

British Jesuit Alumni (Eagle Aid)

Trip to Sicily

Tuesday 5th – Saturday 9th November 2019

DAY 1 – Tuesday 5th November

We arrive at Palermo Airport. Meet our Pax Travel Tour Manager for our coach transfer to our accommodation in Palermo. Dinner will be included in the hotel or a local restaurant on each night of our stay.

DAY 2 – Wednesday 6th November

PALERMO

This morning we start our exploration of this fascinating city on foot, which lies in the spectacular positing by the sea and overlooked by Monte Pellegrino, which rises to a height of nearly 2,000 feet. Palermo was a relatively unimportant town until the Arab invasion in 831AD, which marked the start of a golden age, reaching its climax under the Norman king, Roger I. Although Palermo remained a centre for the various ruling houses, evidence of which can be seen in the many large houses (Palazzi) which line the streets of Palermo, the city fell into decline and areas of it still appear decrepit and rundown. The *Quattro Canti* linking the main arteries of the city is considered to be its centre and is a convenient place from which to visit the historic area. From here it is a short walk to the cathedral, which with its mixture of architectural styles sums up the jigsaw puzzle of Palermo's past. Nearer to the Quattro Canti is the lovely area of the *Piazza Pretoria* with its impressive and elaborate 16th century fountain. From here you follow on into the next square, where in an exotic palm garden are two exquisite churches. *La Martorana* (which is its nickname taken from the name of the founder) was founded in 1143 and became home to the nuns who are now famous for having started the production of marzipan fruits, which are sold all over Sicily. Just next door to La Martorana is the church of *San Cataldo*, which is distinctive for its red cupolas and dates from the same period as La Martorana but is designed in a much purer, more severe, Romanesque style but still with obvious Arabic influences. Lunch will be at choice and the rest of the day will be at leisure in Palermo. Dinner will be in the hotel or a local restaurant.

DAY 3 – Thursday 7th November

CEFALU'

We join our coach for our drive along the coast to the lovely resort of Cefalu, which offers both a pleasant promenade by the beach and a fascinating medieval quarter. On arrival we make our way to the magnificent Cathedral for a guided tour. We will see the striking mosaic in the apse of 'Christ Pantocrator' which unusually for Byzantine art, features the human nature of Christ, looking out onto the world with a compassionate and gentle expression. We will also have the chance to visit the Cloisters during our tour. The rest of the afternoon is at leisure to explore this stunning town. Lunch is at choice, return to Palermo in the late afternoon. This evening's meal will be in a local restaurant.

DAY 4 – Friday 8th November

MONREALE & SEGESTA

After breakfast we leave Palermo by coach to travel outside the city to Monreale, which was created by one man, King William II because this site was revealed to him in a dream by the Virgin Mary. The most impressive aspect of the building has to be the mosaic decorations, which cover over 6,340 metres, 2,000 more than in St. Mark's in Venice! Adjoining the

cathedral is the second wonder of Monreale, the cloister garden, which used to form part of the Benedictine complex. From Monreale we continue westwards to visit the Greek temple, which was once part of one of the most thriving communities in ancient Sicily, Egesta, home to the Elymian people. The Romans added an 's' to the name of the city and the temple is now known as Segesta, even though it stands proudly alone in a majestic setting against the background of hills. We return to Palermo in the late afternoon. Dinner will be in the hotel or a local restaurant.

DAY 5 – Saturday 9th November

We drive to Palermo airport for the return flight to London Gatwick.