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ACCOMMODATION

Accommodation in Sicily ranges from the sublime to the ridiculous, with prices to match. You may find yourself in a national monument, the one-time home of a prince or an ugly Mafia-built '60s block. Hotels and *pensioni* make up the bulk of accommodation, although there is a huge gulf between the luxury of top-end hotels and numerous poky and pricey budget options. A number of good B&Bs, villa rentals, hostels and *agriturismi* (farm stays) have appeared in recent years, making it more possible to stay in good places for less money.

In this book we've used 'budget' to describe hotels with double rooms under €80, 'mid-range' to describe doubles between €80 and €180, and 'top end' to cover hotels above €180. Unless otherwise stated, prices are for en suite rooms and include breakfast. We have quoted price ranges for the highest-priced standard rooms from low season (November to March) to high season (August).

During August or in rural accommodation you might have to pay for half or full board. Half board will include breakfast and lunch, while full board means that all meals are included in the price you pay for your room.

Prices fluctuate wildly depending on the season. The peak tourist times are Easter, summer and Christmas. It is advisable to

PRACTICALITIES

- Sicily uses the metric system for weights and measures.
- Buy or watch videos on the PAL system.
- Plugs have two round pins; the current is 220V, 50Hz.
- If your Italian's up to it, try *Il Giornale di Sicilia* for uncompromising coverage of corruption and political scandals, international news and a terrific listings page with details of all cinemas, theatres, festivals and other events. Other good newspapers include Milan's *Corriere della Sera*, Turin's *La Stampa* and Rome's *La Repubblica*.
- Tune into RAI-1 (1332AM or 89.7 FM), RAI-2 (846AM or 91.7 FM) and RAI-3 (93.7 FM), which combine classical and light music with news broadcasts and discussion programmes; the BBC World Service is on medium wave at 648kHz, short wave 6195kHz, 9410kHz, 12,095kHz and 15,575 kHz, and on long wave at 198kHz.
- Switch on to watch Italy's commercial stations Canale 5, Italia 1, Rete 4 and La7, as well as state-run RAI-1, RAI-2 and RAI-3.

book in advance during these periods. Prices rise around 5% to 10% annually and drop by about 20% in low season.

To make a reservation, hotels usually require confirmation by fax or letter, as well as a credit-card number.

Agriturismo & B&Bs

Agriturismo is a holiday on a working farm. Traditionally, families rented out rooms in their farmhouses and it is still possible to find this type of accommodation, although many *agriturismi* have now evolved into quite sophisticated accommodation. All *agriturismi* are operating farms and you will usually be able to sample the local produce. To search for reputable *agriturismi* log on to www.agriturismo-sicilia.it.

B&Bs have really sprouted all over Sicily in recent years. Options include everything from restored farmhouses, city palazzi and seaside bungalows to rooms in family houses. Tariffs cover a wide price range, typically €40 to €70 for a single, €65 to €150 for a double.

For more information log on to the website of **Bed & Breakfast Sicily** (www.bed-and-breakfast-sicily.it).

Camping

Camp sites in Sicily vary in terms of facilities: some are well organised and well laid out, while others are simply an empty space where you can pitch a tent, with facilities that consist of little more than a toilet-and-shower block.

Even basic camp sites can be dear once you add up the various charges, but they generally work out cheaper than a double room in a one-star hotel. Prices range from around €5 to €10 per adult, plus €5 to €20 for a site. You'll often have to pay to park

your car and there is sometimes a charge to use the showers and electricity. In the major cities, camp sites are often a long way from the historic (or city) centre.

Independent camping is generally not permitted. But, out of the main summer tourist season, independent campers who try to be inconspicuous and don't light fires shouldn't have too much trouble. Always get permission from the landowner if you want to camp on private property. Camper vans are popular throughout Sicily.

Full lists of camp sites are available from local tourist offices or **Touring Club Italiano** (TCI; www.touringclub.it). TCI publishes an annual book, *Campeggi in Italia*, listing all camp sites in Italy, and the Istituto Geografico de Agostini publishes the annual *Guida ai Campeggi in Europa*, sold together with *Guida ai Campeggi in Italia*. These books are available in major bookshops in Sicily. Otherwise, log on to www.camping.it.

Hostels

Youth hostels (*ostelli per la gioventù*), of which there is only a handful in Sicily, are run by the **Associazione Italiana Alberghi per la Gioventù** (AIG; ☎ 064 87 11 52; www.ostellionline.org; Via Cavour 44, Rome), which is affiliated to **Hostelling International** (HI; www.ihf.org). You need to be a member but you can join at one of the hostels. Nightly rates vary from €15 to €25 including breakfast. A meal will cost €8. Accommodation is in segregated dormitories, although some hostels offer family rooms (at a higher price per person).

Hostels are generally closed from 10am to 3.30pm. Check-in is from 6pm to 10.30pm, although some hostels will allow you a morning check-in before they close for the day (confirm beforehand). Curfew is 11.30pm or midnight. It is usually necessary to pay before 9am on the day of your departure, otherwise you could be charged for another night.

Hotels & Guesthouses

There is often no difference between a *pensione* (guesthouse) and an *albergo* (hotel). However, a *pensione* will generally be of one- to three-star standard, while an *albergo* can be awarded up to five stars. *Locande* (inns) and *affittacamere* (rooms for rent) are cheaper and are not included in the star classification system, although in some areas

BOOK YOUR STAY ONLINE

For more accommodation reviews and recommendations by Lonely Planet authors, check out the online booking service at www.lonelyplanet.com/hotels. You'll find the true, insider lowdown on the best places to stay. Reviews are thorough and independent. Best of all, you can book online.

(such as the Aeolian Islands) the standard is very high.

While the quality of accommodation can vary a great deal, one-star hotels/*pensioni* tend to be very basic and usually do not have a private bathroom. Standards at two-star places are often only slightly better, but rooms will generally have a private bathroom. Once you arrive at three-star accommodation, you can assume that standards will be reasonable. Four- and five-star hotels offer facilities such as room service, laundry, parking and internet.

Overall, prices are highest in major tourist destinations such as Taormina, the Aeolian Islands and Cefalù. Prices can soar in the high season at beach resorts and during Easter, as Sicily is a very popular destination with Italians on Easter holiday. The cost of a single room (*camera singola*) starts at €40. A double room with twin beds (*camera doppia*) and a double room with a double bed (*camera matrimoniale*) will cost from around €60. Make a complaint to the local tourist office if you believe you're being overcharged.

Tourist offices have booklets listing all local accommodation, including prices.

Mountain Refuges

Around Etna and Piano Battaglia in the Madonie Park there is a number of *rifugi* (mountain chalets), most of which are open year-round. In Sicily these operate as small hotels with dormitory and double-room accommodation. The price per person for an overnight stay and breakfast is €25 to €30, and €50 for full board.

On Etna there is also a number of unstaffed, ranger-maintained *bivacchi* (shelters), which are always open and a good place to lay your sleeping bag.

The **Club Alpino Italiano** (CAI; www.cai.it in Italian) is a good source of information and is affiliated with some of these refuges. Members of

organisations such as the Australian Alpine Club and British Mountaineering Council can enjoy discounted rates for accommodation and meals by obtaining (for a fee) a reciprocal-rights card.

Rental Accommodation

Renting an apartment in Sicily is quite easy. In coastal resorts such as the Aeolian Islands or tourist haunts like Syracuse, tourist offices will have lists of local apartments and villas for rent. Renting short-term accommodation is not necessarily cheap, hovering around €1000 per month, although this can drop to around €600 per month for a long-term rental.

BUSINESS HOURS

Generally, shops open from around 9am to 1pm and 3.30pm to 7.30pm (or 4pm to 8pm) Monday to Saturday. Some stay closed on Monday mornings. Big department stores, such as Rinascente, and most supermarkets have continuous opening hours from 9am to 7.30pm Monday to Saturday. Some even open 9am to 1pm on Sunday. Smaller shops open on Saturday morning until about 1pm.

Businesses such as travel agencies usually open 9am to 12.30pm or 1pm, and 4pm to 7pm.

Banks tend to open 8.30am to 1.30pm and 2.45pm to 3.45pm (or 3pm to 4.30pm) Monday to Friday. They are closed on weekends, but it is always possible to find an exchange office open in the larger cities and in major tourist areas.

Major post offices open 8.30am to 6pm Monday to Friday and also 8.30am to 12.30pm on Saturday. Smaller post offices generally open 8.30am to 1.30pm Monday to Saturday.

Farmacie (pharmacies) are usually open 8.30am to 1pm and 4pm to 8pm. They are always closed on Sunday and usually on Saturday afternoon, but are required to display a list of *farmacie* in the area that are open.

Bars (in the Italian sense; that is, coffee-and-sandwich places) and cafés generally open 7am to 8pm, although some stay open after 8pm and turn into pub-style drinking and meeting places. *Enoteche* (wine bars), on the other hand, usually don't open until the evening, around 7pm, and stay open until about midnight (or later in summer).

A WORD OF WARNING

Always try to book in advance in B&Bs since many of the owners don't live in the same building and no-one may be around if you arrive unannounced. There is usually a telephone number outside the front door, which you can call if you do pop in without booking. If you're sticking around for a couple of weeks and changing beds often, it's worth investing in a pay-as-you-go SIM card, which will make calls cheaper.

LIVE LIKE A KING

You don't have to be a prince to be treated like royalty. In recent years Sicily's aristocracy and moneyed classes have flung open the doors of their fabulous palazzi and country villas, providing the well-heeled traveller with a unique holiday experience.

Prices for villas are not cheap (especially in summer), although the cost is more reasonable if you are in a large group. Prices for a four- to six-person villa start from €1200 per week in winter and can rise as high as €4000 per week in high season.

- Bravo Holiday Residences** (📞 in US 866 265 5516; www.hipvillas.com) Get out your credit cards for these beauties. Bravo takes the biscuit for exclusive Sicilian villas such as Don Arcangelo all'Olmo and the stunning Villa Tasca, if you can afford the US\$20,000 price tag!
- Cuendet & Cie Spa** (📞 057 757 63 30; www.cuendet.com) Cuendet is one of the major villa-rental companies in Italy offering villas in Sicily. In the UK you can order Cuendet's catalogues and make reservations by calling 📞 0800 891 573. In the USA Cuendet bookings are handled by **Rentals in Italy** (📞 805 987 5278; 1742 Calle Corva, Camarillo, CA 93010).
- Cottages & Castles** (📞 in Australia 61 3 9853 1142; www.cottagesandcastles.com.au) This Australian agency has a portfolio of villa rentals throughout Italy, including a respectable clutch of Sicilian houses in Cefalù, Taormina and Syracuse. The company also has agents in New Zealand and across Europe.
- Dolce Vita Villas** (📞 in UK 44 020-7436 0426; www.dolcevillavillas.com) Run by two smooth Italian operators, Dolce Vita Villas offers a range of top-end rentals, from the slick Villa Carruba in Taormina to a faux-19th-century manor house at Trecastagni, near Mt Etna.
- Think Sicily** (📞 in UK 44 020-7377 8518; www.thinksicily.co.uk) Devoted exclusively to Sicily, this company holds the most comprehensive portfolio of Sicilian treasures, including a 14th-century palazzo in the heart of Palermo, a swanky condo in Mondello and domed *dammusi* (low-level dwellings made of thick volcanic rock) on Pantelleria.

Discos and clubs might open around 10pm but often there'll be no-one there until midnight. Restaurants open roughly from noon to 3pm and 7.30pm to 11pm. Restaurants and bars are required to close for one day each week (the day varies between establishments, although Monday is a popular choice).

Museum and gallery opening hours vary, although there is a trend towards continuous opening hours from around 9.30am to 7pm. Many close on Monday.

CHILDREN Practicalities

Sicilians love children, but there are few special amenities for them. Ask staff at tourist offices if they know of any special family activities and about hotels that cater for children. Discounts are available for children (usually aged under 12 but sometimes based on the child's height) on public transport and for admission to sights.

Book accommodation in advance to avoid any inconvenience, and when travelling by

train make sure to reserve seats to avoid finding yourselves standing up for the entire journey. You can hire car seats for infants and children from most car-rental firms, but you should always book them in advance.

You can buy baby formula in powder or liquid form (€18 for 1kg), as well as sterilising solutions such as Milton at *farmacie*. Disposable nappies (diapers) are widely available at supermarkets, *farmacie* and sometimes in larger *cartolerie* (stores selling paper goods). A pack of around 30 disposable nappies costs about €10. Fresh cow's milk is sold in cartons in bars that have a 'Latteria' sign and in supermarkets. If it is essential that you have milk, carry an emergency carton of UHT milk, since bars usually close at 8pm. In Sicily people generally use UHT milk.

See p287 for information on eating with children.

Sights & Activities

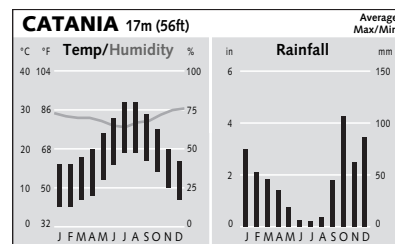
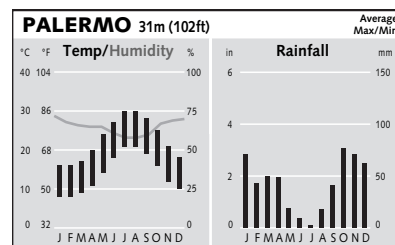
Successful travel with children can require special effort. Don't try to overdo things, and organise activities that include the children – older

children could help you plan these. Try to think of things that will capture their imagination such as the archaeological sites at Selinunte (p126), the mosaics at Monreale (p99) and the Greek temples in Agrigento (p261); other good bets are the volcanoes of Etna (p208), Stromboli (p176) and Vulcano (p167), and snorkelling or boat trips around the numerous offshore islands are always popular. Even the hydrofoil is something of an event. In numerous cities (Palermo, Syracuse and Cefalù) there is the traditional Sicilian puppet theatre – a great way to keep kids amused, but always remember to allow some free time for playing. Most city parks have some sort of play area.

For more information see Lonely Planet's *Travel with Children* or look up the websites www.travelwithyourkids.com and www.familytravelnetwork.com.

CLIMATE CHARTS

Sicily has a mild Mediterranean climate, defined by hot, dry summers followed by mild winters with light rainfall. However, climatic conditions vary across the island. The finest weather is usually found around the coast. The southern and western coasts are hotter due to their proximity to North Africa. They are also occasionally affected by the Saharan *scirocco* (sirocco or desert wind), usually in the springtime. The Tyrrhenian Coast is shielded to a large extent by the mountainous interior,



while the Ionian Coast is considered to have the best weather of all.

Sicily's interior presents a different story. Summer days are dry and hot, although at altitude the air is surprisingly fresh and even cold in the evenings. On the highest mountains (Mt Etna and the Madonie) there is substantial snowfall in January.

See p17 for information on the best times to visit Sicily.

COURSES

Sicily is not well known for holiday courses, least of all language courses. It does, however, have a growing reputation as a food destination and there are a number of very good cooking courses on offer (see p52 for details).

If you are determined to learn Italian in Sicily there are a few institutions that run courses. The University of Catania has the well-regarded **Scuola di Lingua e Cultura Italiana per Stranieri** (📞 095 710 27 08; www.unict.it/slc/it_home.htm; Piazza Dante 32). It offers 40 hours of Italian language and culture classes for €300. If you fancy learning the language in beautiful Taormina, **Babilonia** (📞 094 22 34 41; www.babilonia.it; Via del Ginnasio 20) is a good school that offers classes in Italian language, literature, history and art history. A one-week standard language course (five hours per day) costs €350. Otherwise the most popular destination for language courses is Cefalù, where **Kulturforum** (📞 092 192 39 98; www.kulturforum.it; Corso Ruggero 55) runs a standard two-week Italian course (20 hours) for €240. Private lessons and longer courses can also be arranged.

If you need to find accommodation, all the schools can help you.

