

Introduction to the Gardens & Landscapes of Sicily

A tour for those who enjoy gardens and plants

Hosted by Nicholas Wray

25 April – 6 May 2015

Thank you for showing interest in my forthcoming tour to Sicily in association with World Odyssey. The tour has been planned to give an introduction to the gardens, architecture and landscapes of Sicily through a collaborative partnership between the University of Bristol Botanic Garden and Sicilian horticulturalist Sergio Cumitini. Aimed at anyone with an interest in plants, gardens and travelling, the tour has been arranged to give access to some beautiful public and private gardens. Our visit will often be hosted by the garden owner, giving an extra special dimension.



Rich in history and at a crossroads between East and West Mediterranean and the trade routes between Europe and North Africa Sicily has had waves of invasion and settlement throughout the past 2700 years. Much of this diversity can be seen in the architecture and historic ruins that are found throughout the island. We will visit three of these historic sites: The ancient Greek town of *Akragas* modern day Agrigento with its ancient temples and fortifications, the Greek-Roman theatre at Taormina with its superb hill top location overlooking the bay of Naxos and the recently restored Norman-Arab

house at Zisa castle outside Palermo. We will visit two Botanic Gardens, Palermo and Catania, both historic and individual in their design. Both have superb collections of plants, some the first specimens to be introduced to Europe, and fine buildings, many recently restored. Guided tours will introduce us to botanical treasures growing within.

We will visit many great gardens including: Marchesi Di San Giuliano (Villasmundo), a privately owned estate which can trace its history back 800 years, where British Head Gardener Rachel Lamb will provide our tour, at Contrada Case Biviere Villa Borghese our guide will be Princess Maria Carla Borghese who created this extraordinary garden from a former dry lakes side, a process that has taken forty years, at Il Giardino di Villa Trinita the garden is home to many historic artifacts and our host Baron Salvatore Bonajuto will introduce his family run garden. In contrast the Chinese palace at the Parco della Favorita with its strange juxtaposition of Chinese architecture set in Italian Renaissance parterre garden seems out of place, but none the less beautiful.

Throughout we will experience regional cuisine, a highpoint will be our visit to the vineyard of Tasca d'Almerita where we tour the vineyard and follow with a wine tasting, dinner and overnight stay.



Set high in the mountains of the interior Tasca d' Almerita has won many awards for its fine wines, cuisine and sympathetic management of its vineyards. We will spend each day with a mixture of travel (by luxury coach), exploring the gardens, local flora and points of interest. Our accommodation will be a mixture of traditional and modern hotels, farmhouse and country house. All will be of a high standard and will reflect the best of the region.

Spring will see Sicily in full flower and we will see many interesting wild plants along the way. Located at the heart of the Mediterranean climatic region the fields will be full of ripening cereals and vegetable crops. At the end of the tour there is an optional extra of a day trip to Mount Etna. Etna is part of Sicilian life, it can be seen from one third of the island and its nutrient rich volcanic ash has enriched the soil enabling Sicily to produce over half of Italy's fruit and vegetables. As we travel we will pass through many vegetation zones, where most plants are endemic to Etna.

Attached to this letter is the itinerary which gives more details of daily activities. The tour operator will be World Odyssey who I have used before and who have given excellent service. The tour price is based on 14 travellers with a maximum of 20 persons. The flight is listed separately as Easyjet / BA as they offer the most convenient flight times to and from the island.

The separate pricing structure gives you the opportunity to book the Easyjet flight yourself or if you prefer you can book through World Odyssey.

I do hope that you will give careful consideration to this exciting venture and if I can provide you with any further information about the tour then please do not hesitate to contact me at the address below.

If you have any queries over the travel arrangements, accommodation or insurance then please contact World Odyssey direct on 01905 731373 Mark@world-odyssey.com or visit: www.world-odyssey.com

If you are aware of a friend or relative who may be interested then please put them in touch.

I very much look forward to hearing from you.

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