

## **Route 13**

- **Tour:** Medea
- **Starting point:** Cefalù
- **Arrival:** Val di Noto
- **Points of interest:** Cefalù - Siracusa  
- Val di Noto
- **Km:** 263



After visiting Cefalù, carry on to reach Catania, Syracuse and Val di Noto.

### ■ **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.

Syracuse

Syracuse was founded 2740 years ago by Greek settlers from Corinth, who called it Sirako ("swamp"). The settlers found the land to be fertile and the native tribes to be reasonably well-disposed to their presence. The city grew and prospered, and for some time was the most powerful Greek city of the Mediterranean.

Since the 5th century BC Syracuse was ruled by tyrants until 211 BC, with some interruptions. In the late 5th century, Syracuse was engaged in a war with Athens, which sought more resources to fight the Peloponnesian War.

Perhaps the most famous citizen of Syracuse was the natural philosopher Archimedes. Among his many inventions were various military engines including the so-called "claw of Archimedes", used to resist a Roman siege

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.

#### Syracuse

Syracuse is one of the oldest cities in Italy. Important centre of the "Magna Grecia", it was actually built as a Greek city. The island of Ortigia is a pleasant place for walks and sightseeing, with its three bridges and the old area, full of bars and nice restaurants where to stop for a meal.

#### 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.

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