



Eastern Sicily

UNDER THE VOLCANO

Join us in Italy, October 17–24, 2022.

Eastern Sicily is the land of Etna, Europe's largest and most active volcano, and of six UNESCO World Heritage sites. From the Greek theater of Taormina to the Roman mosaics of Piazza Armerina to the Baroque gem that is Noto, you'll be immersed in Sicily's diverse past and vibrant contemporary life.

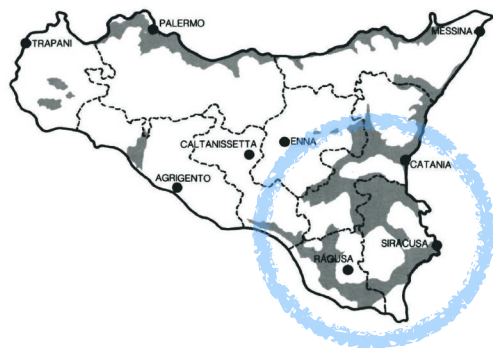


Elifant Archaeo-Culinary Tours

www.elifanttours.com / info@elifanttours.com / +1-347-868-6345

Eastern Sicily

UNDER THE VOLCANO



The tour itinerary covers much of the southeastern corner of the triangular island of Sicily, the area dominated by Catania and Mount Etna. Our gateway is Catania's international airport.

"When you pick us up that first day I can just relax, turn it all over to you, and just go with the flow."

—Barbara A., Los Angeles



Maureen Fant and Elizabeth Bartman,
Elifant's principals

THIS WAS THE HOME OF SOME OF MYTHOLOGY'S MOST terrifying monsters. The one-eyed Polyphemus lived on fiery Etna. Scylla and Charybdis personified the winds and currents that still threaten navigation in the straits of Messina. Yet seafaring Greeks and Phoenicians were drawn by the island's spectacular natural beauty and fertility.

The cities they founded would rival Athens and Carthage for Mediterranean hegemony. Romans, Byzantines, Normans, Arabs, and Spanish followed them, each bringing a distinctive culture whose traces we still see today in the island's art and cuisine.

For the Romans, ancient Sicily, like North Africa, was a breadbasket, and the same durum wheat (or nearly) is today used for wonderful local flour-and-water pastas—and the tomatoes from sun-drenched, salt-swept Pachino, on the southeast corner of the island, make the best sauces. The volcanic soils on the slopes and foothills of Mount Etna yield the best blood oranges, the best pistachios, and excellent minerally wines (Etna DOC). All our (fabulous) meals are accompanied by local wines made from native grape varieties, such as Grillo and Carricante whites, Nero d'Avola and Nerello Mascalese reds, and, for dessert, the exquisite Moscato di Noto.

What's included?

Everything. Once the tour begins, you can go the whole week without opening your wallet except for your personal insurance, extras, snacks (which we doubt you'll want), and maybe some souvenir chocolate, marzipan, or Etna wine.

The tour price of US\$6700 per person (supplement for private room US\$725) includes 8* nights bed and breakfast, at least one multi-course Italian meal a day (including wine) as well as other meals and snacks as described in the itinerary; all activities and transport as described; airport transfers as described; and tips. Plus the undivided attention of Elizabeth Bartman and Maureen Fant, Elifant's principals, who plan and lead the tour themselves.

The following program accurately reflects the tour at this writing. Details of some meals and activities are still being worked out, not least because of the havoc wrought by the pandemic. If circumstances should impose a minor change, rest assured that Plan B will be great too.

Most travel is by private medium-size tour bus. Within cities, we'll use smaller vans or taxis where we can't walk.

The tour begins in Siracusa and ends in Catania, both served by Catania's Fontanarossa International Airport (CTA), which has frequent flights from/to many Italian and European cities.

**The tour officially begins on Monday, the 17th, at 10 a.m. We suggest people arrive the day before, and we are including the night of Sunday, the 16th.*

PREVIOUS PAGE: Blood-orange trees in the foreground frame a view of snow-capped Mount Etna.

PICTURED ABOVE: The celebrated Greek theater at Taormina (left); sweet almond paste and ricotta are the main ingredients of the cassata Siciliana (right)



Eastern Sicily

DAYS 1–3

The beautiful mountain

Known locally as Montebello or Mungibeddu, and Aetna to the Romans, Mount Etna is Europe's largest volcano and the second-most active volcano on earth (after Kilauea in Hawaii).

"The best two weeks of eating of my life."

—Bob D., Los Angeles



Syracuse or Siracusa? Ortygia or Ortigia?

