

Route 11

- **Tour:** Diana
- **Starting point:** Cefalù
- **Arrivo:** Val di Noto
- **Points of interest:** Ennese e Villa del Casale - Caltagirone - Val di Noto
- **Km:** 257



A route without any drawn highway. The taste of driving to cross Sicily leaving from the Madonie and to reach the south-east edge of the island to see a different landscape.

■ **History and traditions:**

Cefalù

The Cathedral of Cefalù located in Piazza Duomo was built under the patronage of Roger II of Sicily, beginning in 1131. This style of Norman architecture would be more accurately called Sicilian Romanesque, the mosaics inside are among the most famous in the world.

Villa del Casale

Villa del Casale is an old Roman Residence of Hunting. It was built between the late 3rd century BC and the early 4th century AD. The most remarkable feature of the villa is the floor, mainly consisting of mosaics which fortunately endured in excellent condition.

In 1997, Villa Romana del Casale was declared from Unesco inalienable heritage of Mankind, not only because it is an extraordinary and important Roman remain, dated at the end of the Roman Empire, but also because it represents the complex system of economic, social and cultural relations of the Mediterranean basin. It includes 48 rooms. Almost in every room it is possible to see the splendid mosaics made almost certainly by north African workers. Surely the best known picture is the one of the girls wearing Bikinis. It is situated in one of the rooms to the South of the peristyle.

Villa Romana del Casale

Open Everyday from 8.00 to 17.30 (winter)

from 8.00 to 18.30 (summer)

Admission 2 Euros From 18

to 25 years old 4 Euros From 26

Val di noto

In the south east of Sicily, it is dominated by the limestone Iblean plateau. In 1693 the entire area was decimated by an enormous earthquake. The town area was rebuilt in what came to be known as the Sicilian baroque style; most notable the town of Noto itself, which is now a tourist attraction on account of its fine Baroque architecture. Other towns in the Val di Noto include Modica, Ragusa and Scicli. Many towns in the area were declared World Heritage by UNESCO in June 2002.

Modica

The city is situated in the Iblean mountains and was founded by the Sykels circa the 7th century B.C

Over the centuries, as the city developed, it gradually became divided into "Modica Alta" (Upper Modica) and "Modica Bassa" (Lower Modica). During the last century the city has extended and developed new suburbs which include Modica Sorda, Monserrato, Idria, these are often referred to as Modern Modica; both old and modern quarters of the city are today joined by Europe's highest bridge (300m).

Modica was the birth place of Salvatore Quasimodo, writer and 1959's Nobel Prize, and also of Tommaso Campailla, the 18th century scientist and philosopher.

■ Sightseeing and Landscape:

Cefalù

A gorgeous little town located on the north coast between Palermo and Messina, has about 50,000 inhabitants and is one of the major tourist attractions in the region. It has Roman baths, an ancient cathedral, marvellous beaches and is a tranquil city full of history.

Caltagirone

Caltagirone is located on three hills at about 600m above sea level in the interior of Sicily about 70km SW of Catania. The city has been long famous for the production of pottery and terra-cotta wares. Nowadays the production is more and more oriented to artistic production of ceramics and terra-cotta sculptures. Other activities are mainly related to agriculture. The city was almost completely destroyed by the severe earthquake of 1693. Many public and private buildings were rebuilt in Baroque style. Primarily for this reason, the city has been included, together with the surrounding territory, in an area protected by the UNESCO World Heritage program. The main landmark of the city is a 142-step monumental staircase in the old part of the town. The peculiarity is that each step is decorated with different hand-painted ceramic tiles presenting figures derived from the millennial tradition of pottery making. Every year on 25 July, during the celebration of the Saint of the City (Saint James), the staircase is illuminated with candles of different colours for several tens of meters.

Ragusa

In Ragusa you can find Palazzo Zacco, one of the most notable Baroque buildings of the city. Its Corinthian columns supporting balconies of amazing wrought iron work, while supports of grotesques mock, shock or amuse the passerby.

The building has two street façades, each with six wide balconies bearing the coat of arms of the Melfi family, a frame of acanthus leaves from which a puttino leans. The balconies, a feature of the palazzo, are notable for the differing corbels which support them, ranging from putti to musicians and grotesques. The focal points of the principal façade are the three central balconies, divided by columns with Corinthian capitals. Here the balconies are supported by images of musicians with grotesque faces.

The Cathedral of San Giovanni Battista in Ragusa Superiore was built between 1718 and 1778. Its principal façade is pure Baroque, containing fine carvings and sculptures. The cathedral has a high Sicilian belfry in the same style. The ornate Baroque interior is separated into three colonnaded aisles.