CUSTOMS

Duty-free sales within the EU no longer exist. Under the rules of the single market, goods bought in and exported within the EU incur no additional taxes, provided duty has been paid somewhere within the EU and the goods are for personal use.

Travellers entering Italy from outside the EU are allowed to import the following duty free: 200 cigarettes, 1L of spirits, 2L of wine, 60mL of perfume, 250mL of *eau de toilette*, and other goods up to the value of €175. Anything over this limit must be declared on arrival and the appropriate duty paid (it is advisable to carry all your receipts with you).

DANGERS & ANNOYANCES**Racism**

As with nearly all European countries, Italy has seen a disturbing rise in racism. For decades Italy was one of the world's largest exporters of immigrants but now, as the first port of call for refugees from the Balkans, Eastern Europe and North Africa, it has become a net importer of people. For such a homogenous society with one of the lowest birth rates in Europe, the sudden influx has been traumatic and there are now an estimated half-million *clandestini* (illegal immigrants) in the country.

Historically, Sicilians have been fairly tolerant of their large North African community, but the vast numbers of immigrants landing on the beaches of Lampedusa are souring relations. Travellers should be aware of this at key entry points on the Sicilian coast, most notably at Agrigento and Trapani; if subjected to any racial discrimination you should report it to your embassy immediately.

Theft

This can be a problem for travellers in Sicily – groups of pickpockets and bag snatchers operate in Palermo especially, though you should keep an eye on your belongings in most towns and cities.

Wear a money belt under your clothing. Keep all important items, such as money, passport and tickets, in your money belt at all times. If you are carrying a bag or camera, wear the strap across your body and have the bag on the side away from the road to deter snatch thieves who operate from motorcycles and scooters.

Motorists are not immune to thieves either. Parked cars are the easiest prey, particularly those with foreign numberplates or rental-company stickers. Naturally, *never* leave valuables in your car. It is also preferable to park in a secure parking lot.

Always report theft or loss to the police within 24 hours, and ask for a statement otherwise your travel insurance company won't pay out. Emergency numbers are listed throughout this book.

Traffic

Sicilian traffic, particularly in Palermo, is second only to Naples as the most chaotic in Europe. The unprepared tourist is likely to be in for a shock when first confronted

with the sheer lunacy of local motorists, who have seemingly never heard of road rules. The honking of car horns is incessant.

If you must drive in the city, you'll need to develop nerves of steel pretty quickly. For the virgin driver in Sicily, the best day to make your maiden voyage is Sunday when everyone stays resolutely at home. It is also a good idea to plan on leaving or arriving in big cities between 2pm and 4pm, when everyone is having lunch and the streets are relatively quiet.

Drivers are not keen to stop for pedestrians, even at pedestrian crossings. Sicilians simply step off the footpath and walk through the (swerving) traffic with determination – it is a practice that seems to work, so if you feel uncertain about crossing a busy road, wait for the next local. In the major cities, roads that appear to be for one-way traffic have special lanes for buses travelling in the opposite direction – always look both ways before stepping out.

DISCOUNT CARDS**Senior Cards**

Senior citizens are often entitled to public-transport discounts, but usually only for monthly passes (not daily or weekly tickets). The minimum qualifying age is 65 years.

Admission to all of Sicily's major sites, museums and archaeological parks is free for the over-60s. The only place they may be asked for some ID is at the Cappella Palatina in Palermo.

Student & Youth Cards

Free admission to galleries and sites is available to under-18s. Discounts (usually half the normal fee) are available to EU citizens aged between 18 and 25 (you may need to produce proof of your age). An ISIC (International Student Identity Card) is no longer sufficient at many tourist sites as prices are based on age. A passport or driving licence is better, otherwise the **Euro<26** (www.euro26.org) card is universally acceptable. An ISIC card will still prove useful for cheap flights and theatre and cinema discounts. Similar cards are available to teachers (ITIC). For nonstudent travellers who are under 25, there is the **International Youth Travel Card** (IYTC; www.istc.org), which offers the same benefits.

Student cards are issued by student unions, hostelling organisations and some youth-travel agencies. **Centro Turistico Studentesco e Giovanile** (CTS; ☎ 06 44 11 11; www.cts.it Italian), the youth and

travel organisation, has branches in Sicily that can issue ISIC, ITIC and Euro<26 cards. You have to join the CTS first, which costs €28.

EMBASSIES & CONSULATES

It's important to realise what your embassy (of the country of which you are a citizen) can and can't do to help if you get into trouble. Generally speaking it won't be much help in emergencies if the trouble you're in is remotely your own fault. Remember that you are bound by the laws of the country you are in. Your embassy will not be sympathetic if you end up in jail after committing a crime locally, even if such actions are legal in your own country.

In genuine emergencies you might get some assistance but only if other channels have been exhausted. For example, if you need to get home urgently, a free ticket is highly unlikely – the embassy would expect you to have insurance. If you have all your money and documents stolen, it might assist with getting a new passport, but a loan for onward travel is out of the question.

Most countries have an embassy in Rome, and several also maintain consulates in Palermo. Passport inquiries should be addressed to the Rome-based offices. Most embassies and consulates are open from 8.30am or 9am to 5pm Monday to Friday. The immigration section is usually only open in the mornings from around 8.30am to 11.30am.

Australia (☎ 068 5 27 21; www.italy.embassy.gov.au; Via Antonio Bosio 5, 00161 Rome)

Canada (☎ 064 4 59 81; www.canada.it; Via Zara 30 Rome)

France (☎ 066 8 60 11; www.france-italia.it in French & Italian; Via Giulia, 251 Rome)

Germany Palermo (Map pp78-9; ☎ 091 625 46 60; Viale Scaduto 2d); Rome (☎ 064 9 21 31; www.deutsche-botschaft-rom.it in German & Italian; Via San Martino della Battaglia 4)

Ireland (☎ 066 97 91 21; Piazza di Campitelli 3 Rome)

Japan (☎ 064 8 79 91; Via Quintino Sella 60 Rome)

Netherlands Palermo (Map p82; ☎ 091 58 15 21; Via Roma 489); Rome (☎ 063 22 11 41; www.olanda.it in Dutch & Italian; Via Michele Mercati 8)

New Zealand (☎ 064 41 71 71; www.nzembassy.com; Via Zara 28 Rome)

Spain (☎ 066 84 04 01; Palazzo Borghese, Largo Fontanella Borghese 19 Rome)

UK Palermo (Map p82; ☎ 091 32 64 12; S Tagliavia & Co, Via Cavour 121); Rome (☎ 064 220 00 01; www.britishembassy.gov.uk; Via XX Settembre 80a)

USA (☎ 064 67 41; www.usembassy.it; Via Vittorio Veneto 119a-121 Rome)

FESTIVALS & EVENTS

Sicily's calendar is full to bursting with events that range from colourful traditional celebrations with a religious and/or historical flavour, through to festivals celebrating the performing arts, including opera, music and theatre. The biggest events appear in the following list.

January

Befana (Epiphany) The town of Piana degli Albanesi, near Palermo, celebrates the festival of *La Befana* with a colourful parade that culminates in a firework display.

February

Carnevale (Carnival) During the week before Ash Wednesday, many towns stage carnivals and enjoy their last opportunity to indulge before Lent. The popular festivities in Sciacca are renowned throughout Sicily for imaginative floats. The party in Taormina is also pretty good.

Festa di Sant'Agata (Feast of St Agatha) There are hysterical celebrations in Catania, when one million Catanians and tourists follow a silver reliquary of the saint through the main street. Held 3 to 5 February. See p201.

Sagra del Mandorlo in Fiore (Festival of the Almond Blossom) A folk festival in Agrigento with open-air performances of drama and music. Held first Sunday in February. See p265.

April

Pasqua (Easter) Holy Week in Sicily is a very big deal and is marked by solemn, slow-moving processions and passion plays. Trapani's procession of *I Misteri* is the island's most famous, but there are similar ones worth checking out in Enna and in towns throughout the island.

Grand Prix (Motor Racing) The circuit is around Lago di Pergusa near Enna. Racing begins its season on the last weekend of April and runs till the end of October. See p244.

May & June

Festival of Greek Classical Drama Syracuse boasts the only school of classical Greek drama outside Athens and the shows attract some of Italy's finest performers. See p222.

Infiolata (Flower Festival) To celebrate the arrival of spring, Noto decorates its streets with colourful designs made with flower petals. Held third Sunday in May. See p230.

July & August

Festino di Santa Rosalia (Feast of St Rosalia) Palermo pulls out all the stops in the celebration of its patron saint. Amid the street celebrations – music, food, dancing and partying – the saint's relics are paraded from the city's cathedral. Held 10 to 15 July. See p91.

Taormina Arte (Taormina Art) This festival held in July and August hosts films, theatrical events and music concerts from an impressive list of international names. For information, log on to www.taormina-arte.com (in Italian). See p193.

Palio dei Normanni (Medieval Pageant) Piazza Armerina celebrates its Norman past on 13 and 14 August as it commemorates Count Roger's taking of the town from the Arabs in the 13th century. There are costumed parades, a procession into the town and even a joust. See p250.

September

Pelegrinaggi (Pilgrimages) This is the month for many of Sicily's pilgrimages. The most important are on 4 September (Palermo to Monte Pellegrino) and 8 September (Cefalù to the church at Gibilmanna in the Madonie mountains).

November

Ognissanti (All Souls Day; Festa dei Morti or Day of the Dead) Includes a children's toy fair and lots of *pupe* (sticky sugar figurines). Held 1 November.

December

Festa di Santa Lucia (Festival of St Lucy) This annual procession on 13 December commemorates Syracuse's patron saint. During the festival an enormous silver statue of the saint wends its way from the cathedral to Piazza Santa Lucia accompanied by fireworks. See p223.

Natale (Christmas) During the weeks preceding Christmas there are numerous religious events. Many churches set up elaborate cribs or nativity scenes known as *presepi*; these are particularly good in Caltagirone and Erice.

FOOD & DRINK

Throughout this book, prices are quoted for meals, which includes a *primo* (first course), *secondo* (second course) and dessert. We've used the term budget to describe places where you can get a main course for around €8 to €10 per person, which generally means that your whole meal will cost below €20 to €25 per person with drinks. Midrange places offer main courses between €9 and €15, resulting in a bill between €25 and €40 per person; while mains at top-end restaurants tend to exceed €15, going as high as €22 in places like Taormina (total meal cost over €40 per person). Some of the price ranges overlap as pasta dishes tend to be around €8 on all menus, the higher prices being confined to fish and meat main courses.

In very touristy places like Agrigento, Cefalù and Taormina numerous establishments offer a tourist menu that includes a

WATER

While tap water is reliable and safe throughout the country, most Sicilians prefer to drink *acqua minerale* (bottled mineral water). It will be either *frizzante* (sparkling) or *naturale* (still) and you will be asked in restaurants and bars which you prefer. If you want a glass of tap water, ask for *acqua dal rubinetto*.

starter, main course and dessert (and sometimes coffee or half a jug of house wine). These are always competitively priced (around €15 to €20 per person) but are hardly *haute cuisine*, and the selection is limited to one or two choices. Top-end restaurants also offer set menus, including all courses and coffee but no wine. These are generally expensive (between €25 and €50 per person), although they offer a good selection and the standard of the food is exceptionally high.

Within each section, restaurants are listed in order of budget.

Where to Eat & Drink

Restaurants in Sicily are divided starkly between casual bars or trattorie, the haunt of the working classes, and formal *ristoranti*, usually well decorated with excellent service and a wealthy clientele. Young professionals prefer to pose in *enoteche* (wine bars) or in a new breed of more casual restaurants.

In general eating establishments follow the same pattern as those on the mainland. Cheap trattorie serve simple, hearty menus; the more upmarket *ristoranti* generally have a wider selection of dishes and higher prices. It is best to check the menu, usually posted by the door, for prices. Don't judge the quality of a place by its appearance. You are just as likely to eat your most memorable meal at a place with plastic tablecloths in a tiny backstreet as in a smart restaurant.

Tavole calde (literally 'hot tables') serving street fare are popular hang-outs. In these places, what you see is what you get: brioche, *cornetti* (Italian croissants), *panini* (bread rolls with simple fillings) and *spuntini* (snacks). You can round off your meal with an ice cream – a crowd outside a *gelateria* is always a good sign.

Wine bars are popular and usually offer a limited menu (often charcuterie and cheese)

to accompany a selection of wines. The general idea is to sample wines by the glass, which will, they hope, encourage you to buy a bottle or two.

Most eating establishments have a *coperto* (cover charge) of usually €1 to €3 per person; some include a *servizio* (service charge) of 10% to 15%.

For more on what to eat in Sicily, see p45.

Vegetarians & Vegans

While vegetables take pride of place on the Sicilian table, the notion of vegetarianism is quite foreign to Sicilians. You will have to pick and choose your way carefully through the menu or quiz your host on the most appropriate dishes. Most eateries serve a good selection of vegetable antipasti, pasta dishes and *contorni* (vegetable side orders). Vegans will be in for a tougher time, with many dishes featuring some sort of animal product (butter, eggs or animal stock).

Eating with Kids

You'll be hard pressed to find a children's menu in Sicilian restaurants. It's not that children aren't welcome because they are just about everywhere. Local children are treated very much as adults and are taken out to eat from a young age. You'll often see families order a *mezzo piatto* (half-plate) instead. Virtually all restaurants are perfectly comfortable tailoring a dish to meet your child's tastes.

High chairs are not easily available so bring one along if you can. While children are often taken out it's expected that they be well behaved and that they're disciplined if they are not.

GAY & LESBIAN TRAVELLERS

Although homosexuality is legal in Sicily it is not particularly well tolerated – though some say that attitudes are improving. There are a few gay and/or lesbian clubs and bars, mostly in Taormina and Catania (apparently the new gay capital). Palermo is lagging behind, though you'll find a couple of bars and clubs here too.

Overt displays of affection by homosexual couples can attract a negative response. Yet physical contact between men (and women), such as linking arms and kissing on the cheek, is commonplace and very much part of Sicilian life. It is best to bear this strange

dichotomy in mind when travelling throughout the island.

Gay-friendly bars and clubs can be tracked down through national gay organisations or the national monthly magazine *Pride*, published by Circolo Mario Mieli in Rome (available at gay and lesbian organisations and bookshops). The international gay guide, *Spartacus International Gay Guide*, has listings of gay venues all over Italy. The website <http://it.gay.com> (in Italian) lists gay bars and hotels, or get hold of a copy of *Guida Gay Italia* (www.metropolis.it/guidagay/guida200.asp, in Italian). It is sometimes available at newsstands in Palermo and Catania.

If you want to track down the small (but growing) gay scene in Palermo, contact **ARCI-GAY & ARCI-Lesbica** (☎ 051 644 70 54; www.arcigay.it; Piazza di Porta Saragozza 2, 20123 Bologna), an Italian association based in Bologna.

HOLIDAYS

Most Sicilians take their annual holiday in August, deserting the cities for the cooler seaside or mountains. This means that many businesses and shops close for at least a part of the month, particularly during the week around Feast of the Assumption (Ferragosto) on 15 August. The Easter break (Settimana Santa) is another busy holiday period for Sicilians, especially as the rest of Italy seems to descend on the island, along with numerous school groups doing the tour of the churches.

Individual towns have public holidays to celebrate the feasts of their patron saints. National public holidays in Sicily include the following:

New Year's Day (Anno Nuovo) Celebrations take place on New Year's Eve (Capodanno)

Epiphany (Befana) 6 January

Good Friday (Venerdi Santo) March/April

Easter Monday (Pasquetta/Giorno dopo Pasqua) March/April

Liberation Day (Giorno della Liberazione) 25 April; marks the Allied victory in Italy

Labour Day (Giorno del Lavoro) 1 May

Republic Day (Giorno del Repubblica) 2 June

Feast of the Assumption (Ferragosto) 15 August

All Saints' Day (Ognissanti) 1 November

Feast of the Immaculate Conception (Concezione Immacolata) 8 December

Christmas Day (Natale) 25 December

St Stephen's Day (Boxing Day, Festa di Santo Stefano) 26 December

INSURANCE

A travel-insurance policy to cover theft, loss and medical problems is a good idea. It may also cover you for cancellation of and delays in your travel arrangements. Paying for your ticket with a credit card can often provide limited travel accident insurance and you may be able to reclaim the payment if the operator doesn't deliver. Ask your credit-card company what it will cover.