For modern places, we use the Italian names, in this case Siracusa and Ortigia. When referring to ancient times and places, we use the Greek or Latin names, often anglicized. For example, for the ancient city, we use Syracuse, in English, from the Latin Syracusae, in turn from the Greek Syrakousai.

Meal key:

B = Breakfast

L = Lunch

D = Dinner

S = Snack or tasting

PICTURED ABOVE: mosaic of female athletes from the Roman villa at Piazza Armerina (left); aerial view of Morgantina (right)



Monday, October 17

INTRODUCING SYRACUSE AND OUR WEEK

You'll be met at Catania International Airport (CTA) whenever you arrive and transferred to our boutique 4-star hotel in Siracusa, about an hour's drive away, our base for the next two nights. The hotel is on the island of Ortigia, the oldest part of the city, where antiquities mix with trendy art galleries and restaurants. Cicero called Syracuse "the greatest Greek city and the most beautiful of all," and who could disagree? Ancient Syracuse is even a Unesco World Heritage Site. Our week officially begins with a mid-morning walk around ancient Ortygia, with its various archaic temples and sanctuaries, including the fountain into which the nymph Arethusa was transformed by the goddess Artemis.

After lunch, we visit the archaeological park in Neapolis ("New City"), where an impressive Greek theater, gigantic altar, and colossal man-made caves testify to a city whose wealth and power once surpassed all others in the Mediterranean. In the late afternoon, energy and time permitting, we can visit some of the extensive catacombs from later antiquity that honeycomb the city.

Our first evening is devoted to getting acquainted over aperitivi and nibbles as well as illustrated previews by Liz and Maureen of the week's archaeology and cuisine.

Overnight in Siracusa. B, L, D

Tuesday, October 18 GREEK SYRACUSE, ROMAN TELLARO, BAROQUE NOTO

The day begins with a visit to Siracusa's spectacular new(ish) archaeological museum, where important antiquities illustrate the rich diversity of ancient life and culture on every part of Sicily.

Lunch will be on the sea in the southeast corner island, but on the way, we stop to visit the Roman villa at Tellaro, recently restored and opened to the public. Its polychrome mosaic pavements rival those of the better-known villa at Piazza Armerina (which we visit later in the week).

Marzamemi, the fishing village that is our destination, is also in the middle of the Pachino area renowned for its particularly succulent tomatoes. We'll skip dessert (trust us).

A few miles, and many centuries, away is our last stop of the day, Noto, "pearl" of Sicily, renowned for its exquisite baroque architecture, the result of its rebuilding after a major earthquake devastated much of southeastern Sicily in 1693. Noto and seven other towns destroyed at the same time form the UNESCO World Heritage site known as the Val di Noto. And you'll be glad we waited for dessert.

Evening free. Overnight in Siracusa. B, L, S

Wednesday, October 19 AKRAI, RAGUSA, MODICA

Today we drive into the countryside to Akrai, a colony founded by Syracuse, with its unspoiled Greek buildings as well as rock-cut caves (Templi Ferali) that have found multiple uses over the centuries. A short drive brings us to Ragusa, another Val di Noto town renowned for its Baroque architectural beauty as expressed in stone. We'll have a light lunch there.

The nearby town of Modica has made the Val di Noto as famous for chocolate as for seventeenth-century domes. Often overshadowed by the country's many unique products, Italy's chocolate is superb, and Modica's boasts the country's first IGP, a European quality designation. This busy day concludes sweetly as we learn its secrets—tasting permitted!

Dinner and overnight at a wine estate near Gela. En route, we'll have a look at the magnificent ancient city walls of Gela. B, L, S, D



Eastern Sicily

DAYS 4-5



Famous Catanesi and Siracusani:

Archimedes (ca.287–212 BCE), mathematician and inventor

Vincenzo Bellini (1801–34), composer

Pietro Scalia (1969–), cinematographer

Giovanni Verga (1840–1922), writer

Gaetano Adorno (1803–79), statesman

"I wish Elifant Tours went everywhere. I would never travel any other way again."

—Patty H., Boston

What's a "blood orange"?

Arance rosse di Sicilia, Sicilian red oranges, have a European IGP designation that covers three main types of oranges, with many subtypes, containing anthocyanins, red pigments that are powerful antioxidants. The best are the so-called tarocchi grown on the southern slopes of Mount Etna.

Thursday, October 20

PIAZZA ARMERINA

The archaeological museum of Gela may or may not be open. If it is, we'll start our day there. Otherwise, we'll go straight to Caltagirone, a small city renowned for centuries for some of the island's most exquisite painted pottery and, today, also for the excellent restaurant where we'll have lunch.

