

ITALY · HISTORY · FOOD · BEACHES · ISLANDS · ARCHITECTURE · WINE

 Sicily

Greek temples, Arab-Norman Palermo, Baroque towns and an active volcano share one island, with beaches and a food culture quite distinct from mainland Italy's. Most UK visitors fly to Catania for Taormina, Etna and Syracuse, or to Palermo for the west and Cefalù. Spring and autumn are best; July and August are hot and busy.

 Read the UK government's travel advice for Italy and entry requirements before you go.

 COUNTRY Italy	 BEST TIME May–Jun, Sep–Oct	 FLIGHT FROM LONDON 3h direct ~£110–£360 return	 DAILY BUDGET £60–£270 ££ Moderate
 WARMEST MONTH July (31°C)	 SEA TEMPERATURE 15–27°C coolest–warmest	 TIME ZONE Rome +1h vs UK now	 CURRENCY Euro £1 ≈ €1.19

A week works best split between two bases in one half of the island: the east, with Taormina, Etna, Syracuse and the Baroque towns of Noto and Ragusa, or the west, with Palermo, Cefalù, Agrigento's temples and the salt pans near Trapani. A fortnight lets you drive a loop of the whole island, though slow roads catch people out. Taormina suits couples and first-timers wanting a resort with culture; Cefalù is better for families after a sandy beach and an old town. Add the Aeolian Islands by hydrofoil from Milazzo. Swimming season runs from June to October, while April, May and October are ideal for sightseeing and walking.

Highlights

1

NATURE

Mount Etna

Europe's highest active volcano, at around 3,300m, with lava fields, a cable car up from Rifugio Sapienza on the southern flank and guided walks towards the summit craters. Go early, take warm layers and finish with a tasting at an Etna winery.

2

HISTORY

Valley of the Temples, Agrigento

A ridge of Doric temples above Agrigento, including the remarkably intact Temple of Concordia from the fifth century BC. There is little shade, so visit early or late in the day and allow a good three hours.

3

HISTORY

Ortigia, Syracuse

The island heart of ancient Syracuse, with a cathedral built into a Greek temple of Athena, the Fountain of Arethusa and a lively morning market. The Neapolis archaeological park and its Greek theatre are a short ride away.

4

ARCHITECTURE

Palermo and Monreale

The Palatine Chapel, Palermo Cathedral and Monreale's gold-mosaic cathedral form a UNESCO-listed Arab-Norman ensemble. Pair them with the Ballarò market and street food such as arancine, panelle and sfincione.

5

NATURE

Aeolian Islands

Seven volcanic islands off the north coast, reached by hydrofoil from Milazzo. Lipari is the practical base, Salina the greenest and quietest, and Stromboli's night-time eruptions can be watched from a boat or on a guided walk.

Where to stay

WHERE TO STAY

Taormina

Cliff-top resort above the Ionian Sea with a Greek theatre, smart hotels and views of Etna; ideal for couples and first-timers, but pricey in summer.

WHERE TO STAY

Cefalù

Medieval town with a Norman cathedral and a long sandy beach right in town; good for families, and about an hour from Palermo by train.

WHERE TO STAY

Ortigia, Syracuse

Stay on the island itself for evening strolls, seafood and swimming platforms off the rocks; suits couples and food lovers, with Noto close by.

WHERE TO STAY

Palermo

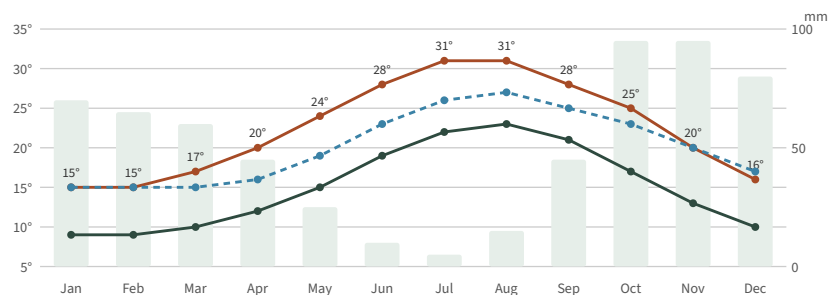
Best for city lovers and food fans: markets, street food, Baroque churches and Mondello's beach by bus; less suited to a pure beach holiday.

When to go to Sicily

Best time: **May–Jun, Sep–Oct.**

**Average climate in Palermo**

— High °C
 — Low °C
 — Sea °C
 ■ Rain (mm)

**How much does Sicily cost?**

SHOESTRING

£60

per person / day
≈ €71.42

MID-RANGE

£130

per person / day
≈ €155

COMFORTABLE

£270

per person / day
≈ €321

Per person per day excluding flights. Return flights from London typically cost £110 off-peak and £360 in school holidays.

Visas & entry for Sicily

Shown for a British passport.

No visa needed

You can travel without a visa to the Schengen area, which includes Italy, for up to 90 days in any 180-day period. This applies if you travel: as a tourist; to visit family or friends; to attend business meetings, cultural or sports events; for short-term studies or training.

The requirements for working in Italy are different.

From the UK government's FCDO entry requirements for British passport holders — read the full page for passport validity, permits and exceptions.

Health & vaccinations

See a travel health nurse, GP or travel clinic **6–8 weeks before you go**. Make sure routine UK vaccinations (such as MMR and diphtheria-tetanus-polio) are up to date.

RECOMMENDED FOR MOST TRAVELLERS

Tetanus

SOMETIMES ADVISED — DEPENDS ON YOUR TRIP, ACTIVITIES AND HEALTH

Bat Lyssavirus Tick-borne encephalitis

YELLOW FEVER CERTIFICATE

No yellow fever certificate is required to enter.

MALARIA

No malaria risk

Source: TravelHealthPro (National Travel Health Network and Centre), checked 21 October 2026. This is a summary, not medical advice.

Public holidays in Italy

The next 12 months. Banks, offices and some sights may close, and transport and hotels get busy around these dates.

Sun 1 Nov 2026	All Saints' Day · National Unity Day
Tue 8 Dec 2026	Immaculate Conception
Fri 25 Dec 2026	Christmas Day
Sat 26 Dec 2026	Saint Stephen's Day
Fri 1 Jan 2027	New Year's Day
Wed 6 Jan 2027	Epiphany
Sun 28 Mar 2027	Easter Sunday
Mon 29 Mar 2027	Easter Monday
Sun 25 Apr 2027	Liberation Day
Sat 1 May 2027	Labour Day
Wed 2 Jun 2027	Republic Day

Sun 15 Aug 2027	Assumption Of Mary Day
Mon 4 Oct 2027	Saint Francis of Assisi, Patron Saint of Italy

National holidays only. Dates based on lunar calendars can move by a day or two depending on official announcements.

Know before you go

Taormina's beaches at Mazzarò and Isola Bella are reached by cable car from town; they are pebbly and packed in August, so take water shoes and arrive early.

Hire a car for Agrigento and the Baroque south-east, but avoid driving in central Palermo and Catania, and book an authorised guide if you want to go near Etna's summit craters.

Plugs, money, phrases, emergency numbers and more: see our Italy guide.

Visa, health and safety rules change. Before you book or travel, check the FCDO travel advice (gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice) and TravelHealthPro (travelhealthpro.org.uk). Costs are estimates. © 2026 Pick My Trip.