Some insurance policies offer lower and higher medical-expense options; the higher ones are chiefly for countries such as the USA, which have extremely high medical costs. See p305 for more details.

Some policies specifically exclude 'dangerous activities', which can include scuba diving, motorcycling and even trekking. A locally acquired motorcycle licence is not valid under some policies.

You may prefer a policy that pays doctors or hospitals directly, rather than you having to pay on the spot and claim later. If you have to claim later make sure you keep all documentation. Some policies ask you to call (reverse charges) a centre in your home country, where an immediate assessment of your problem can be made.

Check that the policy covers ambulances or an emergency flight home.

For details of car insurance, see p302.

INTERNET ACCESS

Wi-fi access is increasingly popular in Sicily and most of the top-end hotels will have wi-fi, as will some of the smaller hotels and B&Bs.

You'll find internet cafés throughout Sicily (some of them are listed in the town information listings in this book). Otherwise check out www.netcafeguide.com for an up-to-date list. Expect to pay about €6 per hour and to have to show ID – the staff will record your details in their book (as part of the new antiterrorism laws).

LEGAL AGE

- Driving: 18
- Voting: 18
- Drinking: 16
- Sex: 14 (heterosexual and homosexual)

For more useful internet addresses, see p21.

LEGAL MATTERS

For many Sicilians, finding ways to get around the law (any law) is a way of life. They are likely to react with surprise, if not annoyance, if you point out that they might be breaking the law.

The average tourist will probably have a brush with the law only if robbed by a bag snatcher or pickpocket.

Drink & Drugs

Sicily's drug laws are for the most part lenient on users and heavy on pushers. If you're caught with drugs that the police determine are for your own personal use, you'll be let off with a warning and, of course, the drugs will be confiscated from you. If the police determine that your intention was to sell the drugs, you could find yourself in prison. It's up to the police to decide whether you're a pusher, since the law is not specific about quantities. The sensible option is to avoid illicit drugs altogether. Sicilian attitudes to drug use are very conservative for the most part.

The legal blood-alcohol limit is 0.05% and random breath tests do occur. Penalties for driving under the influence of alcohol can be severe.

Police

If you run into trouble in Italy, you're likely to end up dealing with either the *polizia statale* (state police) or the *carabinieri* (military police).

The *polizia* belong to a civil force: officers take their orders from the Ministry of the Interior and generally deal with thefts, visa extensions and permissions. They wear powder blue trousers with a fuchsia stripe and a navy blue jacket. Tourists who want to report thefts and people wanting to get a residence permit will have to deal with them. They are based at police stations.

The *carabinieri* are more concerned with civil obedience. They deal with general crime, public order and drug enforcement, and are therefore more visible on the street. They wear a black uniform with a red stripe and drive dark blue cars with a red stripe. Their police station is called a *caserma* (barracks), a reflection of their military status.

Although innocent queries are always dealt with politely, in Sicily the role of *carabinieri* is an especially difficult one as – along with the regular army – they are the vanguard in the fight against the Mafia. Consequently, they have a reputation for being harsh and sometimes heavy-handed.

Other varieties of police in Italy include the *vigili urbani*, basically traffic police, and the *guardia di finanza*, who are responsible for fighting tax evasion and drug smuggling. Their role in Sicily is vastly inflated compared with their role in the rest of Italy and they are given wide berth by many Sicilians. The ordinary tourist will have no occasion to deal with them. The *guardia forestale* or *corpo forestale* are responsible for enforcing laws concerning forests and the environment in general.

Addresses and telephone numbers of local police stations are given in the Information sections in this guide.

Your Rights

Italy has some antiterrorism laws that could make life very difficult if you happen to be detained by the police for any alleged offence. You can be held for 48 hours without a magistrate being informed and you can be interrogated without the presence of a lawyer. It is difficult to obtain bail and you can be held legally for up to three years without being brought to trial.

MAPS

For specialist trekking maps see the Sicily Outdoors chapter (p70).

The city maps in this book, combined with tourist-office maps, are generally adequate. More detailed maps are available in Sicily in big-city bookshops (the best places being Palermo, Catania and Syracuse). The best large-scale city maps are produced by Litografia Artistica Cartografica (LAC) at a scale of 1:3500 and cost €5.50. Michelin, de Agostini and Touring Club Italiano (TCI) also produce decent city maps.

The AA's *Road Atlas Italy* (1:250,000), available in the UK, includes Sicily. In Italy, the Istituto Geografico de Agostini publishes a comprehensive *Atlante Turistico Stradale della Sicilia* (1:250,000), which includes 145 city maps. TCI publishes an *Atlante Stradale d'Italia* (1:200,000) divided into three parts: Nord, Centro and Sud.

The best map of Sicily is published by TCI at a scale of 1:200,000. You can buy it in bookshops, airports and motorway cafés in Sicily. Michelin also has a very good map of Sicily (series number 565) at a scale of 1:400,000.

MONEY

Sicily's unit of currency is the euro (€). The euro is divided into 100 cents. Coin denominations are one, two, five, 10, 20 and 50 cents, €1 and €2. The notes are €5, €10, €20, €50, €100, €200 and €500. In all EU countries, all euro notes of each denomination are identical on both sides. Euro coins are identical on the side showing their value, but there are different obverses, each representing one of the euro-zone countries. For more information on the euro check out the website www.europa.eu.int/euro.

See Quick Reference on the inside front cover for a handy table of exchange rates or log on to www.oanda.com. Refer to p17 for a guide to costs.

Money can be exchanged in banks, post offices and exchange offices. Banks generally offer the best rates, but shop around as rates fluctuate considerably.

ATMs

Credit cards can be used in ATMs (*bancomat*) displaying the appropriate sign or (if you have no PIN number) to obtain cash advances over the counter in many banks – Visa and MasterCard are among the most widely recognised. Check what charges you will incur with your bank.

You'll find ATMs throughout Sicily and this is undoubtedly the simplest (and safest) way to handle your money while travelling.

If an ATM rejects your card, don't despair. Try a few more ATMs displaying your credit card's logo before assuming the problem lies with your card.

Cash

Don't bring wads of cash from home (travellers cheques and plastic are much safer). Bag snatchers and pickpockets prey on cash-flashing tourists, so your best bet is never to carry more than you need for a day or two. It is, however, an idea to keep an emergency stash separate from other valuables in case you lose your travellers cheques and credit cards. You will need cash for many day-to-day transactions – many small guesthouses,

eateries and shops do not take credit cards and cash is a necessity at markets.

Credit & Debit Cards

Carrying plastic is the simplest way to organise your holiday funds.

Major cards, such as Visa, MasterCard, Eurocard, Cirrus and Eurocheque, are accepted throughout Sicily. They can be used for many purchases (including in some supermarkets) and in hotels and restaurants. Check any charges with your bank but, as a rule, there is no charge for purchases on major cards.

You should check the procedure on what to do if you experience problems or if your card is stolen. Most card suppliers will give you an emergency number you can call free of charge for help and advice.

Travellers Cheques

These are a safe way to carry your money because they can be replaced if lost or stolen. They can be cashed at most banks and exchange offices. American Express, Thomas Cook and Visa are widely accepted brands.

It's vital to keep your initial receipt, a record of your cheque numbers and the ones you have used, separate from the cheques themselves. If your travellers cheques get stolen, you'll need these documents to get them replaced. You must take your passport with you when cashing cheques.

POST

Sicily's postal service is notoriously slow, unreliable and expensive.

Stamps (*francobolli*) are available at post offices and authorised tobacconists (look for the official *tabacchi* sign, a big 'T', often white on black).

Main post offices in the bigger cities are generally open from around 8.30am to 6pm and Saturday mornings too. Tobacconists keep regular shop hours (see p281).

It can take up to two weeks for mail to arrive in the UK or USA, while a letter to Australia will take between two and three weeks. Postcards take even longer. Put them in an envelope and send them as letters.

You can also send letters express, using *posta prioritaria*, which guarantees to deliver letters within Europe in three days and to the rest of the world within four to eight days. For more important items, use registered mail

(*raccomandato*), or insured mail (*assicurato*), the cost of which depends on the value of the object being sent.

Information about postal services and rates can be obtained at www.poste.it.

SHOPPING

The most interesting places to shop in Sicily are at the markets; every town worth its salt has at least one. Palermo's Mercato della Vucciria (p85) is probably the most famous of all and many Palermitans also shop in one of the city's two other markets. Catania has an excellent produce market and Syracuse's is fine too. At most markets you can pick up virtually everything you need, from fish to frocks and all things in between.

As in Spain and Portugal, the Arabs brought a rich tradition of ceramic production to Sicily. Major ceramics centres include Caltagirone, Santo Stefano di Camastra and Sciacca. A love of gold, coral and turquoise jewellery reflects another Arab tradition most strongly in evidence on the west coast and in particular in Trapani and Cefalù, although Syracuse, Taormina and Messina are also excellent centres of handmade jewellery, with Sciacca coral a precious local commodity. Old-fashioned European traditions of lace and embroidery can be found in Palermo and Taormina, or rural towns like Erice and Caltanissetta.

But perhaps the best shopping to be done in Sicily centres around its food and wine. The Aeolian Islands, along with Syracuse, Taormina and Cefalù, have a substantial number of gourmet delis. Sicilian wines are also beginning to make an impression on the international market. For more details see p51.

For the ultimate memento you could always purchase one of Sicily's paladin puppets or a miniature model of the traditional Sicilian cart, painstakingly decorated with all kinds of colourful features. The originals are now collectors' items.

SOLO TRAVELLERS

There is more of a backpacking culture in the east of the island around Catania, Mt Etna and Syracuse and these are the best destinations for the solo traveller. In the west there are fewer facilities for single travellers. You may feel a little lonesome in some very family-orientated communities, although Sicilians are very friendly and helpful.

The main problem facing solo travellers is the dearth of single rooms in popular tourist spots. In these places you will probably find yourself paying pretty much a double-room rate. If you are on a budget you may want to consider hostel accommodation. Other than that, normal common-sense rules apply. Avoid unlit streets and parks at night and ensure your valuables are safely stored.

TELEPHONE Mobile Phones

Italy uses GSM 900/1800, which is compatible with the rest of Europe and Australia but not with North American GSM 1900 or the totally different system in Japan (although some North American GSM 1900/900 phones do work in Italy). If you have a GSM phone, check with your service provider about using it in Sicily and beware of calls being routed internationally (very expensive for a 'local' call). The alternative is to link up with a local service provider.

Payphones & Phonecards

The partly privatised Telecom Italia is the largest phone company in the country and its orange public payphones are scattered all over the place. The most common accept only telephone cards (*carte/schede telefoniche*), although you will still find some that accept both cards and coins. Some cardphones now also accept special Telecom credit cards and even commercial credit cards.

Payphones can be found in the streets, train stations and some big stores, as well as in Telecom offices. Where these offices are staffed, it is possible to make international calls and pay at the desk afterwards. There are also cut-price call centres run by various companies that offer lower rates than Telecom payphones for international calls. You simply place your call from a private booth inside the centre and pay for it when you've finished.

You can buy phonecards at post offices, tobacconists and newsstands. They come in denominations of €1, €2.50, €5 and €7.50. Remember to snap off the perforated corner before using them.

Phone Codes

The international access code is ☎ 00 and the country code is ☎ 39.

Telephone area codes all begin with '0' and consist of up to four digits. The area code is

followed by a telephone number of anything from four to eight digits.

Area codes are an integral part of all telephone numbers in Italy, even if you are calling within a single zone. For example, any number you ring in Palermo will start with ☎ 091, even if it's next door. When making domestic and international calls you must always dial the full number including the initial zero.

Numeri verdi (toll-free phone numbers) usually begin with ☎ 800 (some start with ☎ 199 or ☎ 848). Mobile-telephone numbers begin with a three-digit prefix such as ☎ 330, ☎ 335, ☎ 347 etc.

TIME

Sicily is one hour ahead of GMT. Daylight-saving time starts on the last Sunday in March, when clocks are put forward one hour. Clocks go back an hour on the last Sunday in October.

TOILETS

Public toilets are not exactly common in Sicily except at major tourist sites and archaeological parks. Most people use the toilets in bars and cafés – although you might need to buy a coffee first. In many places public toilets tend to be grim, usually with a broken or nonexistent loo seat. This means you will have to do a lot of hovering about.

TOURIST INFORMATION

The quality of tourist offices in Sicily varies dramatically. One office might have enthusiastic staff but no useful printed information, while indifferent staff in another might have a gold mine of brochures.

Sicily's regional **tourist office** (☎ 091 605 81 11; www.regione.sicilia.it/turismo; Piazza Castelnuovo 35) has its headquarters in Palermo. You can also find information on the website of the **Italian State Tourist Office** (ENIT; www.enit.it).

Throughout the island, three tiers of tourist office exist: regional, provincial and local. They have different names but offer roughly the same services, with the exception of the regional offices, which are generally concerned with promotion, planning and budgeting. Throughout this book, offices are referred to as 'tourist office' rather than by their elaborate and confusing titles. Most offices will respond to written and telephone requests for information.

Azienda di Promozione Turistica (APT) The regional – read main – tourist office should have information on the town you are in and the surrounding province.

Azienda Autonoma di Soggiorno e Turismo (AAST)

Otherwise known as Informazioni e Assistenza ai Turisti, AAST is the local tourist office. These local offices have town-specific information and should also know about bus routes and museum-opening times.

Pro Loco This is the local office in small towns and villages and is similar to the AAST office.

Tourist offices are generally open 8.30am to 12.30pm or 1pm and 3pm to 7pm Monday to Friday. Hours are usually extended in summer, when some offices also open on Saturday or Sunday.

Information booths at most major train stations tend to keep similar hours, but in some cases operate only in summer. Staff can usually provide a city map, a list of hotels and information on the major sights.

As you would expect, offices in popular destinations such as Palermo, Catania, Taormina, Syracuse and the Aeolian Islands are used to dealing with visitors from all over the world. They are usually well stocked and staffed by employees with a working knowledge of at least one other European language; usually English but also French or German.

TRAVELLERS WITH DISABILITIES

Sicily is not an easy island for disabled travellers. Even a short journey in a city or town can become a major expedition if negotiating cobblestoned streets in many of Sicily's undulating towns. Although many buildings have lifts, they are not always wide enough to accommodate a wheelchair.

Alitalia operates a courtesy wheelchair service for infirm passengers in the airport – useful, as you will almost certainly have to change planes in Rome and Milan to get to Sicily. This service needs to be booked when you book your ticket and should be reconfirmed the day before you travel. The Italian travel agency CIT can advise of hotels with special facilities. It can also request that wheelchair ramps be provided to meet your train if you book travel through CIT.

The Italian State Tourist Office in your country may provide advice on Italian associations for the disabled and information on what help is available. It may also carry a small brochure, *Services for Disabled Passengers*, which details facilities at stations and on trains. There's an airline directory that provides information on facilities offered

by various airlines on the disability-friendly website www.everybody.co.uk.

The following are some useful organisations:

Accessible Italy (☎ inside Italy 378 054 994 11 00, outside Italy 39-3486 91 30 64; www.accessibleitaly.com)

A Turin-based company that specialises in holiday services for the disabled, ranging from tours to the hiring of adapted transport. There is also a branch in Rome called **La Viaggeria** (☎ 067 158 29 45; Via Lemonia 161, 00174 Rome). **Consorzio Cooperative Integrate** (CO.IN; ☎ 067 12 90 11; www.coinsociale.it) A Rome-based organisation that focuses largely on the capital, but it can provide information on transport and accessible accommodation throughout Italy and can help plan itineraries.

Holiday Care Service (☎ in UK 44 0845 124 9971; www.holidaycare.org.uk) This company produces an information pack on Italy for the physically disabled and others with special needs. The website also has lots of useful resources.

