



## OFF THE BEATEN TRACK

# Sicily

### ALTERNATIVE SIGHTS

Sicily's historic heavy-hitters are well documented. Sure, the Valley of the Temples and Neapolis Archaeological Park are fascinating. But in our humble opinion, it's worth weaving in visits to some of the island's more modern constructions too. Take the open-air Andromeda Theatre, for example, which is set high in the hills of Santo Stefano Quisquina. A mystical air hangs around the venue, where the arrangement of 108 seats mimics the stars of the Andromeda constellation. Dating from the 1980s, the theatre was built by a local shepherd-cum-artist by the name of Lorenzo Reina. On a clear day, the views go on forever.

### SMALL-TOWN SURPRISES

There are seemingly countless small towns in Sicily where you won't have to jostle for space. In the not-too-distant past, the historic core of Favara—just a short hop from Agrigento—was on the cusp of abandonment, with only a few stubborn residents remaining. That was, until 2010, when things began to change. A local couple bought several buildings in the historic hub and transformed them into exhibition spaces for contemporary

art, breathing new life into an ailing town centre. For an atmospheric wander, you can't beat Ragusa Ibla in the south of the island, whose tangle of palazzos and Baroque buildings cling to the slopes of a hill. Then there's Sant'Angelo Muxaro, a secluded inland community where—in an unusual twist—you'll find a sizeable portion of the population has links to the English town of Bedford.

### GUSTATORY PLEASURES

When it comes to food, Sicily's tastiest morsels are generally made locally and with love. In the small town of Campobello di Licata, less than an hour's drive from Marsala, you can feast on local goodies. Taste fresh cheese made from the milk of Sicilian spiral-horned goats and extra virgin olive oil from family producers. Venture to Borgo Santa Rita to unearth another only-in-Sicily gem: Forno Santa Rita Bakery. The remote inland village has become a pilgrimage site for the carb-obsessed, with local baker, Maurizio Spinello, producing breads, pizza and pasta using flour milled from heritage grains.

### WINNING WINES

We'd be remiss to speak of Sicily without mentioning the island's wines. Sicilian reds, particularly Nero d'Avola, are now a common sight on British off-licence shelves, but our must-try is Marsala. You've probably thrown a splash of this fortified wine into the pan while cooking, and you may even think you have an opinion on it, but be prepared to think again. The best Marsala rarely makes it beyond Sicilian shores.

### MOUNT ETNA

Towering over the northwest of the island, the mighty Mount Etna is hardly a secret. And when she spews out fiery lava—which is surprisingly frequent—all eyes on the island turn to her. But while many travellers are content to gaze upon Etna from a distance, we recommend seeing her craters up close. Ride the cable car up the slopes, then travel up further by Jeep, where the crowds will have all but dissipated.



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