormina is located high up on the mountainside.

The history of [Taormina](#) dates back to before ancient Greece established its first colony on Sicily in 734 BCE.

Taormina has been a tourist destination since the 19th century.

Taormina's main attraction is a Greek theatre, probably from the 4th century BC, rebuilt by the Romans in the 2nd century.

[Italyheaven](#).





We drove all the way up to [Castelmola](#) before turning around and driving down to the hotel where we were to spend the night.



A restaurant in Castelmola, [La Caverna](#).



We had booked at the [Hotel Villino Galodoro](#). The entrance to the reception and breakfast room is up the stairs on the left. The restaurant is at the back on the right.



We were hungry when we arrived, but there was no dinner to be had until 7pm. We went down to the beach to see if there was any beach restaurant open. There wasn't, but there were many people on the beach.



Here we look in the other direction. The beach here is called Mazzaro Beach.



There was a restaurant here, but it was closed.

Italian meal times:

**Breakfast/Prima colazione:** 07-10 - It's sweet and simple. It mostly consists of coffee or tea and, for example, a brioche, a simple roll ('panino') with jam or biscuits ('biscotti') or a piece of cake.

**Lunch/Pranzo:** 13-15 - The first hot meal of the day is lunch.

**Dinner/Cena:** 20-23. A proper main meal is usually composed of: Antipasti (Appetizer), Primo piatto (usually a pasta dish), Secondo piatto (mainly meat or fish. Side dishes must be ordered in addition) and Dolce (Dessert).

We only ordered primo piatto or secondo piatto. It was more than enough for us. Sometimes we had dessert as well.





Then we got food.  
Anne Berit had lasagna.



I had Spaghetti alle Vongole. It's spaghetti with small clams.  
[Wikipedia](#)



The view from the restaurant.



This is from breakfast the following day.



When we checked out of the hotel this day, October 6, we first drove south again to take a few more photos.







We drove further north on the SS114. This is Sant'Alessio Castle.

[Castles99](#) [Castles](#)



Here we look from the road by the fortress down towards Sant'Alessio Siculo.

[Sant'Alessio Siculo](#).



Here stands the figure Galassiopea. It was created in 1987 by the artist Nino Ucchino,



We took a small detour to a small town up in the mountains. It's called [Savoca](#). Just before we got up to the town we saw this donkey. This is also made by the artist Nino Ucchino. When you put a coin in the box below, it starts talking.





Then we come to the settlement.



Nicely decorated wall.



Here we have driven through the city and are on our way down again.



We stopped for a moment here, because we spotted Bar Vitelli.



[Bar Vitelli](#) was one of the places where the movie 'The Godfather' was filmed.



Just beyond the bar stands this steel figure, which is supposed to represent the director of The Godfather, [Francis Ford Coppola](#).





Then we are down by the sea again.  
Another piece of art by Nino Uchino from 1988.  
It's called 'Sirena',

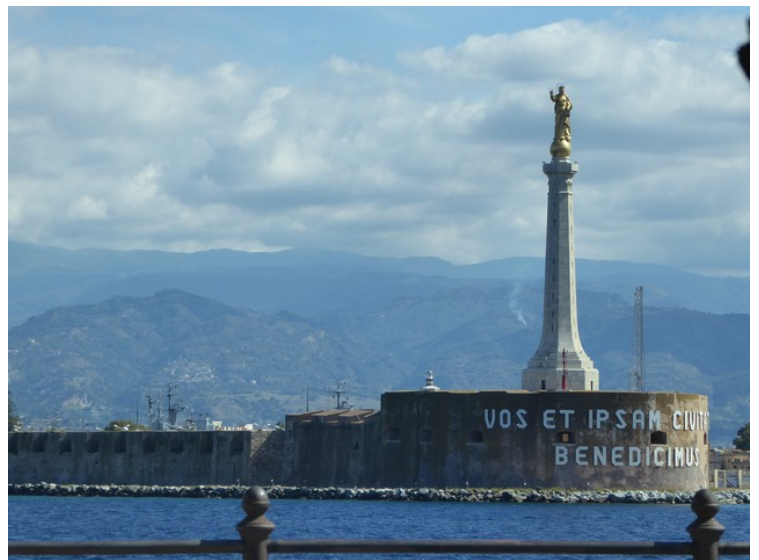


This is in Messina.  
We see the churches [Cathedral of Saint Mary of the Assumption](#) to the left and [Chiesa di Sant'Antonio Abate](#) to the right.



There was a very large cruise ship in the harbor when we drove past.

It's called '[Norwegian Epic](#)' and it was the third largest cruise ship in the world when it was delivered in 2010.



We look across the harbor towards [Madonna della Lettera](#). The gilded statue on a 197-foot pedestal was erected in 1934 on the pier at [Forte del Santissimo Salvatore](#).

The statue is Virgin Mary, the patron saint of Messina.