Royal Association for Disability & Rehabilitation (RADAR; ☎ in UK 44 020-7250 3222; www.radar.org.uk) A UK-based charity that publishes *Holidays & Travel Abroad: A Guide for Disabled People*, which provides a useful overview of the facilities that are available for disabled travellers throughout Europe.

VISAS

The following information on visas was correct at the time of writing, but restrictions and regulations can change. Use the following information as a guide only and contact your embassy for the latest details. Travellers may also visit the Lonely Planet website, lonelyplanet.com, for useful links and up-to-date information.

Italy is one of 15 European countries to have signed the Schengen Convention, an agreement where member countries have abolished checks at their common borders. The other Schengen countries are Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Iceland, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, Spain and Sweden. Legal residents of one Schengen country do not require a visa for another Schengen country. Citizens of the UK and Ireland are exempt from visa requirements for Schengen countries. Nationals of a number of other countries, including Canada, Japan, New Zealand and Switzerland, do not require visas for visits of up to 90 days to any Schengen country.

Various other nationals not covered by the Schengen exemption can also spend up to 90

days in Sicily without a visa. These include Australian, Israeli and US citizens. However, all non-EU nationals entering Italy for any reason other than tourism (such as study or work) should contact an Italian consulate as they may need a specific visa. They should also insist on having their passport stamped on entry as, without a stamp, they could encounter problems when trying to obtain a *permesso di soggiorno* (residence permit; see right). If you are a citizen of a country not mentioned in this section, you should check with an Italian consulate whether you need a visa.

The standard tourist visa issued by Italian consulates is the Schengen visa, valid for up to 90 days. However, individual Schengen countries may impose additional restrictions on certain nationalities. It is therefore worth checking visa regulations with the consulate of each Schengen country you plan to visit.

It is mandatory that you apply for a visa in your country of residence. You can apply for no more than two Schengen visas in any 12-month period and they are not renewable inside Italy. It's a good idea to apply early for your visa, especially in the busy summer months.

Student Visas

Non-EU citizens who want to study at a university or language school in Sicily must have a study visa. These visas can be obtained from your nearest Italian embassy or consulate. You will normally require confirmation of your enrolment, proof of payment of fees and adequate funds to support yourself before a visa is issued. The visa will cover only the period of the enrolment. This type of visa is renewable within Sicily but, again, only with confirmation of ongoing enrolment and proof that you are able to support yourself – bank statements are preferred.

Permits

EU citizens do not require permits to live, work or start a business in Sicily. They are, however, advised to register with a police station if they decide to take up residence, in accordance with an anti-Mafia law that aims to keep a watch on everyone's whereabouts in the country. Failure to do so carries no consequences, although some landlords may be unwilling to rent a flat to you if you

cannot produce proof of registration. Those considering long-term residence will eventually want to consider getting a work permit, a necessary first step to acquiring an ID card (*carta d'identità*). While you're at it, you'll need a tax-file number (*codice fiscale*) if you wish to be paid in Sicily.

WORK PERMITS

Non-EU citizens wishing to work in Sicily will need to obtain a work permit (*permesso di lavoro*). If you intend to work for an Italian company, the company must organise the permit and forward it to the Italian embassy or consulate in your home country; only then will you be issued with an appropriate visa.

If non-EU citizens intend to work for a non-Italian company, wish to go freelance or be paid in foreign currency, they must organise the visa and permit in their country of residence through an Italian embassy or consulate. This process can take several months so look into it early.

It is in any case advisable to seek detailed information from an Italian embassy or consulate about the exact requirements before attempting to organise a legitimate job in Sicily. Many foreigners don't bother with such formalities, preferring to try to work illegally (*al nero*, literally 'in the black'). See p294 for details.

RESIDENCE PERMITS

If you stay at the same address for more than one week, you are technically obliged to report to a police station and obtain a *permesso di soggiorno* (residence permit). Tourists who are staying in hotels do not need to do this, as hotel owners must register all guests with the police.

A *permesso di soggiorno* is only necessary if you plan to study, work (legally) or live in Sicily. Obtaining one is never pleasant, although for EU citizens it is fairly straightforward and success is guaranteed. Other nationals may find it involves long queues, rude police officers and the frustration of arriving at the counter to find that you don't have all the necessary documents.

The exact requirements, such as documents and *marche da bollo* (official stamps), can vary from one place to another. In general, you will need a valid passport containing a visa stamp indicating your date of entry into

Italy, a special visa issued in your own country if you are planning to study, four passport-style photographs and proof of your ability to support yourself financially.

It is best to go to a police station to obtain precise information on what is required.

WOMEN TRAVELLERS

Women travelling alone might well receive some unwanted attention from local lotharios, but the Sicilians are generally pretty relaxed. If you feel nervous about being a solo woman, wearing a wedding ring nearly always deters any unwanted interest. If you do get chatted to by a persistent man, the best response is usually to just ignore him, but if that doesn't work, politely say that you're waiting for your husband (*marito*) or fiancé (*fidanzato*) and, if necessary, walk away.

Women on their own should use their common sense. Avoid walking alone on deserted and dark streets, and look for centrally located hotels within easy walking distance of places where you can eat at night. Women should not hitch alone.

The *Handbook for Women Travellers* (1995) by M and G Moss is recommended reading.

WORK

It is illegal for non-EU citizens to work in Sicily without a work permit but trying to obtain one can be time consuming. EU citizens are allowed to work in Sicily but they still need to obtain a residency permit from the main police station in the town where they have

found work (see p293 for more information). The main challenge will not be bureaucracy but the economy – unemployment in Sicily is officially 20%; in reality it's more like 30% – the highest of any region in Italy. Frankly, other than being sent here by a company, teaching a little English or doing bar work at a summer resort, you won't have much luck securing employment.

Virtually the only source of work available to foreigners in Sicily is teaching English but, even with full qualifications, an American, Australian, Canadian or New Zealander might find it difficult to secure even a temporary position. There are language schools in Palermo, Catania and a few larger towns, but teaching positions don't often come up. Most of the more reputable schools will only hire people with a work permit (*permesso di lavoro*) and will require a Teaching English as a Foreign Language (TEFL) certificate. It is advisable to apply for work early in the year to be considered for positions that become available in October (language-school years correspond roughly to the Italian school year: late September to the end of June).

Some people pick up private students by placing advertisements in shop windows and on university noticeboards. Rates of pay vary according to experience. You can use other ads as a yardstick.

Further reading resources include *Work Your Way Around the World* (2003) by Susan Griffith and *Live and Work in Italy* (2003) by Victoria Pybus.

Transport

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GETTING THERE & AWAY

The best (and fastest) way to get to Sicily is by air. If you live in Europe, there are a number of budget airlines flying to Palermo. If you're coming from outside Europe, you should be able to pick up a reasonably priced fare to Rome or Milan from where you can pick up an onward connecting flight to Sicily. An adventurous alternative is to arrive by boat from Naples, Genoa or Livorno. Flights, tours and rail tickets can be booked online at www.lonelyplanet.com/travel_services.

ENTERING THE COUNTRY

Falcone-Borsellino airport at Palermo is small and efficient, so entering Sicily shouldn't be a problem or particularly stressful. If you're entering Sicily from outside Europe and catching a connecting flight in Rome or Milan, all airport formalities will take place there and the Sicilian leg of your journey will be considered an internal flight, meaning it should be a pretty painless procedure.

Boarding a ferry to Sicily from mainland Italy is almost as easy as getting on a bus, although you might want to consider pre-booking your passage if you are travelling in the high season, especially if you have a vehicle. You don't need to show your passport

THINGS CHANGE...

The information in this chapter is particularly vulnerable to change. Check directly with the airline or a travel agent to make sure you understand how a fare (and ticket you may buy) works and be aware of the security requirements for international travel. Shop carefully. The details given in this chapter should be regarded as pointers and are not a substitute for your own careful, up-to-date research.

on these internal routes but you should keep some photo ID handy.

AIR

You can get cheap flights with Ryanair and easyJet even in the highest of seasons (June to September), though if you're flying with the bigger airlines you'll be paying more (and getting more comfort). The months of April, May and October are the shoulder season, while low season is November to March. Holidays such as Christmas and Easter also see a huge jump in prices. If you are travelling to Sicily from outside Italy you may have to change carrier at either Rome or Milan.

Roughly speaking a return fare to Palermo will cost you from UK£50 on a budget airline from the UK (depending on when you book).

If you're flying to Rome and then Palermo or Catania, count on spending about US\$400/800 (low/high season) from North America; C\$900/1800 from the Canadian east and C\$1200/2000 from the Canadian west coast; and A\$1600/2200 from Australia.

The local airlines Meridiana, Volare and Air One also fly from around Europe to Palermo and Catania, via Rome.

Airports & Airlines

Sicily's two main airports are **Falcone-Borsellino** (☎ 091 702 04 09; www.gesap.it) outside Palermo, and **Fontanarossa** (☎ 095 34 05 05; www.aeroporto.catania.it) in Catania. There's also the small **Vincenzo Florio Airport** (☎ 0923 84 25 02) at Birgi, near Trapani, only used for domestic flights within Sicily.

CLIMATE CHANGE & TRAVEL

Climate change is a serious threat to the ecosystems that humans rely upon, and air travel is the fastest-growing contributor to the problem. Lonely Planet regards travel, overall, as a global benefit, but believes we all have a responsibility to limit our personal impact on global warming.

Flying & Climate Change

Pretty much every form of motor travel generates CO₂ (the main cause of human-induced climate change) but planes are far and away the worst offenders, not just because of the sheer distances they allow us to travel, but because they release greenhouse gases high into the atmosphere. The statistics are frightening: two people taking a return flight between Europe and the US will contribute as much to climate change as an average household's gas and electricity consumption over a whole year.

Carbon Offset Schemes

Climatecare.org and other websites use 'carbon calculators' that allow jetsetters to offset the greenhouse gases they are responsible for with contributions to energy-saving projects and other climate-friendly initiatives in the developing world – including projects in India, Honduras, Kazakhstan and Uganda.

Lonely Planet, together with Rough Guides and other concerned partners in the travel industry, supports the carbon offset scheme run by climatecare.org. Lonely Planet offsets all of its staff and author travel.

For more information check out our website: lonelyplanet.com.

The island is not served by intercontinental flights and only budget airlines fly directly into Sicily. Alitalia serves both Palermo and Catania. The biggest number of flights coming directly into Palermo are from airlines such as Ryanair and easyJet, both flying from London Stansted. British Airways and Air Malta have a direct flight from London Gatwick to Catania. You can also fly into both cities with Lufthansa's competitive local partner, Air One. Meridiana has numerous flights between mainland Italy and Sicily. From May to October, both airports are served by a number of charter flights (British Midlands and JMC Airlines), although airline schedules can be restrictive.

AIRLINES FLYING TO/FROM SICILY

Air Berlin (AB; ☎ 848 39 00 54; www.airberlin.com)

Air Malta (KM; ☎ 091 625 58 48; www.airmalta.com)

Air One (AP; ☎ 199 20 70 80; www.flyairone.it)

Alitalia (AZ; ☎ 022 31 41 81; www.alitalia.com)

British Airways (BA; ☎ 199 71 22 66; www.britishairways.com)

British Midland (BD; ☎ 44-1332 85 4000; www.flybmi.com)

easyJet (EZY; ☎ 0905 821 09 05; www.easyjet.com)

Evolavia (7B; ☎ 899 00 09 29; www.evolavia.com)

Hapag-Lloyd Express (X; ☎ 01805 09 35 09; www.hlx.com)

JMC Airlines (JMC; ☎ 0870 750 57 11; www.jmc.com)

Lufthansa (LH; ☎ 066 568 40 04; www.lufthansa.com)

Meridiana (IG; ☎ 199 11 13 33; www.meridiana.it)

Ryanair (FR; ☎ 899 89 98 44; www.ryanair.com)

Tunis Air (TU; ☎ 091 611 18 45; www.tunisair.com.tn)

Volare (VE; ☎ 199 41 45 00; www.volareweb.com in Italian)

Tickets

If you book early or at the right time, the budget airlines have some excellent offers.

Full-time students and people aged under 26 (under 30 in some countries) can get discounted fares. You need a document proving your date of birth or an International Student Identity Card (ISIC) when buying your ticket. Other cheap deals are the discounted tickets released to some travel agents and specialist discount agencies.

Also check the online agents such as www.travelocity.co.uk, www.cheaptickets.com, www.travelcuts.com and www.expedia.com, which can offer some great deals.

Australia

There are no direct flights between Australia and Sicily so you will need to change planes at some point in Italy. Cheap flights from Australia to Europe generally

go via Southeast Asian capitals. Qantas, along with Alitalia, offer the only direct flights from Melbourne and Sydney to Rome, but if you are looking for a bargain fare you will probably end up on either Thai Air or Malaysia Airlines. Flights from Perth are generally a few hundred dollars cheaper.

Quite a few travel offices specialise in discount air tickets. Some travel agencies, particularly smaller ones, advertise cheap air fares in the travel sections of weekend newspapers, such as the *Age* in Melbourne and the *Sydney Morning Herald*.

Canada

As with Australia and America, there are no direct flights to Sicily and you will have to connect through Rome or Milan. Alitalia has direct flights to Rome and Milan from Toronto and Montreal. Scan the budget travel agencies' advertisements in the *Toronto Globe & Mail*, the *Toronto Star* and the *Vancouver Province*.

Air Canada flies daily from Toronto to Rome, direct and via Montreal. European airlines British Airways, Air France, KLM and Lufthansa all fly from Canada to their respective home countries and then travel onward to Italy. Given Lufthansa's partnership with Air One, this may be the most cost-effective way to go.

Continental Europe

All national European carriers offer services to Italy. The largest of these, Air France, Lufthansa and KLM, have representatives in major European cities. Italy's national carrier, Alitalia, has a huge range of offers from all European destinations and can then connect you with one of their internal flights to Sicily.

The local Italian airlines Air One and Meridiana offer routes from either Palermo or Catania to a few European destinations, including Madrid, Barcelona, Valencia, London Gatwick, Trieste and Geneva, but even these flights will require a change in Rome or Milan.

New Zealand

Air New Zealand flies direct from Auckland to Italy, otherwise Qantas or Alitalia flights from Australia are the most direct way to get to Italy and then Sicily.

UK & Ireland

Discount air travel is big business in the UK. Advertisements for many travel agencies appear in weekend newspapers, such as the *Independent* and the *Guardian* on Saturday, and the *Sunday Times*, and in publications such as *Time Out* and the *Evening Standard*.

A couple of major airlines now operate direct routes to Palermo or Catania. Ryanair and easyJet fly twice daily from Stansted to Palermo and both British Airways (four weekly flights) and Air Malta (three weekly flights) offer flights from London Gatwick to Catania. British Midland flies out of London to Palermo and Catania, while JMC Airlines flies from Manchester or London to Catania only, usually on Friday or Saturday. There are also dozens of Alitalia flights between London and Milan or Rome, where you will have to transfer onto another plane to continue your journey to Sicily. Meridiana also offers flights to London Gatwick via various Italian cities.

Ryanair flies to Trapani from Dublin on a daily basis. There is now talk of the budget airline including flights to Comiso airport (in the Ragusa province), though this was still very much in the pipeline at the time of writing.

USA

Both the enormous **American Airlines** (www.aa.com) and **Delta Airlines** (www.delta.com) have regular flights travelling from New York to Milan and Rome, while **United Airlines** (www.united.com) has a service from Washington to Rome.

Discount travel agencies in the USA are known as consolidators, and San Francisco is the ticket consolidator capital of America although some good deals can be found in other big cities. The *New York Times*, *LA Times*, *Chicago Tribune* and *San Francisco Examiner* produce weekly travel sections containing numerous travel agencies' ads.

For discount and rock-bottom options to Europe from the USA it may be worth investigating stand-by and courier flights. Stand-by flights are often sold at 60% of the normal price for one-way tickets.

