

# La Dolce Vita Wine Tours

## DISCOVER SICILY



See why this ancient land is Italy's hottest new wine zone. You'll also explore Greek temples and Byzantine cathedrals, lunch at an olive oil mill, see ancient methods of sea salt production, rediscover marsala, and feast on Sicily's multicultural cuisine.

### 2014 dates

May 12-17 • September 21-27

### Price

\$3,095

Single supplement: \$350

### Meet

Palermo city center

### Depart

Palermo airport

### HIGHLIGHTS

- Visit new and historic wineries in the Alcamo and Marsala regions of Western Sicily
- Enjoy private, **sit-down tastings** at Planeta, Donnafugata, Ceuso, De Bartoli & more
- Lunch at a boutique **olive oil producer** and taste samples from different types of olive trees
- Take a private boat ride around the *saline*, where **sea salt** is made the ancient way, using windmills and evaporation ponds
- See a perfectly preserved **Greek temple and amphitheater** in the archaeological park of **Segesta**
- Be awestruck by **Byzantine mosaics** in the cathedrals of Palermo and Monreale

### DAY 1 – PALERMO, PAST AND PRESENT

Glittering Byzantine mosaics, ornate Baroque churches, domed Arab mosques, and grandiose Norman cathedrals stand shoulder-to-shoulder in Palermo, the richest city in the Mediterranean during the 1100s. DISCOVER SICILY starts with a **walking tour of Palermo**, which touches on this complex history as we stroll through major sites like the Cathedral and **Palatine Chapel**, a jewel-box of Byzantine mosaics and Arabic carvings. We'll also dip into the **Vucciria market**, an outdoor bazaar with strong Sicilian atmosphere and carts loaded with produce, fish, and spices. Lunch is at the historic **Focacceria S. Francesco**, which features Sicilian street food like *arancine* (meat and rice balls) and *panelle* (chickpea fritters), as well as classics like *Pasta alla Norma*, *caponata*, and, for dessert, sublime *cannoli*. Afterwards, we head east of the city to **Abbazia di Santa Anastasia**, a 12th C. abbey that was transformed into a winery in 1980. Tasting their elegant, award-winning *nero d'avola* and *cabernet*,

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we'll see that the monks knew how to pick ideal vineyard sites. Dinner is at a friendly restaurant near the hotel that specializes in traditional Sicilian dishes. *D • Mercure Palermo Centro*

### DAY 2 – BYZANTINE SPLENDOR

In 1166, the Norman King William II commissioned the **Cathedral of Monreale**. Built on a hill overlooking Palermo, it stood on the spot where the Virgin reputedly appeared to William and revealed where his father had buried a treasure. Coated with mosaics, gold leaf, and intarsia, it's one of the world's greatest masterpieces of Byzantine architecture. We then travel an hour south to **Alessandro di Camporeale**. Owner Antonino Alessandro or a family member will escort us through the boutique winery, which excels in syrah; their Kaid is a symphony of dark berries and spice. Lunch will be close by at an *agriturismo*. From here, we head to our second tasting, at **Planeta**. Founded in 1995, this is the winery that put Sicily on the map, first with their intense chardonnay and merlot, then with their succulent nero d'avola, berry-like cerasuolo, and floral fiano. From here, we'll drive across the stark rolling hills to **Alcamo**, a medieval town at the center of the Alcamo DOC wine zone, where we'll settle into our second, countryside hotel. For dinner on your own, we'll drive down to a marina in the fishing village of Castellamare del Golfo, where seafood eateries line the harbor. *B, D • Hotel Cala Marina*