A little further away we drive past the [Neptun-fountain](#).  
[Link](#)

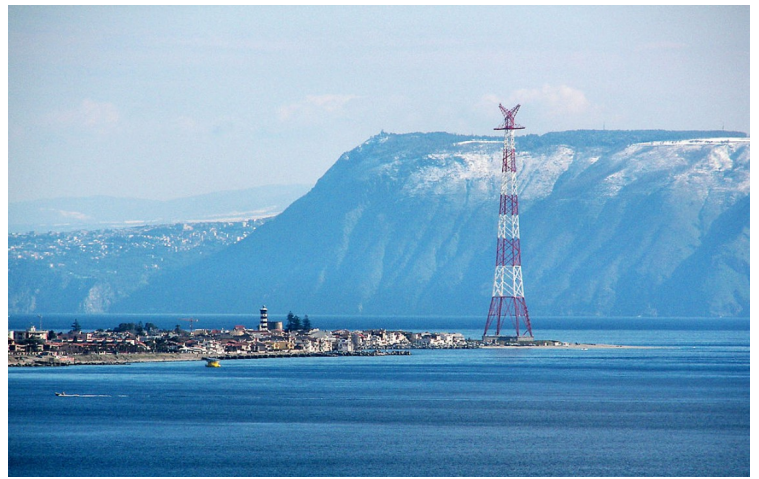


Directly beyond is this monument, [Batteria Masotto](#).





Nord for Messina kjørte vi forbi Parish "S. Maria delle Grazie" - Peace.



We drove all the way to the north-eastern corner of Sicily. There we see this [steel tower](#). There is a corresponding one on the mainland, Calabria, which we see in the background. They were in use from 1955 to 1994. Wires were strung between them to transmit electrical power. Now the masts are allowed to stand as historical monuments.



[Capo Peloro](#) lighthouse stands near the high tower



Out here on the headland there are two lakes. Here we see [Lago di Ganzirri](#). The other is called Pantano Piccolo.



Next to the lighthouse we saw this nice restaurant, [La Risacca dei Due Mari](#).



After we had been out on the north-east tip of the island, we drove along the north coast on the SS113 to Milazzo, where we had booked at the [Hotel San Michele](#). We had booked parking for the car. It was in the basement under the hotel. There was such a convoluted descent that I managed to scratch the length of the car. Fortunately, I had full insurance.





[Milazzo](#) was originally a Greek city. Today it is a tourist destination. There are plans to get the castle, the fortress town and the old village onto the UNESCO World Heritage List.



There are ferries from Milazzo to the [Aeolian Islands](#). It is a group of 7 inhabited and some smaller uninhabited islands.



The next day we drove further along the SS113. Here, we have come so far that we see [The Sanctuary of Tindari](#).

[Link](#)

The Tindari Shrine was built on the ruins of Tindari Castle. Here stands the famous statue of the Black Madonna.



View from the road down towards the bay.

Tindari was a Greek colony said to have been founded by Dionysios in 396 or 395 BCE. There are many ruins in the surrounding area of [Tindari](#).



View further east where we came from.



Anne Berit studies the view.





More views.



This is in [Patti](#). These are the remains of an old gate. We drove a bit wrong and messed up into the old town. The streets were so narrow that we had to turn around and drive out again.



Still in the old town of Patti.



Here we have come a little further and will drive on a [stone bridge](#) over the Rosmarino River. The river, like all the rivers in Sicily, is completely dry at this time of year.



This day we had booked at [Hotel Za Maria](#), which is located on the coast before we get to S. Stefano di Camastra.

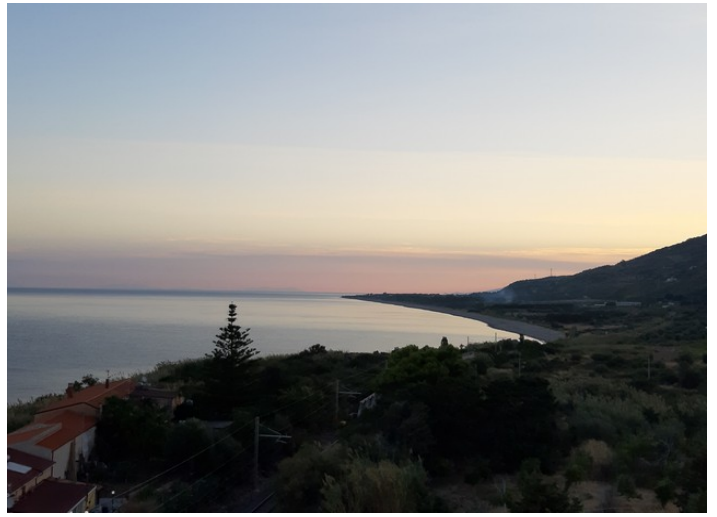


[Santo Stefano di Camastra](#) originated around the Benedictine monastery of Santa Croce di Santo Stefano in Val Demone, in the 11th century AD. The current town was built after a catastrophic landslide destroyed the old village on 6 June 1682. The town is located in an area with a lot of clay and a lot of ceramics, bricks and tiles are produced.





