7. Sicily - Malta Itinerary

Siracusa, Ragusa, Agrigento, Caltanissetta, Trapani, Malta (via Ryanair from Trapani)

Day 1 Siracusa

- Arrival in the morning at Catania Airport and independent transfer to the chosen bike hotel in Siracusa.
- The afternoon will be spent in Siracusa, biking across the ancient streets of Ortigia (Siracusa city centre), to discover its cultural roots (as a result of the Greek domination then the Roman, Arab, Byzantine, Norman and Spanish) and its artistic roots (from the Greek ones to the more "modern" baroque development. This city has a cycle lane, which has been built on the old railway that skirted part of the Siracusa territory northwards. The lane is 7 km long. It starts from the monument to the fallen workers in Africa, then crosses the ancient tonnara of Santa Panagia and takes you to the area called Targia. You will have the opportunity to enjoy a spectacular view both of the city and the sea. Going southwards, along the coastline, you can spot the river Ciane and its natural oriented reserve, and the river Anapo (which in some points along its way, it goes under the subsoil and then come out). Afterwards you will go across the seaside areas of Arenella, Ognina and Fontane Bianche, where you can admire a splendid coastal panorama.
- Return to the chosen Bike Hotel and dinner.

Day 2 Siracusa-Noto-Ragusa

- Breakfast in hotel
- Leaving for Avola, an ancient maritime burg. Today Avola is famous all over the world thanks to its special almond quality. During the journey you may go for a hike in the Natural Oriented Reserve of Cavagrande del Cassibile with its exquisite small lakes. It is an area of almost 3,000 hectares where many animal and vegetable species live from centuries and it has a very long history. Once you enter Avola, whose city centre was rebuilt after the 1693 earthquake and its peculiarity is that of having a hexagonal map, you will be able to visit the "Dolmen Ciancio", a giant megalithic construction of Neolithic period. This structure has been considered unique in Sicily. It probably had a funerary function and it could have been used as a burial place for children. Another interesting site in the city is the Roman Villa near the mouth of torrent Margio. It was probably found during the II century AD. Once you cross Avola, you will go on in the direction of Calabernardo first and then you will go to Noto, considered as the Capital of Baroque in the area. You will
admire the urban map, the decorations and the buildings shapes. Some examples are the cathedral of San Nicolò and the city hall Palazzo Nicolaci.

- Arrival in Noto in the chosen bike hotel. Dinner

Day 3 Noto-Ragusa-Gela

- Breakfast in hotel

- You will go for a walk along the city high street and discover Noto's baroque (visit to the mother-church Chiesa Madre and the city hall palace Palazzo Nicolaci. Leaving by bike towards the Villa Romana del Tellaro, right outside Noto. Inside this Roman villa there are very important and beautiful mosaics dating back to the IV century AD. It is a 6,000 square meters (approx. 64,500 square feet) dwelling of a nester family. The floors were covered in extraordinary mosaics that because of their fine style are between the most important of their age and can easily compete against the more famous ones of Piazza Armerina (province of Enna). There is a 15 meters long way covered in mosaic representing ornaments and geometric figures, the floors of three rooms are entirely covered in mythological dance or hunt scenes formed by millions of chalky stone and earthenware tiles of natural very intense colours. These mosaics tell stories full of animals, flowers and faces that seem to be coming out from their drawing. After visiting Noto, you will be riding your bike southwards and arriving in the Natural Oriented Reserve of Vendicari, one of the most humid area of Europe. It is a very important area especially from a naturalistic point of view. This is both due to the presence of birds that choose it as a stand zone during the migratory flux, and to the presence of the typical Mediterranean brush in all its glory. The tower Torre Sveva and the old Antica Tonnara are still visible. Now you will go back on the road towards Marzamemi, an ancient maritime burg. It developed around a "tonnara" existing from the Arab domination in Sicily. Today Marzamemi is an important fishing town where ichthyic products are also processed. One of those is for example the famous red tuna fish eggs, which are traditionally processed through ancient desiccation procedures inherited from the Arab-Phoenician culture. Ride your bike, you are now leaving towards Portopalo di Capo Passero. You will be able to visit the famous "Tonnara" (where the fished fish was processed for commercialisation) inside the town. It is a splendid monument of industrial archaeology. Do not miss the Scalo Mandrie, where the fishermen lived. Here, the last archaeological excavations, carried out a few years ago, have brought back the remains of an ancient settlement whose main activity was related to the sea. In particular, great Greek-Roman tanks that were used to make "garum", a kind of tuna based sauce. Lastly, you will see Capo Passero Island on which it stands the massive fort Fortezza Svevo Aragonese, built as the first defence outpost against the pirate raids that infested the Mediterranean Sea a few centuries ago. The Fort now has been restored and it will host the "Museo del Mare", a sea museum. Going southwest, where you will still be in Portopal
territory, you will get to the "island of currents". In this burnt by the sun land you find the precious yellow and white clay that has been used by every single bather, naturalist or ecologist, lover of natural landscape and its rarities that has ever visited this place to make mud baths. When the tide is low, you can reach it on foot. Then you will go on towards the Pantani Cuba and Longarini a stand zone to the migrant birds coming from Africa and flying to Northern Europe. Afterwards you will arrive in Pozzallo where you will be transferred to Gela.