But the day's main event is a visit to the large Roman villa at Piazza Armerina, famed for its extraordinary mosaic floors (including such unique scenes as the female athletes popularly known as "bikini girls"). The dour portrait at the entrance still greeting visitors may depict a Roman emperor of the late third century who owned the villa. Certainly the showpiece architecture as well as the mosaics give credibility to the imperial attribution.

Overnight in Piazza Armerina.

B, L, S

Friday, October 21 MORGANTINA, CATANIA

The site of the Greek town of Morgantina, excavated by Princeton University, is our morning's destination, where we see the agora's public buildings, including a VIP dining room, and houses with mosaic floors.

A sizable new museum in nearby Aidone displays the magnificent cult statue of Aphrodite and other works of art looted from Morgantina that have recently been repatriated.

The afternoon will be free in Catania, our base for the last three nights.

Dinner and overnight in Catania.

B, L, D



Questions about the tour or destination?
Send us an [email](#) or give us a ring
(+1-347-868-6345).



Eastern Sicily

DAYS 6–8

"All that nature has of great, all that it has of pleasant, and all that it has of terrible can be compared to Etna, and Etna cannot compare to anything."

—Dominique Vivant Denon, 1788

"I wish Elifant Tours went everywhere. I would never travel any other way again."

—Patty H., Boston

"One of the very nicest things about life is the way we must regularly stop whatever it is we are doing and devote our attention to eating."

—Luciano Pavarotti



Saturday, October 22

CATANIA'S FISH AND ETNA'S WINE

How can we not love a Sicilian city whose emblem is an obelisk bearing a statue of an elephant? It stands in front of the Duomo, a pebble's throw from one of the city's most enticing café-pastry shops and one of Europe's great fish markets. We devote the first part of the morning to exploration of Catania's historic markets (fruit and vegetables too), accompanied by a chef. But first, we'll go beneath the Duomo to visit an ancient bath complex.

From the center of Catania, we go to a winery on the slopes of Mount Etna for a cooking lesson (taught by the chef who took us to the market), lunch, a visit to the vineyards and cellar, and, of course, a tasting of examples from all four sides of the volcano—oh yes, direction makes a difference.

Overnight in Catania. B, L, S

Sunday, October 23

TAORMINA

Too many visitors to eastern Sicily never get beyond picturesque, famous Taormina, about an hour north of Catania between Etna and the coast. We've saved it for our last day. Once a Greek colony, Taormina preserves one of the finest theaters from antiquity (it was even featured in the Woody Allen film *Mighty Aphrodite*). Ascending to the topmost seats, we enjoy an unsurpassed panorama that juxtaposes the azure Ionian Sea with snow-capped Mount Etna. The remains of several less-known ancient buildings uncovered in recent years also warrant a look. We stay in Taormina for our festive farewell Sunday lunch.

Finally, if it has reopened, we visit the historic early 20th-century house and gardens of Casa Cuseni, commissioned in the Arts and Crafts style by a wealthy Englishman.

Over a final drink this evening, we say our farewells.

Overnight in Catania. B, L, S

Monday, October 24

DEPARTURE

Individual transfers to Catania airport, a half-hour's drive from the hotel.

B

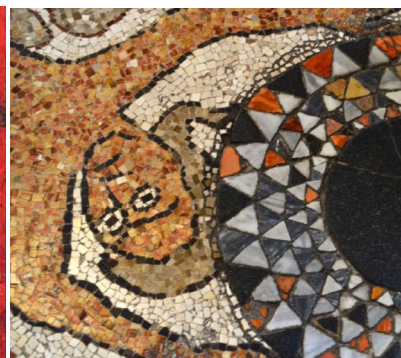
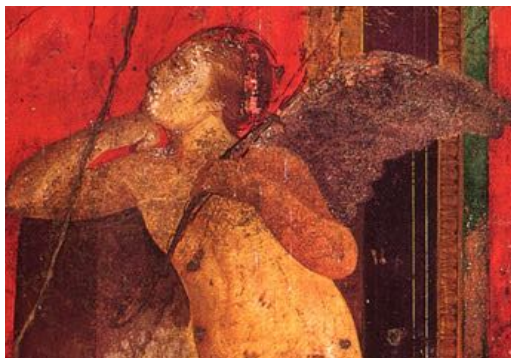


PICTURED ABOVE: The obelisk-bearing elephant, nicknamed Liotru, stands in Piazza del Duomo and is the emblem of Catania (left); an orange vendor in Catania's splendid street market (center); "Morgantina Goddess," Aidone Museum (right)



Elifant

A NEW RECIPE FOR HIGH-END
CULTURAL TRAVEL IN
THE MEDITERRANEAN



Elifant Archaeo-Culinary Tours are unique, small- group trips for sophisticated travelers who delight in learning about the ancient world while indulging in the culinary present.