From our room we looked down on the railway which ran directly below the hotel.



The view in the evening.

Here we couldn't get the plugs into the sockets, but we were able to borrow an adapter from the hotel host. When we left the next day, we asked if we could buy it. We got it and we had to use it in all the next places we stayed.



An example of ceramic tiles. These were on the floor of the hotel. I assume they are produced in the area.



Here we are in the dining room in the evening. We were the only ones eating so early. Eventually a group of men arrived at a long table next to us.



Anne Berit had a vegetarian pasta dish.



I had Spaghetti Vongole here too.





The next day, 8 October, we drove further west on the SS113. Here we come to the mountain by which Cefalu is situated.



We drive through the city.

Cefalu was originally a Greek fortress up on the cliff. The ancient city was also built up there. The building that dominates the cityscape today is the cathedral, which was begun in 1131.



Here we look back towards the city.



Zoomed in on the cathedral.



This is an industrial area to the east of Termini Imerese. Here there is, among other things, a car factory and a power station. The city is one of the most important in the area with good infrastructure. People have lived here since time immemorial and there are both Greek and Roman ruins in the area.





This is [Torre delle Mandre](#). Tånnet was probably built when Sicily was under Aragon in the 15th or 16th century. It was mentioned for the first time in documents in 1557. The tower was intended to protect the area from [Maghreb](#) pirates.



Here there appears to be a warehouse of ceramics.



We have now arrived in Palermo and we see [Castello Utveggiro](#) up on [Mount Pellegrino](#). It was built as a mansion, but has gradually been used for a hotel and school. It was closed in 2016.



The Port of Palermo.

From here we drove towards the apartment we had booked, but before that we stopped by a supermarket to buy some food.



The kitchen.



The terrace

We had booked an apartment called [Zisa Home](#). We were supposed to spend two nights here. The next day we had planned a trip up to Monreale and a trip with a Hop on - Hop off bus in Palermo. The next day, however, I was plagued by a viral infection, so I slept most of the day. Anne Berit also had traces of the same symptoms, sore throat, runny nose and cough.





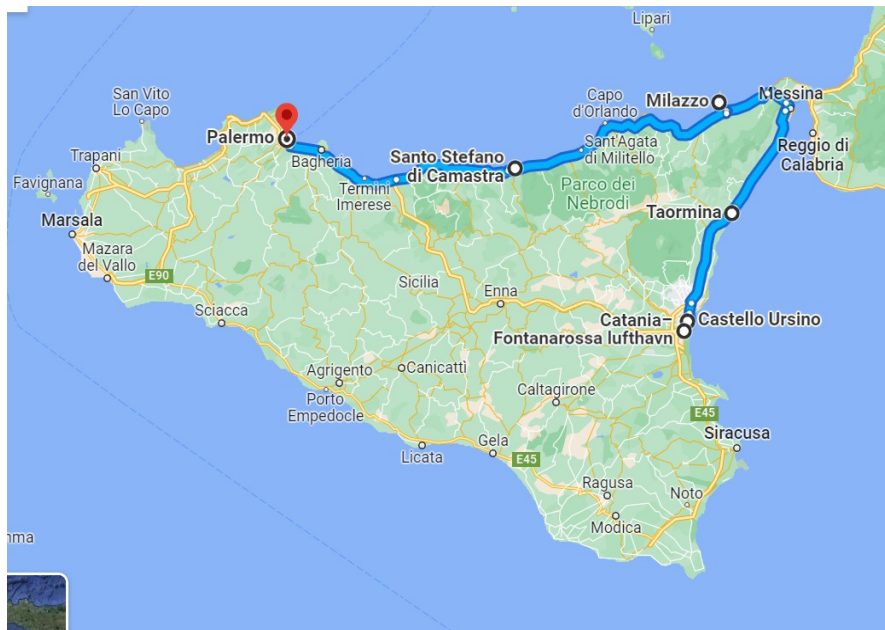
The cathedral.



The monastery.

After Palermo was occupied by Muslims in 831, the bishop of Palermo was forced to move his episcopal seat to outside the capital. The role of the new cathedral was given to the small church of Aghia Kiriaki in the village later called [Monreale](#). After the [Normans](#) conquered the site in 1072, the Christians could once again move back to the old town's cathedral. Possibly because of the small church's temporary role as an eclectic center, [King William II of Sicily](#) decided to build his famous cathedral here. Under King William II, the [Benedictines](#) from [Cava de' Tirreni](#) founded a monastery next to the cathedral.

[Palermo](#) is the capital of Sicily. The city has 676,100 inhabitants and the surrounding urban area together 1,065,600. This makes Palermo the 5th largest city in Italy after Rome, Milan, Naples and Turin. The city is known for its rich history, culture, architecture and gastronomy, and has played a major role in the roughly 2,700 years the city has existed.



So far we have been driving like this.