

Route 4

- **Tour:** Valle dei Templi
- **Starting point:** Agrigento
- **Arrival:** Parco delle Madonie
- **Points of interest:** Valle dei Templi - Ennese e Villa del Casale - Piazza Armerina - Parco Naturale delle Madonie
- **Km:** 208



Drive in the Sicilian inland to the Madonie on roads full of curves, hairpin curves and beautiful landscapes, surrounded by nature to discover that Sicily is not only a sea resort.

■ **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

Madonie

The naturalistic, historical, and artistic heritage of the area is of considerable importance. In a context characterized by harsh mountains facing the Sicilian sea, the human signs still represent the evidence of a millenary presence (Prehistory) which in some cases has been handed down in current activities. The territory is scattered with several religious buildings, monasteries, hermitages and churches, often isolated on the top of the mountains. Along the watercourses you will find abandoned mills which, together with the old farmsteads (the so-called "masserie") often built on the more ancient ruins of Roman farmhouses, witness the ability of a culture to live in symbiosis with nature. In the Madonie there are the most ancient rocks of Sicily, dating back to the Triassic period. The several fossils of lamellibranchs, algae, and sponges found in the calcareous areas of the mountain chain are an evidence of it.

■ Food and wine:

The Madonie's gastronomic tradition is second to none, relying as it does on local produce for prime ingredients. Meat, sausages, salami, cheese, olives, mushrooms, and fresh seasonal vegetables are all excellent while some of Sicily's best wine is produced nearby. In these lands a millenary peasant tradition offers the taste of local cheese and the warmth of Sicilian hospitality. Basilisk mushrooms become precious ingredients for the preparation of first meal courses. Sausages and lamb chops cheer up endless grills. Local pastry chefs turn loose in creating more and more refined pastries, "sfoglio", "testa di turco", and "amaretti" (macaroons). Wine-making is an almost sacred activity.

Finally, you cannot certainly miss a good lemon, strawberry, and wild berries "granita".

■ 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.

Madonie

Situated south of Cefalu', was the second natural reserve to be established in Sicily. The area of the Madonie with its geomorphological and climatic features leads to the identification of three different areas: the coastal strip of the northern slope, protected by the African winds and covered by thick woods, centuries-old olive groves, cork tree woods, chestnut tree woods, ash trees, oak woods made of Downy oak and the holly nuclei



www.sicilymotorent.it

of Piano Pomo. On the contrary, the large mountain chain preserves the woods of ilex and beech trees, and is characterized by several endemic species, among which the *Abies Nebrodensis*, a relict of ancient glaciation. The southern and sunny slope, bare or luxuriant and mild in the changing succession of the seasons is "The aspect of real Sicily; however, it is also a gentle series of mountain and hilly slopes cultivated with wheat and barley.