- Arrival at the chosen Bike Hotel and dinner.

**Day 4 Gela-Licata-Palma di Montechiaro-Agrigento**

- Breakfast in hotel

- You will go back on the road to reach the heart of the itinerary in the Archaeological Park of the Valley of Temples. You will cross the flat land of Gela and run into the beautiful castle Castello di Falconara. Then you will go on towards Licata (from Falconara to Licata: 7 km.), and meet an extraordinary beach on the Mediterranean Sea.

  The trail starts from the province border on the SS115 state road and then enters Licata a few kilometres forward. A sign right at the entrance, indicates the cycle tourists are free to bike around the town but it also warns that you have to come back there to go on following the cycle path indications. The itinerary continues up to the hill west of Licata (about 100 m msl) on a very peculiar panoramic path, always overlooking the sea and the coast. Then you will climb down to the beach of Mollarelle, and access a leg of provincial road SP88 that leads you to the area of Torre di Gaffe. Here, from the open space at the bar/restaurant of the same name, you will start a brief segment of dirt trail until you reach the old SP63 provincial road, with a very low traffic level. After riding for 25.14 km you will reach Palma di Montechiaro by going through great part of the town and getting to a crossing. Here you can vary your path by following an open-circuit route that connects to the cycle path, and at the same time allows you to visit the castle called Castello Chiaromontano, placed in a great coastal location. Who does not choose to visit the castle, can go on towards Agrigento for 27.9 km by accessing a characteristic dirty trail right outside the town that leads to the old state road in two kilometres. This way you avoid riding on the very dangerous SS 115 state road. A few kilometres further you will find the crossing between the tour circuit and the old state road Agrigento/Palma di Montechiaro continuation, which is partly uneven, abandoned and with no traffic. On this section there will be the second open-circuit variation. It is a nature only path (entirely on cycling dirt trail) towards the sea, between the countryside and the seaside. The landscape is extremely striking. The path (6.5 km) ends by reaching the main path. Before the beginning of the variation, the path continues towards Agrigento on the old state road Agrigento/Palma di Montechiaro until you reach the SS115. After going through it for a bit, you will access the provincial road SP71 (Via lago Pergusa). This will bring you to San Leone after crossing the other nature path entrance, next to a small race ground. You will go down the alley Dune from the same name roundabout. You will find all the touristic indications. A tourism signpost will inform you about the area. The itinerary continues along the seafront. At the crossing with street Via Maddalusa, there will be an indication.
for the variation path towards Agrigento. This one differs from the other variations because it is a "return" path. The cycle path indeed goes on in the direction of Via Maddalusa towards the next section of "San Leone/Eraclea Minoa". In the Agrigento variation, road signs will accompany the cycle tourist to the Museum area. Here a signpost will inform that who wants to visit the town, must come back in that exact place to follow the indications again and move towards Trapani.

Arrival at the chosen Bike hotel and dinner. Splendid night view of the Valley of Temples

Day 5 - Agrigento –
(Whoever wants to know better the beautiful Agrigento hinterland can indulge in the 119 km long Monti Sicani route or deepen the knowledge of Favara with its Chiaramontano Castle and also enjoy the experience of the Farm Cultural Park, by tasting the famous Easter Lamb. You can also discover Racalmuto, birth town of Leonardo Sciascia, and its Literary Park. Moreover you can visit the Natural Reserve of Macalube in Aragona that is run by Legambiente).