Online travel agencies www.expedia.com and www.travelocity.com are useful and reliable North American online-booking agencies, but there are plenty of others.

LAND

Sicily's location means getting there overland involves travelling the entire length of Italy, which can either be an enormous drain on your time or, if you have plenty to spare, a wonderful way of seeing Italy on your way to Sicily. At some point you are going to have to stop at a mainland port and travel over the water by boat (most people go from Villa San Giovanni or Reggio di Calabria in Calabria, to Messina). Buses are usually the cheapest option, but services are less frequent and considerably less comfortable than the train.

If you are travelling by bus, train or car to Italy it will be necessary to check whether you require visas to the countries you intend to pass through.

Border Crossings

The main points of entry to Italy are the Mt Blanc tunnel from France at Chamonix, connecting with the A5 for Turin and Milan; the Grand St Bernard tunnel from Switzerland (SS27), which also connects with the A5; and the Brenner Pass from Austria (A13), which connects with the A22 to Bologna. Mountain passes in the Alps can be closed in winter and sometimes in autumn and spring, so the tunnels are more reliable. Bring snow chains in winter.

Regular trains on two lines connect Italy with main cities in Austria and on into Germany, France or Eastern Europe. Those crossing the frontier at the Brenner Pass go to Innsbruck, Stuttgart and Munich. Those crossing at Tarvisio in the east proceed to Vienna, Salzburg and Prague. Trains from Milan head for Switzerland and on into France and the Netherlands. The main international train line to Slovenia crosses near Trieste.

Continental Europe

BUS

There is no direct service to Sicily from outside Italy. **Eurolines** (www.eurolines.com) is a consortium of European coach companies that operates across Europe but only goes as far as Rome, where you will have to change carrier. You can contact Eurolines in your own country or in Italy. Its multi-lingual website gives comprehensive details of prices, passes and travel agencies where you can book tickets.

Another option is the UK-based **Busabout** ([020 7950 1661](http://020.7950.1661); www.busabout.com), which covers

at least 60 European cities and towns and offers passes of varying duration, allowing you to use its hop-on, hop-off bus network. Passes can be bought at travel agencies such as STA Travel. Travellers under the age of 26 and students get a discount of around 13%.

The frequency of departures and the number of stops available increase between April and October. You can book onward travel and accommodation on the bus or on their website.

From Rome, **Interbus** ([06 481 96 76](http://06.481.96.76); www.interbus.it in Italian; Saistours, Piazza della Repubblica 42) runs one service weekly on Sunday from Piazzale Tiburtina to Messina (€33, 9½ hours, one per week), and then on to Palermo or Catania, all via Naples.

SAIS Autolinee ([051 24 21 50](http://051.24.21.50), in Pisa 050 4 62 88; www.saisautolinee.it in Italian) has buses from Bologna to Messina (€54, 14 hours, via Florence and Siena) and from Pisa to Messina (€54, 15 hours) all the way down the eastern coast (via Florence, Siena and Perugia). SAIS also has buses from Naples to Sicily.

In Rome, you can get tickets and information at the **Eurojet agency** ([06 474 28 01](http://06.474.28.01); Piazza della Repubblica 54), or go to the bus station at Piazzale Tiburtina. Booking is a must.

CAR & MOTORCYCLE

Driving to Sicily is a pricey proposition, especially once you cross the border into Italy, which has the most expensive motorway tolls (from the French or Swiss borders to Naples it'll cost around €50) as well as the most expensive petrol in Europe (see p302 for prices). Furthermore, it's quite a drive to get to the ferry terminal at Villa San Giovanni, from where you'll cross the Straits of Messina into Sicily: you might make the trip from the French or Swiss borders in around 17 hours but only if you keep to the motorways, drive flat out (remember that the speed limit in Italy is 130km/h) and avoid the worst of the traffic – during the holiday seasons it'll be a minor miracle if you do.

Although Italy is a popular motorcycle destination, the mania has not quite reached Sicily – although there is a strong motorcycle contingent constantly racing around the hairpin bends of Mt Etna. Still, with a bike you rarely have to book ahead for ferries and can enter restricted traffic areas in cities. Crash helmets are compulsory. Unless you're touring, it is probably easier to rent a

bike once you have reached Sicily. See p301 for details on driving in Italy and car and motorcycle rental.

An interesting website loaded with advice for people planning to drive in Europe is www.ideamerge.com. If you want help with route planning, try www.euroshell.com.

TRAIN

Not quite as tough-going as travelling by bus, one major advantage of getting to Sicily by train is the greater options you have en route, including more frequent departures and the possibility of breaking up your journey so it isn't one long slog.

The *Thomas Cook European Timetable* is a rail traveller's bible, giving a complete listing of train schedules. It is updated monthly and is available from Thomas Cook offices and agents worldwide. It is always advisable, but sometimes compulsory, to book seats on international trains to and from Sicily. Some of the main international services include transport for private cars – an option worth examining to save wear and tear on your vehicle before it arrives in Sicily. On overnight hauls you can book a *cuccetta* (couchette) for around €18 to €25.

If you're travelling to Sicily from anywhere outside Italy you'll have to change trains somewhere along the line in Italy; the handiest place is Rome, although there are also trains for Sicily that depart from Milan and Turin (which travel via Rome). From both Rome and Milan you should take an Intercity or Eurostar train to Sicily.

A one-way adult fare from Rome to Palermo on a EuroCity (EC) or Intercity (IC) train costs €78/55 for 1st/2nd class (11 hours, about nine daily). The equivalent from Milan costs €122/101 (19 hours, at least one daily). The *espresso* train from Rome to Messina costs €59/43 (about nine hours, five daily); from Milan to Messina with Eurostar (ES) costs €114/93 (14 hours, at least two daily). For train information in Rome, call [06 147 88 80 88](http://147.88.80.88) (open 7am to 9pm) or go to the information office at any train station.

UK

CAR & MOTORCYCLE

From the UK, you can take your car across to France either by ferry or the Channel Tunnel car train, **Eurotunnel** ([08705 353 535](http://08705.353.535);

www.eurotunnel.com). The latter runs 24 hours, with up to four crossings (35 minutes) each hour between Folkestone and Calais in the high season. You pay for the vehicle only and fares vary according to the time of day and season, but you could be looking at paying as much as UK£312 (valid for one year).

UK drivers holding the old-style green driving licence will need to obtain an International Driving Permit (IDP) before they can drive in Europe. For breakdown assistance both the **AA** ([0870 600 0371](http://0870.600.0371); www.theaa.co.uk) and the **RAC** ([08700 106 382](http://08700.106.382); www.rac.co.uk) offer comprehensive cover in Europe.

TRAIN

The excellent passenger-train service **Eurostar** ([08705 186 186](http://08705.186.186); www.eurostar.com) travels from London to Paris and Brussels. Alternatively, you can get yourself a train ticket that includes crossing the Channel by ferry, Seacat or hovercraft. After that, you can travel via Paris and southern France or by swinging from Belgium down through Germany and Switzerland. The journey from London to Palermo takes 35 hours and costs around UK£300 (€420).

For the latest fare information on journeys to Italy, including the Eurostar, contact the **Rail Europe Travel Centre** ([Europe tickets & inquiries 08708 371 371](http://Europe.tickets&inquiries.08708.371.371); www.railchoice.co.uk) or **Rail Choice** (www.railchoice.com).

Alternatively, log on to the website www.seat61.com – this man has surely been on every train in the world!

SEA

Regular car/passenger ferries cross the strait between Villa San Giovanni and Messina and from Reggio di Calabria to Messina. Hydrofoils run by the railways and Ustica Lines connect Messina directly with Reggio di Calabria (see p188 for details). Sicily is also accessible by ferry from Valencia (Spain), Genoa, Livorno, Naples and Cagliari, and from Malta and Tunisia.

Ferry prices are determined by the season and are considerably more expensive from June to September. In high season, all routes are busy and you need to book several weeks in advance through each company or at travel agencies throughout Italy. Offices and telephone numbers for the ferry companies are listed in the Getting There & Away sections for the relevant cities. The incredibly helpful search

engine **Traghettonline** (☎ 010 58 20 80; www.traghettonline.net) covers all the ferry companies in the Mediterranean; you can also book online.

Grandi Navi Veloci (www.1.gnv.it) Genoa (☎ 010 58 93 31); Livorno (☎ 058 640 98 94); Palermo (☎ 091 58 74 04) These are luxury ferries servicing Valencia (once weekly), Livorno (three weekly) and Genoa (daily) to Palermo.

Tirrenia Navigazione (☎ call centre 199 12 31 99; www.tirrenia.it in Italian) The main company servicing the Mediterranean and all Italian ports. Its ferries to and from Sicily include Palermo–Cagliari, Palermo–Naples, Trapani–Cagliari and Trapani–Tunisia.

Trenitalia (☎ 090 66 16 74; www.trenitalia.it; ferry terminal) Runs at least 20 fast boats a day from Villa San Giovanni and Reggio di Calabria to Messina. The boats bear the old Ferrovie dello Stato or a newer Bluvia insignia.

TTT Lines (☎ 095 746 21 87; www.tttlines.it in Italian) Based in Naples, TTT Lines has a daily car ferry from Naples to Catania leaving at midnight Monday to Saturday and 7.30pm on Sunday.

Ustica Lines (☎ 0923 2 22 00; www.usticalines.it) Ustica Lines' services include a daily hydrofoil from Naples to the Aeolian Islands and a June-to-September ferry from Naples to Trapani via Ustica.

Virtu Ferries (☎ 356 31 88 54; www.virtuferries.com; 8 Princess St, Ta'Xbiex, Malta) Virtu runs ferries between March and October from Malta to Catania and Pozzallo, just south of Syracuse.

The following table shows some mainland to Sicily ferry crossings (prices quoted for the high season; check individual websites for exact quotes at your travel time).

Route	Adult/Car	Duration
Genoa-Palermo	from €59/99	20hr
Livorno-Palermo	from €53/89	17hr
Malta-Catania	€81/130	3hr
Malta-Pozzallo	€99/110	1½hr
Naples-Catania	€40/92	10½hr
Naples-Palermo	€40/85	11hr
Naples-Trapani	€83	6½hr
Reggio di Calabria-Messina	€3/20	25min
Tunisia-Trapani	€60/100	11hr

GETTING AROUND

You can reach all of the major – and most of the minor – destinations in Sicily by train or bus. Services are generally efficient and cheap, although some of the slower trains tend to chug along in no real rush. In Sicily, your own wheels will give you the most freedom. A car allows you to stray off the main routes to discover out-of-the-way hill towns

or deserted beaches. The limited motorway (autostrada) system is toll free except for certain tracts between Messina and Catania, and Palermo and Messina (see boxed text, p190), but the extensive network of state roads can be clogged with traffic. You should also be aware that petrol is expensive and that the stress of driving and parking your car in the bigger Sicilian cities could easily ruin your trip.

To get to the offshore islands there is an extensive system of regular hydrofoils and ferries between June and the end of September. The frequency of services slows considerably in winter, when many of the islands close down. For Pantelleria and the Pelagic Islands, planes are probably a better bet – they are now cheaper than the ferries and a lot faster.

AIR

Boat trips to Sicily's offshore islands are frequent and reliable, but you may want to catch planes for Pantelleria and the Pelagic Islands if your time is limited. Local airlines Air One, Alitalia and Meridiana (for details see p296) operate flights out of Palermo and Trapani for Pantelleria and from Palermo for Lampedusa. All these flights cost from €40 one way.

Tickets can be bought at the airport or booked through any travel agency, including Sestante CIT and Centro Turistico Studentesco e Giovanile (CTS), details of which are given in the relevant regional chapters.

BICYCLE

Cycling can be a great way to see the countryside as well as get around busy town centres. There are no special road rules for cyclists. Helmets and lights are not compulsory but you would be wise to equip yourself with both. You cannot cycle on the autostrada. If you plan to bring your own bike, check with your airline for any additional costs. The bike will need to be disassembled and packed for the journey. Make sure you include a few tools, spare parts and a very solid bike lock.

Bikes can be taken very cheaply on trains for around €5, although only certain trains will take them. Fast trains (Intercity and Eurostar) will generally not accommodate them so they must be sent as registered luggage, which can take a few days. Bikes can be transported free on ferries to Sicily.

In the UK, **Cyclists' Touring Club** (☎ 08708 730 060; www.ctc.org.uk) can help you plan your

own bike tour or organise guided tours. Membership costs UK£32.

Bikes are available for hire in most towns and many places have both city and mountain bikes. Rental costs for a city bike start at €5 per day or €25 per week; a good mountain bike will cost around double the price. See Getting Around under the relevant cities in this guide for more information.

BOAT

Sicily's offshore islands are served by *traghetti* (ferries) and *aliscafi* (hydrofoils). Services for the Aeolian Islands run from Milazzo; for the Egadi Islands from Trapani; for the Pelagic Islands from Porto Empedocle near Agrigento; and Ustica is served from Palermo and Trapani. See the Getting There & Away sections in the relevant regional chapters for details.

On overnight services (such as to the Pelagic Islands or Pantelleria), travellers can choose between cabin accommodation (men and women are usually segregated in 2nd class, although families will be kept together) or a *poltrona*, an airline-type armchair. Deck class is available only in summer and only on some ferries, so ask when making your booking. Restaurant, bar and recreation facilities are available on the larger ferries. All ferries carry vehicles.

The following companies serve Sicily's offshore islands:

Navigazione Generale Italiana (NGI; ☎ 090 928 34 15, www.ngi-spa.it in Italian) A ferry-only service operating out of Milazzo for the Aeolian Islands.

Siremar (☎ 091 749 31 11; www.siremar.it in Italian) Ferries and hydrofoils mainly to the Aeolian Islands from Milazzo. However, it also runs services to the Egadi Islands and Pantelleria from Trapani and to the Pelagic Islands from Porto Empedocle, as well as a useful service to Ustica from Palermo and a fast boat to Pantelleria from Mazara del Vallo (June to September only).

Ustica Lines (☎ 0923 2 22 00, for the Aeolian Islands only 090 924 91 99; www.usticalines.it in Italian) Ustica Lines specialises in a hydrofoil service. Its boats serve Ustica, Pantelleria and the Egadi Islands from its base in Trapani; the Aeolian Islands from Milazzo and Messina; and now the Pelagic Islands from Porto Empedocle.

BUS

Bus services within Sicily are provided by a variety of companies and vary from local routes linking small villages to intercity connections.

By utilising the local services, it is possible to get to just about any location on the island. Buses are usually a more reliable and faster way to get around if your destination is not on a main train line (trains tend to be cheaper on major routes).

It is usually possible to get bus timetables from local tourist offices. In larger cities, most of the main intercity bus companies have ticket offices or operate through agencies. In some smaller towns and villages, bus tickets are sold in bars – just ask for *biglietti per il pullman* – or on the bus. Note that in Sicily some minor bus routes are linked to when local markets are open: in rural areas this can often mean leaving incredibly early or finding yourself stranded after 2pm!

Major companies that run long-haul services include **Interbus** (☎ 091 616 90 39; www.interbus.it) and **SAIS Autolinee** (☎ 091 616 60 28; www.saisautolinee.it), both of which serve Naples and Rome. Interbus also owns Segesta. Although it is not usually necessary to make reservations on buses, do so in the high season for overnight or long-haul trips. Contact details and costs are listed throughout this book.

CAR & MOTORCYCLE

Roads are generally good throughout the island and there is a limited network of motorways (autostrade). The main west–east link is the A19, which extends from Palermo to Catania. The A18 runs along the Ionian Coast between Messina and Catania, while the A29d goes from Palermo to the western coast, linking the capital with Trapani and (through the western interior) Mazara del Vallo along the A29. The A20 runs from Palermo to Messina; at the time of writing it was still incomplete between Cefalù and Sant'Agata di Militello and it is doubtful it will be finished any time soon. Drivers usually travel at very high speeds in the fast (left-hand) lane on motorways, so use that lane only to pass other cars.

There's a cheap toll to use the A18 and A20 motorways. See p190 for costs.