Each archaeo-culinarySM tour concentrates on a circumscribed area of Italy, the route defined by the archaeological remains. We may choose the sites because they're too important to miss or because we have extraordinary access to interesting sites closed to the public.

We build a food-related itinerary around the archaeological route. Through fabulous meals and visits with chefs and niche producers, we learn about contemporary and traditional local food, while the ancient ruins provide a historical backdrop to how this food culture evolved. Informal talks over evening *aperitivi* often supplement topics addressed during the tour. Menus are carefully planned to highlight local specialties and traditions.

Don't worry about a thing

The comfort level is high. Hotels range from very comfortable to downright luxurious, restaurants from rustic trattorias to cutting-edge elegant, and travel (except in city centers) is by private bus. Every hotel selection involves choosing the right balance of charm, location, and comfort. The days are full, but the activity level is moderate. Participants should be able to walk up to half a mile at a time—extraordinary strength or stamina not needed.

Everyone receives plenty of individual attention before and during the trip, whether it's about travel advice, food allergies, or more in-depth discussion of the places we've seen and foods we've eaten.

No elephants in the room

"Elifant" stands for Elizabeth (Bartman) and (Maureen) Fant, Elifant's principals.

Liz, an archaeologist with a lively interest in cookery, is a past president of the Archaeological Institute of America and a prominent scholar of ancient Roman sculpture. Maureen, an award-winning food writer, studied classical archaeology before moving to Rome and becoming an expert in Italian cuisine.

Both Liz and Maureen call on their personal connections in the worlds of archaeology and food for access to special people and places, but curate and lead the tours themselves to give their guests all the convivial pleasures of traveling with friends. Tour participants speak of Maureen and Liz's knack for explaining their subjects without being either too scholarly or too simple.

Great company

If you've read this far, you'll understand that Elifant tours are special tours for special people. Group size ranges from 6 to 12, and includes couples, friends, and a good many solo travelers. Our meals are like dinner parties with an absolutely fantastic mix of guests—often taking their first group tour.

And no one ever feels left out. Liz and Maureen jointly lead and guide every Elifant tour and are always available to chat, have a coffee, or talk in greater depth about the day's subjects.

Every site visit is an
adventure in living
the past. Every meal
is an event.

Destinations so far

Rome
Bay of Naples
Basilicata + Puglia
Sardinia
Emilia-Romagna
Western Sicily
Southern Etruria
Abruzzo + Molise
Eastern Sicily

Contact us

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PICTURED ABOVE: Detail from the Villa of the Mysteries, Pompeii (left).
Detail from the mosaic pavement in the Otranto cathedral (right).

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Terms

AND CONDITIONS



Costs

The 8-day tour—as per the above description, including 8 nights bed and breakfast; meals and other food (including wine), activities, and transport as described; tips; and airport transfers—will cost US\$6700 per person. An additional charge of US\$725 is made for a private room.

Reservations and payments

To reserve space, complete the [online reservation form](#) or send the information in an email to info@elifanttours.com. You will then receive an invoice for a deposit of US\$3000 per person per tour. We accept payment, only in U.S. dollars, by personal check drawn on a U.S. bank, wire transfer, or [paypal.com](#) (including credit cards). You are responsible for any bank or service charges related to the payment method you choose. When you submit your deposit, you are bound to the terms and conditions outlined below.

Cancellation and refunds

Your deposit is refundable for 30 days after the date on your booking form, up to 120 days before the start of the tour. You will be billed for the balance, due 90 days before the start date. After that date, all payments, including the deposit, become nonrefundable. Cancellations will be effective once they are received in writing and confirmed by Elifant. An administrative charge of \$100 will apply to all cancellations. If you need to cancel after your payment becomes nonrefundable, you may, with Elifant's approval, transfer your booking to a third party who satisfies the conditions of the tour (we will retain a \$100 administrative fee). If we are forced to cancel the tour, you will receive a full refund without further obligation on our part. Partial or full refunds cannot be made to participants who for any reason do not participate in some part of the program or complete the tour, or whose start on the tour is delayed. For this reason, we highly recommend that participants carry personal travel insurance.

Tour cancellation

Tours are costed on the basis of a minimum number of passengers traveling together. If this minimum is not reached, we shall either cancel the tour and offer a refund in full or, subject to clients' agreement, operate the tour at the necessary supplement.

