

## **Route 2**

- **Tour:** Mosaico
- **Starting point:** Agrigento
- **Arrival:** Vulcano Etna
- **Points of interest:** Piazza Armerina  
- Valle dei Templi - Ennese e Villa del Casale - Catania e l'Etna
- **Km:** 227



Leaving from Agrigento and after visiting the beautiful Valle dei Templi, you reach the zone of Enna in the Sicilian inland where the ancient Romans have left precious remains. then driving on the motorway you arrive in Catania where you can see the great of Etna volcano.

### ■ **History and traditions:**

#### Agrigento

The Valley of the Temples rises southernmost, on the traces of the old town and includes many temples built in the 5th century BC.

Walking along the path you can find:

- The temple of Concorde; the only temple still standing in its whole.
- The temple of Castor and Pollux; tributed to Leda and Zeus's twins.
- The temple of Olympian Zeus
- was built in the 5th century BC and dedicated to Zeus
- The temple of Heracles; was built to commemorate the soldiers died during the Second Punic War.
- The temple of Hera Lacinia (Giunone)

#### 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

Catania

In the Roman age Catania was a flourishing city with the second largest amphitheatre after the Coliseum. But above all Catania can be considered a symbol of revival, many times destroyed by the forces of nature - the Volcano and earthquakes - and by conquerors. Catania was more than once ransacked and plundered to the limit.

Etna

Etna was known in Roman times as Aetna, that possibly comes from the Greek word aitho ("to burn").

The Arabs called the mountain Gibel Utlamat ("the mountain of fire"); this name was later changed into Mons Gibel and subsequently Etna's current local name Mongibello.

The mountain's regular and often dramatic eruptions made it a major subject of interest for Classical mythologists and their later successors, who sought to explain its behaviour in terms of the various gods and giants that populated Roman and Greek legends. Aeolus, the king of the winds, was said to have imprisoned the winds in caves below Etna. The giant Typhon was confined under Etna, according to the poet Aeschylus, and was the cause of the mountain's eruptions. Another giant, Enceladus, rebelled against the gods, was killed and was buried under Etna.

Hephaestus or Vulcan, the god of fire and forge, was said to have had his forge under Etna and drove the fire-demon Adranus out from the mountain. The Greek underworld, Tartarus, was supposed to be situated beneath Etna.

#### ■ **Food and wine:**

Typical dishes are: Pasta alla Norma, maccu, "le Minne di Sant'Agata" (St. Agata's tits), the Sicilian "cassata", "cannoli", the hazelnut granita and "arancini" (fried rice balls with bolognese sauce, peas and carrot)... don't miss it!

#### ■ **Sightseeing and Landscape:**

Agrigento

Its origins are very ancient and notably Agrigento still offers the enchanting view of a presumably sacred area built when Greeks landed there to start the civilisation of Magna Graecia.

The remains include some temples, in strategic position on the peak of several hills around the town, dominating the valley (famous as the Valle dei Templi "Valley of temples"). The valley is known for the pervasive yet pleasant scent of orange flowers (locally called zagare) that bloom in spring.

In a poor village close to Agrigento, the Contrada Xaos (which means Chaos), was born perhaps the most famous Italian dramatist, Luigi Pirandello.

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## Catania

Catania is the second largest city in Sicily. It is also the Italian city with the highest number of theatres per square kilometre, with numerous professional and amateur theatre companies based there.

In the late 1980's and 1990's Catania boasted a youth culture in which indie pop and indie rock from lesser known international bands like The Violent Femmes, Robert Gordon, The Mexican Spitfires, Ben Vaughan, Dirty Looks, Alan Vega, Camper Van Beethoven, Pylon, Pixies and the Human Beinz were popular and received regular airplay.

Over the last decade, Catania has seen an explosion in its nightlife. In 1992 the city streets were almost deserted from 8pm until 8am but ten years later, thanks to more permissive licensing, restaurants, cafe's and bars are open and the streets and squares are lively until 3 and 4 in the morning

## Etna

Mount Etna is an active volcano on the east coast of Sicily, close to Catania. It is the largest volcano in Europe, currently standing about 3,320 m (10,900 ft) high. It is the highest mountain in Italy south of the Alps. Etna covers an area of 460 square miles (1190 km<sup>2</sup>) with a basal circumference of 140 km.

It is one of the most active volcanoes in the world and is in an almost constant state of eruption. Although it can occasionally be very destructive, it is not generally regarded as being particularly dangerous, and thousands of people live on its slopes and in the surrounding areas.

Etna is an isolated peak about 18 miles (29 km) from Catania which dominates the eastern side of Sicily. Its shape is that of a truncated cone with a ragged top, which is actually a complex of large volcanic cones hosting four summit craters. At the top of the mountain is a volcanic wasteland, dominated by old lava flows, scree and volcanic ash. Few plants grow there and it is covered by snow for much of the year.

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