### DAY 3 – GREEK TEMPLES & BOUTIQUE WINERIES

We begin the day at **Cusumano**. With eight vineyards spread across the island, they excel in both monovarietal and blended wines. We'll taste their excellent lineup at their new cellar in Partinico, situated in a 19th century *baglio*. Then we'll move on to the smaller boutique winery, **Ceuso**. Started in 1990 as a labor of love by the three Melia brothers – a farmer, an enologist, and an agronomist, Ceuso makes luscious, oak-aged blends of nero d'Avola and French grapes, inspired by mentor Giacomo Tachis (of Sassicaia fame). Our host will be Giuseppe Melia, who will show us around the 1860 *baglio* (a plantation's walled farmstead) that the brothers slowly restored. He'll give us a first-person account of the winery's rise to success. After lunch, we take a trip back in time. On Monte Barbaro, a thousand feet above the sea, lies the temple of **Segesta**. Once the political center of the indigenous Elymian and Ionian Greek people, this is now a vast archeological park. Here we'll see a beautifully preserved Greek Doric temple and, higher up, a Greek amphitheater with an unparalleled view of countryside and sea.

*B • Hotel Cala Marina*

### DAY 4 – SALT & OIL

This morning, we move down the coast towards Marsala. First stop is **Erice**, a stone village perched high atop a mountain that is famous for its churches and breathtaking view of the sea. Next is **lunch at an olive oil estate**, where, in a new trend, different types of olives are separately pressed to make diverse oils. We'll see the stone press and hear how extra virgin olive oil is made, then taste these various oils over lunch. Afterwards, we drive to the picturesque **saline, or sea-salt ponds**, where sea salt is made using an ageless technique of windmills and diked evaporation pools. We'll see a fascinating short film that shows the entire process, then take a **chartered boat** past the windmills

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towards the Isle of Mozia, a Phoenician settlement. We then check into our third hotel, in the historic center of Marsala, and have dinner in town. *B, L, D • Hotel Carmine*

### DAY 5 – MARSALA: THE TOWN AND THE WINE

In 1773, a *sirocco* storm forced British merchant John Woodhouse into **the port of Marsala**. Here he found the local *perpetuum* wine (named for its perpetual blending/aging process) to his liking. He sent a shipload back home, adding grape spirits to stabilize it for the long sea journey. It was a smashing success, and soon Marsala was the most famous wine of Italy. This morning is devoted to the town and the eponymous wine. First we'll head to the bustling outdoor market in the old city center, where locals shop for their fresh swordfish, prickly pear, Pantelleria capers, and other local goodies. Then it's on to **Marco de Bartoli**, where we'll discover the *real* marsala. Inheriting his mother's estate, this former race-car driver has done more than anyone to resurrect the reputation and quality of marsala, using techniques that harken back to the *perpetuum* aged wine that Woodhouse so loved. We'll taste his nutlike 10-year-old Vecchio Samperi, sweet *passito* wine from the windswept island of Pantelleria, and his dry table wines. Our second winery is **Donnafugata**. This family-run estate, a setting in the novel *Il Gattopardo (The Leopard)*, pioneered night harvests in Sicily and routinely wins coveted wine awards. Afterwards, there will be free time to stroll and shop in Marsala before our farewell dinner at the elegant Bottega del Carmine. *B, D • Hotel Carmine*

### DAY 6 – BUON VIAGGIO!

A shuttle to the Palermo airport and assistance with your travel plans. *B*

*Please bear in mind that this itinerary is made one year in advance, so details may change due to the winemakers' schedule (especially during harvest), hotel availability, weather, and other unforeseen circumstances. Any substitutions will be with a property of equivalent interest and value.*

#### What's included

- 5 nights accommodations (double room) in three hotels, with breakfast buffet
- 4 gourmet dinners (three courses with wine)
- 2 lunches (welcome lunch & olive farm)
- Guided walking tour of Palermo
- Entry to Segesta archaeological park
- Boat ride near the *saline* (sea-salt production)
- All wine tastings mentioned
- Shuttle to Palermo airport on final day

#### What's not included

- Air travel
- Train to meeting point (Palermo hotel)
- 1 dinner on your own and most lunches
- After-dinner drinks, or special wines at tastings that are not part of what is provided to the group
- Items of a personal nature