Alterations to the tour

We will do our utmost to provide the tour described in the published material, but retain the right to modify or cancel any tour, accommodation, or arrangement due to unforeseen circumstances amounting to Force Majeure. In such circumstances we will inform you as soon as possible, and should the change be such that it alters the nature of the tour, we shall give you the choice of an alternative tour or a full refund of all money paid. As we will absorb all financial loss consequent upon cancellation due to Force Majeure, we shall not cancel any tour for reason of political tension or natural disaster unless the U.S. Department of State so recommends.

We reserve the right to make, without notice, minor alterations to the published program that do not change the nature of the tour or the value supplied.

If we have to cancel at any time, Elifant is not responsible for any monies paid to others for travel in conjunction with this tour, notably any airline cancellation penalty incurred by the purchase of a nonrefundable air ticket.

Surcharges

Our prices are based at the euro-US dollar exchange rate as of January 28, 2022. We reserve the right to impose a surcharge to reflect increases in the exchange rate. If the increase exceeds 5% of the tour price, we will offer you the option to cancel, with a full refund of all monies paid, provided we are notified within seven days of the surcharge's being imposed.

Health and insurance

All participants should be in good health and able to keep up with an active group. You are personally responsible for your own

health and medical treatment. You must confirm to Elifant that you carry adequate travel and medical insurance, including medical evacuation. The tour leader, in conjunction with the appropriate medical advice, if applicable, has the right to disqualify any client at any time during the course of the tour, if considered necessary for the medical well-being or safety of the individual, or if, in the tour leader's opinion, the client's actions are materially affecting the enjoyment of the tour for the remainder of the group. Any decision with regard to any reimbursement for any part of the tour not completed will be made by Elifant.

Baggage and personal effects

These remain your responsibility and risk at all times. Elifant will accept no liability for loss, damage, or misdirection of your baggage or effects.

Airport transfers

Please book your flights early to avoid disappointment. To arrange for your airport transfers, Elifant will need your arrival and departure information at least 60 days before the start date of the tour. Clients failing to provide such information by then will be subject to a surcharge of \$50 per person or be responsible for their own transfers.

Responsibility

As a condition of participation, each passenger will be required to sign a Release of Liability, which will be distributed at the start of the tour.

All participants must be fully vaccinated against Covid-19 with proof of vaccination (a certificate or vaccine passport) if asked. We expect all participants to adhere to any local requirements such as wearing face masks or distancing.

Elifant is not responsible for the performance of the services provided by carriers, hotels, and agents, and is not liable for any damage or compensation payable to any participant in respect to loss or injury sustained by the participant, regardless of its cause.



Next

HOW TO BOOK



Ready to reserve?

To book, visit [our website](#) to complete a booking form online. Or just email us at info@elifanttours.com.

To complete your booking, we request a deposit of \$3000 per person per tour. Payment may be by check in US dollars drawn on a US bank, by bank transfer, or by credit card (through [paypal.com](#)).

Simply indicate your preference on the booking form and we will send you an invoice.

We'll bill you for the balance of the tour, due 90 days before departure.

Be sure to read the Terms and Conditions on [page 7](#).



And next ...

EMILIA-ROMAGNA

Across the Rubicon, along the Po

March 27 to April 2, 2023

Beneath the porticoed streets of some of Italy's most gracious, and livable, cities—Bologna, Parma, Modena, Ferrara, Ravenna—lie tantalizing remains left by numerous ancient peoples. Some say the food is the best in Italy. With such products as the real prosciutto (ham) di Parma, parmigiano-reggiano cheese, and balsamic vinegar, to say nothing of the original Bolognese *ragù*, its cuisine is certainly one of the most influential in the world.

Western Sicily

October 9–16, 2023

The western corner of Sicily contains the island's most spectacular antiquities—the Greek temples at Segesta, Selinunte (Selinus), and Agrigento—as well as the renowned Norman architecture of Palermo. Sicily has been a cultural crossroads since Greek settlers and Phoenician traders mixed with local peoples, such as Elymians and Sikans more than three thousand years ago. In fact, parts of western Sicily were never completely Hellenized. We'll also visit Trapani, Marsala, Mozia, Mazara del Valle, and Monreale.

And don't forget the food and wine. The island that the ancient Romans considered Italy's breadbasket thanks to its prized durum wheat does not disappoint today. Lapped by three seas, Sicily celebrates its abundant seafood at the table (think tuna and swordfish). All manner of fruits and vegetables thrive in its rich soil. But superb ingredients are only the start. Generations of perfectionist Sicilian women have used hands and hearts to create richly flavored, labor-intensive, uniquely Sicilian dishes. And every Sicilian seems to have a serious sweet tooth.