To really explore the island, travellers will need to use the system of state and provincial roads. *Strade statali* (state roads) are single-lane highways and are toll free; they are represented on maps as 'S' or 'SS'. *Strade provinciali* (provincial roads) are sometimes little more than country lanes, but provide access to some of the more beautiful scenery

and the many small towns and villages. They are represented as 'P' or 'SP' on maps.

Automobile Associations

The **Automobile Club Italiano** (ACI; www.aci.it in Italian) no longer offers free road-side assistance to tourists. Residents of the UK and Germany should organise assistance through their own national organisations, which will entitle them to use ACI's emergency assistance number (☎ 803 116) for a small fee. Without this entitlement, you'll pay a fee of €80 if you call ☎ 803 116.

If you are hiring a car from a reputable company, it will usually give you an emergency number of its own to call in the case of any breakdown.

Bringing Your Own Vehicle

To drive your own vehicle in Sicily you need an International Insurance Certificate, also known as a Carta Verde (Green Card); your car insurance company will issue this. You should also always carry proof of ownership of a private vehicle.

Every vehicle travelling across an international border should display a national-ity plate of its country of registration. A warning triangle (to be used in the event of a breakdown) is compulsory throughout Europe. A first-aid kit, a spare-bulb kit and a fire extinguisher are also recommended.

Driving Licence

EU member states' driving licences are recognised in Sicily. If you hold a licence from another country, you should obtain an International Driving Permit (IDP) too. Your national automobile association can issue this and it is valid for 12 months.

Fuel

The cost of fuel (petrol) in Sicily is very high – €1.35 for a litre at the time of writing. Petrol is called *benzina*, unleaded petrol is *benzina senza piombo* and diesel is *gasolio*. There are plenty of petrol stations in and around towns and on national road networks.

Hire

You have to be aged 21 or more (23 or more for some companies) to hire a car in Sicily. However, it is cheaper to arrange car rental before leaving your own country, for instance

through some sort of fly/drive deal. The most competitive multinational and national car-rental agencies are as follows:

Auto Europe (☎ 1888 223 55 55; www.autoeurope.com)

Autos Abroad (☎ 44 8700 66 77 88; www.autosabroad.com)

Avis (☎ 02 754 19 761; www.avis.com)

Budget (☎ 1800 472 33 25; www.budget.com)

Europcar (☎ 06 481 71 62; www.europcar.com)

Hertz (☎ 199 11 22 11; www.hertz.com)

Maggiore (☎ 06 229 15 30; www.maggiore.it in Italian)

No matter which company you hire your car from, make sure you understand what is included in the price (unlimited kilometres, tax, insurance, collision-damage waiver and so on) and what your liabilities are. It is also a very good idea to get fully comprehensive insurance to cover any untoward bumps or scrapes that are quite likely to happen.

You'll have no trouble hiring a small motorcycle such as a scooter (Vespa). There are numerous rental agencies in the cities (where you'll also usually be able to hire larger motorcycles for touring) and at tourist destinations such as seaside resorts. The average cost for a 50cc scooter (for one person) is around €25 per day or €130 per week.

Most agencies will not rent motorcycles to people aged under 18. Note that many places require a sizable deposit and that you could be responsible for reimbursing part of the cost of the bike if it is stolen.

Insurance

Third-party motor insurance is a minimum requirement in Italy. The Green Card, an internationally recognised proof of insurance obtainable from your insurer, is mandatory. Ask your insurer for a European Accident Statement form, which can simplify matters in the event of an accident. A European breakdown assistance policy is a good investment. In Italy, assistance can be obtained through the **Automobile Club Italiano** (ACI; ☎ 24hr info line 15 18, 06 49 11 15; www.aci.it in Italian).

Road Rules

In Sicily, as throughout continental Europe, you drive on the right-hand side of the road and overtake on the left. Unless otherwise indicated, you must always give way to cars entering an intersection from the right. It is compulsory to wear seat belts if fitted

ROAD DISTANCES (KM)

Agrigento	---																			
Caltanissetta	58	---																		
Catania	165	112	---																	
Cefalù	133	100	180	---																
Enna	91	33	83	109	---															
Erice	182	231	318	176	264	---														
Marsala	132	195	305	181	228	48	---													
Mazara del Vallo	91	190	324	211	223	67	19	---												
Messina	258	204	95	159	180	352	337	387	---											
Palermo	126	133	208	73	135	112	121	126	226	---										
Ragusa	131	126	101	218	130	308	256	215	201	250	---									
Sciacca	57	115	240	215	148	125	109	64	340	183	181	---								
Syracuse	218	159	60	231	131	378	350	309	160	260	78	275	---							
Taormina	214	162	47	206	135	365	355	321	53	255	157	287	115	---						
Trapani	157	225	312	168	234	6	31	69	324	104	284	127	355	359	---					
Agrigento																				
Caltanissetta																				
Catania																				
Cefalù																				
Enna																				
Erice																				
Marsala																				
Mazara del Vallo																				
Messina																				
Palermo																				
Ragusa																				
Sciacca																				
Syracuse																				
Taormina																				
Trapani																				

to the car. If you are caught not wearing a seat belt, you will be required to pay an on-the-spot fine.

Random breath tests now take place in Sicily. If you're involved in an accident while under the influence of alcohol, the penalties can be severe. The blood-alcohol limit is 0.05%.

The autostrade speed limits are 130km/h and on all nonurban highways 110km/h. In built-up areas the limit is 50km/h. Speeding fines follow EU standards and are proportionate with the number of kilometres that you are caught driving over the speed limit. Fines can cost up to €260.

You don't need a licence to ride a scooter under 50cc but you must be aged 14 or more. You can't carry passengers or ride on motorways, and the speed limit is 40km/h. To ride a motorcycle or scooter up to 125cc, you must be aged 16 or more and have a licence (a car licence will do). Helmets are compulsory. For motorcycles over 125cc you need a motorcycle licence.

On a motorcycle you will be able to enter restricted-traffic areas in Sicilian cities with-

out any problems and traffic police generally turn a blind eye to motorcycles parked on footpaths. There is no lights-on requirement for motorcycles during the day.

HITCHING

In Sicily it can be pretty tough to get a lift, as most motorists tend to be mistrustful of anyone standing on the side of the road and very few, if any, Sicilians (or Italians) would do it. It is illegal to hitch on Sicily's motorways but quite acceptable to stand near the entrance to the tollbooths. Never hitch where drivers can't stop in good time or where you might cause an obstruction. Look presentable, carry as little luggage as possible and hold a sign in Italian indicating your destination.

LOCAL TRANSPORT

All the major cities and towns have good local (bus) transport systems; Palermo and Catania also have a metro.

Bus & Metro

City bus services are usually frequent and reliable. You must always purchase bus tickets

before you board the bus and validate them once on board. It is common practice among Sicilians and many tourists to ride on the buses for free by not validating tickets. However, if you get caught with a nonvalidated ticket, you can be fined on the spot (up to €25 in Palermo and Catania). Having said that, officers are very lenient towards tourists.

The metro systems in Palermo and Catania are limited and don't service destinations of real interest to most visitors. You must buy tickets and validate them before getting on the train. You can get a map of the networks from tourist offices in Palermo and Catania.

You can buy tickets at most *tabaccherie* (tobacconists), at many newsstands and at ticket booths. Tickets generally cost €0.80 to €1 for two hours.

Taxi

Taxis are very expensive in Sicily. If you need a taxi, you can usually find one in taxi ranks at train and bus stations or you can telephone taxi companies direct (numbers are listed in the Getting Around sections of the major cities). However, if you book a taxi by phone, you will be charged for the trip the driver makes to reach you. Taxis will stop when hailed on the street.

Rates vary from city to city. A good indication of the average is Palermo, where the minimum charge is €3.50. After that it's €2.20 for the first kilometre, then €0.70 per kilometre thereafter. There is a surcharge of €1.70 from 10pm to 6am. All this usually means you will be paying about €12 for the shortest of taxi rides.

TRAIN

Travelling by train in Sicily may be slow, but it is simple, cheap and generally efficient. **Trenitalia** (☎ 848 88 80 88; www.trenitalia.it), previously the Ferrovie dello Stato (FS; the State Railway Service) is the partially privatised state train system that runs most of the services in Sicily.

There are several types of train. Intercity (IC) trains are the fastest, stopping only at major stations. The *diretto*, *interregionale* and *espresso* stop at all but the most minor stations, while the *regionale* (also called *locale*) is the slowest of all, halting at every stop on the line. Eurostar Italia (ES) does not run in Sicily. There is one private line in Sicily, the **Ferrovía Circumetnea** (☎ 095 54 12 50; www.circumetnea.it), which does a circuit of Mt Etna.

Travellers should note that all tickets must be validated *before* you board your train. Simply punch them in the yellow machines installed at the entrance to all train platforms. If you don't validate them you risk a fine. This rule does not apply to tickets purchased outside Italy.

There are left-luggage facilities or lockers at most of the bigger train stations. They are usually open 24 hours or close only for a few hours after midnight. Charges are from €3.10 per day per piece of luggage.

Costs & Classes

Apart from the standard division between 1st and 2nd class on the faster trains (generally you can get only 2nd-class seats on *locali* and *regionali*), you usually have to pay a supplement for travelling on the fast Intercity trains.

As with tickets, the price of the supplement is in part calculated according to the length of the journey and is usually between 20% and 25% of the ticket price. You can pay the supplement separately from the ticket. If you don't buy a supplement before you board you can get one from the conductor but it will cost you closer to 40% of the ticket price.

Sample prices for one-way train fares are as follows (return fares are generally double).

From	To	1st/2nd class
Catania	Agrigento	€12
Catania	Syracuse	€5
Messina	Catania	€10.50/8.20
Palermo	Agrigento	€7
Palermo	Catania	€14.50/12
Palermo	Messina	€18/14.50

Reservations

It is recommended that you book train tickets for long trips, particularly if you're travelling on weekends or during holiday periods (see p285), otherwise you could find yourself standing in the corridor for the entire journey.

In 1st class, booking is often mandatory (and free). Where it is optional (which is more often, but not always, the case in 2nd class), you may pay a €2.60 booking fee. Tickets can be booked at the ticket booths at the station or at most travel agencies.

Train Passes

It is not worth buying a rail pass if you are only travelling in Sicily, since train fares are reasonably cheap and the network isn't big enough to justify the expense.

Health

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BEFORE YOU GO

While Italy has excellent health care, prevention is the key to staying healthy while abroad. A little planning before departure, particularly for pre-existing conditions, will save trouble later. Bring medications in their original, clearly labelled containers. A signed and dated letter from your physician describing your medical conditions and medications, including generic names, is also a good idea. If carrying syringes or needles, be sure to have a physician's letter documenting their medical necessity. If you are embarking on a long trip, make sure your teeth are OK (dental treatment is particularly expensive in Italy) and take your optical prescription with you.

INSURANCE

If you're an EU citizen, an EHIC (European Health Insurance Card) is available online (UK citizens see www.ehic.org.uk) or from health centres in your country, and covers you for most medical care but not emergency repatriation home or nonemergencies. Citizens from countries outside the EU should find out if there is a reciprocal arrangement for free medical care between their country and Italy. If you do need health insurance, make sure you get a policy that covers you for the worst possible scenario, such as an accident

requiring an emergency flight home. Find out in advance if your insurance plan will make payments directly to providers or reimburse you later for health expenditures abroad.

RECOMMENDED VACCINATIONS

No jabs are required to travel to Sicily. The WHO, however, recommends that all travellers be covered for diphtheria, tetanus, measles, mumps, rubella and polio, as well as hepatitis B.

INTERNET RESOURCES

Age Concern (www.ageconcern.org.uk) Advice on travel for the elderly.

Fit for Travel (www.fitfortravel.scot.nhs.uk) General travel advice for the layperson.

International Travel and Health (www.who.int/ith) This publication by the WHO is revised annually.

Marie Stopes International (www.mariestopes.org.uk) Information on women's health and contraception.

MDtravelhealth.com (www.mdtravelhealth.com) Travel health recommendations for every country; updated daily.

IN TRANSIT

DEEP VEIN THROMBOSIS (DVT)

Blood clots may form in the legs during plane flights, chiefly because of prolonged immobility (the longer the flight, the greater the risk). The chief symptom of DVT is swelling or pain of the foot, ankle or calf, usually, but not always, on just one side. When a blood clot travels to the lungs, it may cause chest pain and breathing difficulties. Travellers with any of these symptoms should immediately seek medical attention as the condition can be lethal. To prevent the development of DVT on long flights, you should walk about the cabin, exercise the leg muscles while sitting, drink plenty of fluids and avoid alcohol and tobacco.

JET LAG

To minimise jet lag, try drinking plenty of nonalcoholic fluids and eating light meals. Upon arrival, get exposure to natural sunlight and adjust your schedule (for meals, sleep etc) to local time as soon as possible.

IN SICILY

AVAILABILITY & COST OF HEALTH CARE

Excellent health care is readily available throughout Italy, but standards can vary. Pharmacists sell over-the-counter medication for minor illnesses and give valuable advice. They can also advise when more specialised help is required and point you in the right direction. In major cities you are likely to find English-speaking doctors or a translator service.

If you need an ambulance anywhere in Sicily call ☎ 118. For emergency treatment, go straight to the *pronto soccorso* (casualty) section of a public hospital, where you can also get emergency dental treatment.

TRAVELLER'S DIARRHOEA

If you develop diarrhoea, be sure to drink plenty of fluids, preferably in the form of an oral rehydration solution such as Dioralyte. If diarrhoea is bloody, persists for more than 72 hours, or is accompanied by fever, shaking, chills or severe abdominal pain, you should seek medical attention.

ENVIRONMENTAL HAZARDS Bites, Stings & Insect-Borne Diseases

Italian beaches are occasionally inundated with jellyfish whose stings are painful but not dangerous. Dousing the affected area in vinegar will de-activate any stingers that have not fired. Calamine lotion, antihistamines and analgesics may reduce the reaction and relieve pain.

Italy's only dangerous snake, the viper, is found throughout the country except on Sardinia. To minimise the possibilities of being bitten, always wear boots, socks and long trousers when walking through undergrowth where snakes may be present. Don't put your hands into holes and crevices, and be careful when collecting firewood. Viper bites do not cause instantaneous death and an antivenin is widely available in pharmacies. Keep the victim calm and still, wrap the bitten limb tightly, as you would for a sprained ankle, and attach a splint to immobilise it. Seek medical help, if possible with the dead snake for identification. Don't attempt to catch the snake if there is a possibility of being bitten again. Tourniquets and sucking out the poison have now been comprehensively discredited.

Always check for ticks all over your body if you have been walking through a potentially tick-infested area, as they can cause skin infections and other more serious diseases such as Lyme disease and tick-borne encephalitis. If you find a tick attached to your body, press down around the tick's head with tweezers, grab the head and gently pull upwards. Avoid pulling the rear of the body as this may squeeze the tick's gut contents through the attached mouth parts into the skin, increasing the risk of infection and disease. Lyme disease begins with the spreading of a rash at the site of the bite, accompanied by fever, headache, extreme fatigue, aching joints and muscles, and severe neck stiffness. If untreated, symptoms usually disappear but disorders of the nervous system, heart and joints can develop later. Treatment works best early in the illness – medical help should be sought. Symptoms of tick-borne encephalitis include blotches around the bite, which is sometimes pale in the middle, and headaches, stiffness and other flulike symptoms, as well as extreme tiredness, appearing a week or two after the bite. Again, medical help must be sought.

Leishmaniasis is a group of parasitic diseases transmitted by sandflies and found in coastal parts of Italy. Cutaneous leishmaniasis affects the skin tissue and causes ulceration and disfigurement; visceral leishmaniasis affects the internal organs. Avoiding sandfly bites by covering up and using insect repellent is the best precaution against this disease.

Heatstroke

Heatstroke occurs following excessive fluid loss when there is inadequate replacement of fluids and salt. Symptoms of the illness include headache, dizziness and tiredness. Dehydration is already happening by the time that you feel thirsty – aim to drink sufficient water to produce pale, diluted urine. To treat heatstroke, drink water and/or fruit juice, and cool the body with cold water and fans.

Hypothermia

When the body loses heat faster than it can produce it, hypothermia can set in. Proper preparation, however, will reduce the risks of getting it. Even on a hot day in the mountains,

the weather can change, so carry waterproof garments, warm layers and a hat, and inform others of the route you will be taking. Hypothermia starts with shivering, loss of judgment and clumsiness. Unless rewarming occurs, the sufferer's condition deteriorates into apathy, confusion and coma. Stop further heat loss by seeking shelter, warm dry clothing, hot sweet drinks and shared bodily warmth.

TRAVELLING WITH CHILDREN

Make sure children are up to date with routine vaccinations and discuss possible travel vaccines well before departure as some vaccines are not suitable for children under one year of age. Lonely Planet's *Travel with Children* includes travel health advice for younger children.

WOMEN'S HEALTH

Emotional stress, exhaustion and travelling through different time zones can all contribute to an upset in the menstrual pattern.

If using oral contraceptives, remember that some antibiotics, diarrhoea and vomiting can stop the pill from working. Time zones, gastrointestinal upsets and antibiotics do not affect injectable contraception.

Travelling during pregnancy is usually possible but always consult your doctor before planning your trip. The most risky times for travel are during the first 12 weeks of pregnancy and after 30 weeks.

SEXUAL HEALTH

Condoms are readily available but emergency contraception is not, so take the necessary precautions.

Language

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SICILIANO OR ITALIANO?

Although standard Italian may be Sicily's official language and is spoken almost universally on the island, most locals (more than 70%) speak Sicilian among themselves. Sicilian is referred to as an Italian dialect, but is sufficiently different as to warrant being termed a language in its own right; even if you're fluent in Italian, you'll find it almost impossible to understand. Luckily, Sicilians will readily revert to Italian when speaking to anyone from the mainland or abroad, although the occasional Sicilian word will still creep in.

Some Sicilians have studied English at school, but English speakers are generally hard to find beyond the more popular tourist resorts, where staff at hotels, restaurants and tourist offices usually have a basic grasp of the language. Any attempt on your part to get to grips with Italian will greatly enhance your stay on the island, no matter how many mistakes you make.

For information on food and dining, which includes useful words and phrases in Italian, see p45. If you're interested in studying Italian while in Sicily, see p283. If

you'd like a more comprehensive guide to the language, get hold of a copy of Lonely Planet's *Italian Phrasebook*.

ITALIAN

Italian is a Romance language related to French, Spanish, Portuguese and Romanian, all of which are directly descended from Latin. The Romance languages belong to the Indo-European group of languages, which includes English. Indeed, as English and Italian share common roots in Latin, you will recognise many Italian words.

Sicily has a strange relationship with the Italian language. Although it is commonly accepted that modern standard Italian developed from the Tuscan dialect, Sicilians rightly assert that the first literature in the 'common vernacular' (Italian, as opposed to Latin or Greek) was produced in Sicily (at the court of Frederick I in the 13th century). Exponents of the Sicilian school of poetry, mostly court officials-turned-poets, were a source of inspiration to many of the early Tuscan writers. After the Middle Ages, works by prestigious writers from the mainland's north, such as Dante, Petrarch and Boccaccio, contributed to the steady elevation of Tuscan as the dominant written vernacular. History shows that Tuscany's status as the political, cultural and financial power base of the nation ensured that the region's dialect would ultimately be installed as the national tongue.

The Italian of today is something of a composite. What you hear on the radio and TV, in educated discourse and indeed in the everyday language of many people is the result of centuries of cross-fertilisation between the dialects, greatly accelerated in the postwar decades by the modern media.

BE POLITE!

If you have more than the most fundamental grasp of the Italian language, you need to be aware that many Sicilians still expect to be addressed in the third person formal (*lei* instead of *tu*). Also, it is not considered polite to use the informal greeting *ciao* when

SPEAKING IN TONGUES

Along with all Italian dialects, Sicilian belongs to the Italo-Romance language group. However, centuries of foreign occupation have exposed it to linguistic influences from many and varied sources, including Albanian, Arabic, French, Greek, Norman, Spanish and northern Italian dialects.

The grammatical structure of Sicilian is somewhat different from standard Italian: there's no single verb conjugation for the future tense – instead, Sicilian uses a form akin to 'I have (to do something)'; and the simple past (a literary form only in standard Italian) is used for the past perfect tense in everyday speech. Pronunciation is difficult, and it is commonly claimed that only a Sicilian can pronounce the double 'd' that regularly substitutes the standard Italian double 'l' – the classic Sicilian protestation of sincerity, *La bella madre e veramente* (By the beautiful mother and truly), becomes *La bedda madre e beramante*.

Sicilian is also coloured with a rich range of metaphors and proverbs, some of which date back to the days of Arabic occupation. The English 'All things in moderation' in Sicilian reads *Nun essiri duci sinno ti mancianu, nun essiri amaru sinno ti futanu* (Don't be too sweet lest you be eaten, don't be too sour lest you be shunned). The Sicilian way to say 'Make the most of what you've got' is *Camina chi pantofuli fino a quannu nun hai i scarpì* (Walk in your slippers until you find your shoes).

Sicilians are also known for their epithets, which are used as insults of varying strength in a range of situations. If you want to call someone crazy, you refer to them as *stunato*; if there's an excess of drink involved, it's most likely that they're *scribbi di patata* – literally, taken over by the 'spirit of the potato', a reference to the distillation of some alcoholic drinks from that vegetable. If you want to curse someone, you refer to them as having *u mal'occhio* (the evil eye), and if you really want to slander a Sicilian man, refer to him as *cornuto* (with horns), meaning that he is a cuckold. While not an exclusively Sicilian insult, it suggests a loss of honour that is about as ignominious as it gets on the island – so be careful at whom you direct it!

addressing strangers unless they use it first; it's better to say *buongiorno* (or *buona sera*, as the case may be) and *arrivederci* (or the more polite form, *arrivederla*). This is true of most of Italy, but in Sicily inappropriate use of the informal can be considered gravely impolite, and in some cases downright insulting – especially when talking to an older person. You'll find that the younger generation are less likely to be troubled by this, but we have used the formal address for most of the phrases in this guide. Where the informal mode is included, it is indicated by 'inf' in brackets.

GENDER

Italian nouns have both masculine and feminine forms (usually ending in '-o' and '-a' respectively), and adjectives change according to the gender of the noun they modify. Where both gender forms are given in this guide, they are separated by a slash, the masculine form first.

PRONUNCIATION

Surprisingly – especially after you hear the near-incomprehensible dialect – a Sicilian speaker's pronunciation of standard Italian

is refreshingly clear and easy to understand, even if you have only a limited command of the language. Vowels are pronounced more openly than in mainland Italy, and there's a tendency to emphasise consonants, so that a word like *buongiorno* (good day) sounds something like 'bawn-jaw-rrno'. The French influence also means that in certain parts of Sicily, particularly the west, the 'r' is not as rolled as it is in standard Italian: locals pronounce 'Trapani' the way an English-speaker would, without rolling the 'r'.

Setting aside the vagaries of Sicilian pronunciation and dialect, Italian is not difficult to pronounce once you learn a few easy rules. Although some of the more clipped vowels, and stress on double letters, require a bit of practice for English speakers, it's easy enough to make yourself understood.

Vowels

- a** as in 'art', eg *caro* (dear); sometimes short, eg *amico/a* (friend)
- e** short, as in 'let', eg *mettere* (to put); long, as in 'there', eg *mela* (apple)
- i** short, as in 'it', eg *inizio* (start); long, as in 'marine', eg *vino* (wine)

- o** short, as in 'dot', eg *donna* (woman);
long, as in 'port', eg *ora* (hour)
- u** as the 'oo' in 'book', eg *puro* (pure)

Consonants

The pronunciation of many Italian consonants is similar to that of their English counterparts. Pronunciation of some consonants depends on certain rules:

- c** as the 'k' in 'kit' before **a**, **o** and **u**; as the 'ch' in 'choose' before **e** and **i**
- ch** as the 'k' in 'kit'
- g** as the 'g' in 'get' before **a**, **o**, **u** and **h**; as the 'j' in 'jet' before **e** and **i**
- gli** as the 'lli' in 'million'
- gn** as the 'ny' in 'canyon'
- h** always silent
- r** a rolled 'rr' sound
- sc** as the 'sh' in 'sheep' before **e** and **i**; as 'sk' before **a**, **o**, **u** and **h**
- z** as the 'ts' in 'lights', except at the beginning of a word, when it's as the 'ds' in 'suds'

Note that when **ci**, **gi** and **sci** are followed by **a**, **o** or **u**, the 'i' is not pronounced unless the accent falls on the 'i'. Thus the name 'Giovanni' is pronounced *jo-va-nee*, not 'jee-o-va-nee'.

A double consonant is pronounced as a longer, more forceful sound than a single consonant.

Word Stress

Stress is indicated in our pronunciation guide by italics. Word stress generally falls on the second-last syllable, as in *spa-ghet-ti*, but when a word has an accent, the stress falls on that syllable, as in *cit-tà* (city).

ACCOMMODATION

I'm looking for a ...	<i>Cerco ...</i>	<i>cher-ko ...</i>
guesthouse	<i>una pensione</i>	<i>oo-na pen-syo-ne</i>
hotel	<i>un albergo</i>	<i>oon al-ber-go</i>
youth hostel	<i>un ostello per la gioventù</i>	<i>oon os-te-lo per la jo-ven-too</i>

Where is a cheap hotel?

Dov'è un albergo a buon prezzo?
do-ve oon al-ber-go a bwon pre-tso

What is the address?

Qual'è l'indirizzo?
kwa-le leen-dee-ree-tso

MAKING A RESERVATION

(for inclusion in letters, faxes and emails)

To ...	<i>A ...</i>
From ...	<i>Da ...</i>
Date	<i>Data</i>
I'd like to book ...	<i>Vorrei prenotare ... (see the list on this page for bed/room options)</i>
in the name of ...	<i>nel nome di ...</i>
for the night/s of ...	<i>per la/le notte/i di ...</i>
credit card ...	<i>carta di credito ...</i>
number	<i>numero</i>
expiry date	<i>data di scadenza</i>

Please confirm availability and price. *Vi prego di confermare disponibilità e prezzo.*

Could you write the address, please?

Può scrivere l'indirizzo, per favore?
pwo skree-ve-re leen-dee-ree-tso per fa-vo-re

Do you have any rooms available?

Avete camere libere?
a-ve-te ka-me-re lee-be-re

May I see it?

Posso vederla?
po-so ve-der-la

Where is the bathroom?

Dov'è il bagno?
do-ve eel ba-nyo

I'm/We're leaving today.

Parto/Partiamo oggi.
par-to/par-tya-mo o-jee

I'd like (a) ...	<i>Vorrei ...</i>	<i>vo-ray ...</i>
bed	<i>un letto</i>	<i>oon le-to</i>
single room	<i>una camera singola</i>	<i>oo-na ka-me-ra seen-go-la</i>
double room	<i>una camera matrimoniale</i>	<i>oo-na ka-me-ra ma-tree-mo-nya-le</i>
room with two beds	<i>una camera doppia</i>	<i>oo-na ka-me-ra do-pya</i>
room with a bathroom	<i>una camera con bagno</i>	<i>oo-na ka-me-ra kon ba-nyo</i>
to share a dorm	<i>un letto in dormitorio</i>	<i>oon le-to een dor-mee-to-ryo</i>

How much is it ...? *Quanto costa ...?* *kwan-to ko-sta ...*

per night	<i>per la notte</i>	<i>per la no-te</i>
per person	<i>per persona</i>	<i>per per-so-na</i>

CONVERSATION & ESSENTIALS

Hello.	<i>Buon giorno.</i>	<i>bwon jor-no</i>
	<i>Ciao. (inf)</i>	<i>chow</i>
Goodbye.	<i>Arrivederci.</i>	<i>a-ree-ve-der-chee</i>
	<i>Ciao. (inf)</i>	<i>chow</i>
Yes.	<i>Sì.</i>	<i>see</i>
No.	<i>No.</i>	<i>no</i>
Please.	<i>Per favore/Per piacere.</i>	<i>per fa-vo-re per pya-chay-re</i>
Thank you.	<i>Grazie.</i>	<i>gra-tsyé</i>
That's fine/You're welcome.	<i>Prego.</i>	<i>pre-go</i>
Excuse me.	<i>Mi scusi.</i>	<i>mee skoo-zee</i>
I'm sorry.	<i>Mi scusi/Mi perdoni.</i>	<i>mee skoo-zee/mee per-do-nee</i>

What's your name?

Come si chiama? *ko-me see kya-ma*
Come ti chiami? (inf) *ko-me tee kya-mee*

My name is ...

Mi chiamo ... *mee kya-mo ...*

Where are you from?

Da dove viene? *da do-ve vye-ne*
Di dove sei? (inf) *dee do-ve se-ee*

I'm from ...

Vengo da ... *ven-go da ...*

I (don't) like ...

(Non) Mi piace ... *(non) mee pya-che ...*

Just a minute.

Un momento. *oon mo-men-to*

DIRECTIONS

Where is ...?

Dov'è ...? *do-ve ...*

Go straight ahead.

Si va sempre dritto. *see va sem-pre dee-ree-to*
Vai sempre dritto. (inf) *va-ee sem-pre dee-ree-to*

Turn left.

Giri a sinistra. *jee-ree a see-nee-stra*

Turn right.

Giri a destra. *jee-ree a de-stra*

at the next corner

al prossimo angolo *al pro-see-mo an-go-lo*

at the traffic lights

al semaforo *al se-ma-fo-ro*

behind

<i>dietro</i>	<i>dye-tro</i>
<i>davanti</i>	<i>da-van-tee</i>
<i>lontano (da)</i>	<i>lon-ta-no (da)</i>
<i>vicino (di)</i>	<i>vee-chee-no (dee)</i>
<i>di fronte a</i>	<i>dee fron-te a</i>
<i>la spiaggia</i>	<i>la spya-ja</i>
<i>il ponte</i>	<i>eel pon-te</i>
<i>il castello</i>	<i>eel kas-te-lo</i>

SIGNS

Ingresso/Entrata	<i>Entrance</i>
Uscita	<i>Exit</i>
Informazione	<i>Information</i>
Aperto	<i>Open</i>
Chiuso	<i>Closed</i>
Proibito/Vietato	<i>Prohibited</i>
Camere Libere	<i>Rooms Available</i>
Completo	<i>Full/No Vacancies</i>
Polizia/Carabinieri	<i>Police</i>
Questura	<i>Police Station</i>
Gabinetti/Bagni	<i>Toilets</i>
Uomini	<i>Men</i>
Donne	<i>Women</i>

cathedral	<i>il duomo</i>	<i>eel dwo-mo</i>
island	<i>l'isola</i>	<i>lee-so-la</i>
(main) square	<i>la piazza (principale)</i>	<i>la pya-tsa (preen-chee-pa-le)</i>
market	<i>il mercato</i>	<i>eel mer-ka-to</i>
old city	<i>il centro storico</i>	<i>eel chen-tro sto-ree-ko</i>
palace	<i>il palazzo</i>	<i>eel pa-la-tso</i>
ruins	<i>le rovine</i>	<i>le ro-vee-ne</i>
sea	<i>il mare</i>	<i>eel ma-re</i>
tower	<i>la torre</i>	<i>la to-re</i>

HEALTH

I'm ill. *Mi sento male.* *mee sen-to ma-le*
It hurts here. *Mi fa male qui.* *mee fa ma-le kwee*

I'm ... *Sono ...* *so-no ...*
asthmatic *asmatico/a* *az-ma-tee-ko/a*
diabetic *diabetico/a* *dee-a-be-tee-ko/a*
epileptic *epilettico/a* *e-pee-le-tee-ko/a*

I'm allergic ... *Sono allergico/a ...* *so-no a-ler-jee-ko/a ...*
to antibiotics *agli antibiotici* *a-lyee an-tee-bee-o-tee-chee*
to nuts *ai noci* *a-ee no-chee*
to peanuts *alle arachidi* *a-le a-ra-kee-dee*
to penicillin *alla penicillina* *a-la pe-nee-see-lee-na*

antiseptic *antisettico* *an-tee-se-tee-ko*
aspirin *aspirina* *as-pee-ree-na*
condoms *preservativi* *pre-zer-va-tee-vee*
contraceptive *contraccettivo* *kon-tra-che-tee-vo*
diarrhoea *diarrea* *dee-a-re-a*
medicine *medicina* *me-dee-chee-na*
sunblock cream *crema solare* *kre-ma so-la-re*
tampons *tamponi* *tam-po-nee*

EMERGENCIES**Help!***Aiuto!* a-yoo-to**There's been an accident!***C'è stato un incidente!* che *sta-to* oon een-chee-*den-te***I'm lost.***Mi sono perso/a.* mee so-no per-so/a**Go away!***Lasciami in pace!* la-sha-mi een pa-che
Vai via! (inf) va-ee vee-a

Call ...!	<i>Chiami ...!</i>	kee-ya-mee ...
a doctor	<i>un dottore/ un medico</i>	oon do-to-re/ oon me-dee-ko
the police	<i>la polizia</i>	la po-lee-tsee-ya

LANGUAGE DIFFICULTIES**Do you speak English?***Parla inglese?* par-la een-gle-ze**Does anyone here speak English?***C'è qualcuno che parla inglese?* che kwal-koo-no ke par-la een-gle-ze**How do you say ... in Italian?***Come si dice ... in italiano?* ko-me see dee-che ... een ee-ta-lya-no**What does ... mean?***Che vuol dire ...?* ke vvol dee-re ...**I understand.***Capisco.* ka-pee-sko**I don't understand.***Non capisco.* non ka-pee-sko**Please write it down.***Può scriverlo, per favore?* pwo skree-ver-lo per fa-vo-re**Can you show me (on the map)?***Può mostrarmelo (sulla pianta)?* pwo mo-strar-me-lo (soo-la pyan-ta)**NUMBERS**

0	<i>zero</i>	dze-ro
1	<i>uno</i>	oo-no
2	<i>due</i>	doo-e
3	<i>tre</i>	tre
4	<i>quattro</i>	kwa-tro
5	<i>cinque</i>	cheen-kwe
6	<i>sei</i>	say
7	<i>sette</i>	se-te
8	<i>otto</i>	o-to
9	<i>nove</i>	no-ve
10	<i>dieci</i>	dye-chee
11	<i>undici</i>	oon-dee-chee
12	<i>dodici</i>	do-dee-chee

13	<i>tredici</i>	tre-dee-chee
14	<i>quattordici</i>	kwa-tor-dee-chee
15	<i>quindici</i>	kween-dee-chee
16	<i>sedici</i>	se-dee-chee
17	<i>diciassette</i>	dee-cha-se-te
18	<i>diciotto</i>	dee-cho-to
19	<i>diciannove</i>	dee-cha-no-ve
20	<i>venti</i>	ven-tee
21	<i>ventuno</i>	ven-too-no
22	<i>ventidue</i>	ven-tee-doo-e
30	<i>trenta</i>	tren-ta
40	<i>quaranta</i>	kwa-ran-ta
50	<i>cinquanta</i>	cheen-kwan-ta
60	<i>sessanta</i>	se-san-ta
70	<i>settanta</i>	se-tan-ta
80	<i>ottanta</i>	o-tan-ta
90	<i>novanta</i>	no-van-ta
100	<i>cento</i>	chen-to
1000	<i>mille</i>	mee-le

PAPERWORK

name	<i>nome</i>	no-me
nationality	<i>nazionalità</i>	na-tsyo-na-lee-ta
date of birth	<i>data di nascita</i>	da-ta dee na-shee-ta
place of birth	<i>luogo di nascita</i>	lwo-go dee na-shee-ta
sex (gender)	<i> sesso</i>	se-so
passport	<i>passaporto</i>	pa-sa-por-to
visa	<i>visto</i>	vee-sto

QUESTION WORDS

Who?	<i>Chi?</i>	kee
What?	<i>Che?</i>	ke
When?	<i>Quando?</i>	kwan-do
Where?	<i>Dove?</i>	do-ve
How?	<i>Come?</i>	ko-me

SHOPPING & SERVICES

I'd like to buy ...	<i>Vorrei comprare ...</i>	vo-ray kom-pra-re ...
How much is it?	<i>Quanto costa?</i>	kwan-to ko-sta
I don't like it.	<i>Non mi piace.</i>	non mee pya-che
May I look at it?	<i>Posso dare un'occhiata?</i>	po-so da-re oo-no-ky-a-ta
I'm just looking.	<i>Sto solo guardando.</i>	sto so-lo gwar-dan-do
It's cheap.	<i>Non è caro/cara.</i>	non e ka-ro/ka-ra
It's too expensive.	<i>È troppo caro/a.</i>	e tro-po ka-ro/ka-ra
I'll take it.	<i>Lo/La compro.</i>	lo/la kom-pro

Do you accept credit cards?	<i>Accettate carte di credito?</i>	a-che-ta-te kar-te dee kre-dee-to
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I want to change ...

<i>Voglio cambiare ...</i>		
vo-lyo kam-bya-re ...		
money	<i>del denaro</i>	del de-na-ro
travellers cheques	<i>assegni dee viaggio</i>	a-se-nyee dee vee-a-jo

more	<i>più</i>	pyoo
less	<i>meno</i>	me-no
smaller	<i>più piccolo/a</i>	pyoo pee-ko-lo/la
bigger	<i>più grande</i>	pyoo gran-de

I'm looking for ...

a bank	<i>Cerco ... un banco</i>	cher-ko ... oon ban-ko
the church	<i>la chiesa</i>	la kye-za
the city centre	<i>il centro</i>	eel chen-tro
the ... embassy	<i>l'ambasciata di ...</i>	lam-ba-sha-ta dee ...
the market	<i>il mercato</i>	eel mer-ka-to
the museum	<i>il museo</i>	eel moo-ze-o
the post office	<i>l'ufficio postale</i>	loo fee-cho po-sta-le
a public toilet	<i>un gabinetto</i>	oon ga-bee-ne-to
the tourist office	<i>l'ufficio di turismo</i>	loo-fee-cho dee too-reez-mo

TIME & DATES

What time is it?	<i>Che ore sono?</i>	ke o-re so-no
It's (8 o'clock).	<i>Sono (le otto).</i>	so-no (le o-to)
When?	<i>Quando?</i>	kwan-do
in the morning	<i>di mattina</i>	dee ma-tee-na
in the afternoon	<i>di pomeriggio</i>	dee po-me-ree-jo
in the evening	<i>di sera</i>	dee se-ra
today	<i>oggi</i>	o-jee
tomorrow	<i>domani</i>	do-ma-nee
yesterday	<i>ieri</i>	ye-ree

Monday	<i>lunedì</i>	loo-ne-dee
Tuesday	<i>martedì</i>	mar-te-dee
Wednesday	<i>mercoledì</i>	mer-ko-le-dee
Thursday	<i>giovedì</i>	jo-ve-dee
Friday	<i>venerdì</i>	ve-ner-dee
Saturday	<i>sabato</i>	sa-ba-to
Sunday	<i>domenica</i>	do-me-nee-ka

January	<i>gennaio</i>	je-na-yo
February	<i>febbraio</i>	fe-bra-yo
March	<i>marzo</i>	mar-tso
April	<i>aprile</i>	a-pree-le
May	<i>maggio</i>	ma-jo
June	<i>giugno</i>	joo-nyo

July	<i>luglio</i>	loo-lyo
August	<i>agosto</i>	a-gos-to
September	<i>settembre</i>	se-tem-bre
October	<i>ottobre</i>	o-to-bre
November	<i>novembre</i>	no-ven-bre
December	<i>dicembre</i>	dee-chem-bre

TRANSPORT**Public Transport****What time does the ... leave/arrive?**

<i>A che ora parte/arriva ...?</i>		
a ke o-ra par-te/a-ree-va ...		
boat (city) bus	<i>la nave</i>	la na-ve
(intercity) bus	<i>l'autobus</i>	low-to-boos
(intercity) bus	<i>il pullman</i>	eel pool-man
plane	<i>l'aereo</i>	la-e-re-o
train	<i>il treno</i>	eel tre-no

I'd like a ... ticket.

<i>Vorrei un biglietto ...</i>		
vo-ray oon bee-lye-to ...		
one-way return	<i>di solo andata</i>	dee so-lo an-da-ta
	<i>di andata e ritorno</i>	dee an-da-ta e ree-toor-no
1st class	<i>di prima classe</i>	dee pree-ma kla-se
2nd class	<i>di seconda classe</i>	dee se-kon-da kla-se

I want to go to ...

<i>Voglio andare a ...</i>	vo-lyo an-da-re a ...
The train has been cancelled/delayed.	
<i>Il treno è soppresso/ in ritardo.</i>	eel tre-no e so-pre-so/ een ree-tar-do

the first	<i>il primo</i>	eel pree-mo
the last	<i>l'ultimo</i>	lool-tee-mo
platform (two)	<i>binario (due)</i>	bee-na-ryo (doo-e)
ticket office	<i>biglietteria</i>	bee-lye-te-ree-a
timetable	<i>orario</i>	o-ra-ryo
train station	<i>stazione</i>	sta-tsyo-ne

Private Transport

I'd like to hire a/an ...		
<i>Vorrei noleggiare ...</i>		
vo-ray no-le-ja-re ...		
car	<i>una macchina</i>	oo-na ma-kee-na
4WD	<i>un fuoristrada</i>	oon fwo-ree-stra-da
motorbike	<i>una moto</i>	oo-na mo-to
bicycle	<i>una bici(cletta)</i>	oo-na bee-chee-(kle-ta)
diesel	<i>gasolio/diesel</i>	ga-zo-lyo/dee-zel
petrol	<i>benzina</i>	ben-dzee-na

ROAD SIGNS

Dare la Precedenza	Give Way
Deviazione	Detour
Divieto di Accesso	No Entry
Divieto di Sorpasso	No Overtaking
Divieto di Sosta	No Parking
Entrata	Entrance
Passo Carrabile	Keep Clear
Pedaggio	Toll
Pericolo	Danger
Rallentare	Slow Down
Senso Unico	One Way
Uscita	Exit

Where's a service station?

Dov'è una stazione di servizio?
do-ve oo-na sta-tsyo-ne dee ser-vee-tsyo

Please fill it up.

Il pieno, per favore.
eel pye-no per fa-vo-re

I'd like (30) litres.

Vorrei (trenta) litri.
vo-ray (tren-ta) lee-tree

Is this the road to ...?

Questa strada porta a ...? kwe-sta stra-da por-ta a ...

(How long) Can I park here?

(Per quanto tempo) Posso parcheggiare qui?
(per kwan-to tem-po) po-so par-ke-ja-re kwee

Where do I pay?

Dove si paga?
do-ve see pa-ga

I need a mechanic.

Ho bisogno di un meccanico.
o bee-zo-nyo dee oon me-ka-nee-ko

The car/motorbike has broken down (at ...).

La macchina/moto si è guastata (a ...).
la ma-kee-na/mo-to see e gwas-ta-ta (a ...)

The car/motorbike won't start.

La macchina/moto non parte.
la ma-kee-na/mo-to non par-te

I have a flat tyre.

Ho una gomma bucata.
o oo-na go-ma boo-ka-ta

I've run out of petrol.

Ho esaurito la benzina.
o e-zo-ree-to la ben-dzee-na

I've had an accident.

Ho avuto un incidente.
o a-voo-to oon een-chee-den-te

TRAVEL WITH CHILDREN**Is there a/an ...?**

C'è ...?

che ...

I need a/an ...

Ho bisogno di ...
o bee-zo-nyo dee ...

baby change room

un bagno con fasciatoio
oon ba-nyo kon fa-sha-to-yo

car baby seat

un seggiolino per bambini
oon se-jo-lee-no per bam-bee-nee

child-minding service

un servizio di babysitter
oon ser-vee-tsyo dee be-bee-see-ter

children's menu

un menù per bambini
oon me-noo per bam-bee-nee

(disposable) nappies/diapers

pannolini (usa e getta)
pa-no-lee-nee-(oo-sa e je-ta)

formula (milk)

latte in polvere
la-te in pol-ve-re

(English-speaking) babysitter

un/una babysitter (che parli inglese)
oon/oo-na be-bee-see-ter (ke par-lee een-gle-ze)

highchair

un seggiolone
oon se-jo-lo-ne

potty

un vasino
oon va-zee-no

stroller

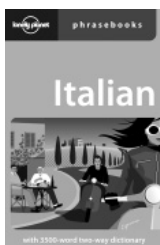
un passeggino
oon pa-se-jee-no

Do you mind if I breastfeed here?

Le dispiace se allatto il/la bimbo/a qui?
le dees-pya-che se a-la-to eel/la beam-bo/a kwee

Are children allowed?

I bambini sono ammessi?
ee bam-bee-nee so-no a-me-see



Also available from Lonely Planet:
Italian Phrasebook

Glossary

abbazia – abbey
affittacamere – rooms for rent
agora – marketplace, meeting place
agriturismo – farm stay
albergo – hotel
alimentari – grocery shop, delicatessen
anfiteatro – amphitheatre
ara – altar
arco – arch
autostrada – motorway, freeway

badia – abbey
baglio – manor house
bancomat – ATM
belvedere – panoramic viewpoint
benzina – petrol
borgo – ancient town or village; sometimes used to mean equivalent of *via*

cambio – money exchange
camera – room
campanile – bell tower
campeggio – camp site
campo – field
cappella – chapel
carabinieri – police with military and civil duties
Carnevale – carnival period between Epiphany and Lent
casa – house
case abusive – literally, ‘abusive houses’; illegal construction usually associated with the Mafia
cava – quarry
centro – centre
chiesa – church
CIT – Compagnia Italiana di Turismo; Italian national travel agency
città – town, city
dientelismo – system of political patronage
comune – equivalent to municipality or county; town or city council
contrada – district
corso – main street, avenue
cortile – courtyard
Cosa Nostra – Our Thing; alternative name for the Mafia
CTS – Centro Turistico Studentesco e Giovanile; Centre for Student & Youth Tourists

dammuso – low-level dwelling made of thick volcanic rock topped by a small whitewashed domed roof
diretto – direct; slow train
duomo – cathedral

enoteca – wine bar, wine shop

fangho – mud bath
faraglione – rock tower
ferrovia – train station
fiesta – festival
fiume – river
fontana – fountain
foro – forum
fossa – pit, hole
funivia – cable car

gola – gorge
golfo – gulf
grotta – cave
guardia medica – emergency doctor service

IC – Intercity; fast train
interregionale – long-distance train that stops frequently
isola – island

lago – lake
largo – small square
latomia – small quarry
lido – beach
locale – slow local train; also called *regionale*
locanda – inn, small hotel
lungomare – seafront road, promenade

mare – sea
mattanza – ritual slaughter of tuna
mercato – market
molo – wharf
monte – mountain
municipio – town hall, municipal offices
museo – museum

Natale – Christmas

oratorio – oratory
ospedale – hospital
osteria – inn

palazzo – palace, mansion
parco – park
Pasqua – Easter
passaggiata – evening stroll
pensione – small hotel
piazza – square

piazzale – large open square

ponte – bridge

porta – gate, door

porto – port

questura – police station

reale – royal

regionale – slow local train; also called *locale*

rifugio – mountain hut

riserva naturale – nature reserve

rocca – fortress; rock

sagra – festival, generally dedicated to one food item or theme

sala – room

santuario – sanctuary

scalinata – staircase, steps

spiaggia – beach

stazione – station

strada – street, road

teatro – theatre

tempio – temple

tonnara – tuna-processing plant

torre – tower

traghetto – ferry, boat

treno – train

via – street, road

viale – avenue

vicolo – alley, alleyway