• Breakfast in hotel

• The morning will be dedicated to a visit of The Valley of Temples. You will have the opportunity of getting to know the thousand-year old history of Akragas, or of going up to the hill of the city to discover the city centre. Here you will find very interesting buildings of Arab, Greek and Chiaramonte architectures. There are also extraordinary remains of a Greek Temple on which today's Church of Santa Maria dei Greci has been built. Then you find the beautiful Cathedral, up in the highest area of the city, with its magnificent woody roof.

• Transfer to Trapani, leaving from the coastal area of the town and reaching Eraclea Minoa after 39.31 km, first stop of this intense day. Now an outstandingly beautiful section starts. After going through Porto Empedocle, the cycle tourist mainly rides along the coast or next to it, by running into many places of interest: the beaches and the small wood of the Maddalusa, those of Porto Empedocle, the Roman Villa in Realmonte, the very well-known "Scala dei Turchi", the beaches of Capo Russello and Gallonardo, Siculiana and its beautiful shore, the WWF reserve of Torre Salsa, and finally Eraclea Minoa. The roads are safe. The journey is barely dangerous. Some parts do not know traffic at all, and some easy cycle dirt trails will represent the opportunity of a full immersion in nature. The section starts with the municipal dirt road, Via Vittorini, right after the bridge in Via Maddalusa. This road will lead you to the SS115 first and then to the SS640 towards Porto Empedocle. You will leave Porto Empedocle to go downwards to the Kaos area. Unfortunately there will be an unavoidable tunnel to cross, and it needs to be adequately indicated. However you can still cycle inside the tunnel, on the lateral walkways. The entrance of Porto Empedocle includes the transit from the port area to get into the street Via F. Crispi; after a few kilometres an indication will invite the cycle tourist to go through the dirt trail on the old railway that, by skirting the provincial road, will lead to the area of Lido Azzurro. A this point you go straight to the provincial road SP68 by accessing the road called Via Nereo. Now on this beautiful panoramic road, you will encounter the Roman Villa, Scala dei Turchi and finally Capo Russello and Realmonte. In the direction of Realmonte, after the roundabout, on the left you find the way to the quarter of
"Giallonardo" and to Siculiana. Here another signpost will invite you to visit the town but it will also remind you to come back to that point in order to continue with the cycle path. From here on, a wide deserted road will bring you to the entrance of a beautiful well-preserved dirt trail; by following this, the cycle tourist will be gladly led near Siculiana Marina. Now you will access an old provincial road that twists in a beautiful natural environment and then ends in the provincial road SP76. Finally it will arrive in Montallegro by riding through the SS115. The town will be totally crossed to go back on the SP76; on this trail there will be lots of very well indicated accesses to the WWF Reserve of Torre Salsa. Beyond the Reserve area and once you access the SP87 provincial road, you will enter a road on the left that, after a hill, will lead you to a beautiful dirt trail; it skirts the mountain side with beautiful formations of gypsum crystals sheets. The dirt trail ends on the SP30 road at the crossing between the roads that goes down towards the splendid sea of Eraclea and then leads to the ancient Greek remains and then continues toward the SS115. Here, an adequate indication will show the tourism location and the cycle path direction; after a few kilometres the San Leone/Eraclea Minoa, comes to an end at the crossing on the SS115. From here on you will go on for 40 km in order to reach Sciacca, the thermal town where you will enjoy your well-deserved rest. This initial part of the path must be undertaken carefully because it is a very busy road until the first junction, that of Borgo Bonsignore, where you will be able to enter the west side of the reserve of the River Platani Mouth and skipping the entire network of cycle paths to which you still have access for the visit. From the junction of Borgo Bonsignore, you will get to the same name burg after riding for 4.5 km on the state road. At this point you can cycle serenely and beyond a slight hill you will see the urban centre, built during the Fascism age. A narrow alley through the built-up area will lead to the torrent Magazzolo easy to be passed on bike by wading across a few centimetres of water. Very characteristic. This way you will be able to enter the tourism location of Secca Grande, Ribera’s shore. After walking across the seafront, the path goes on a beautiful and easy dirt trail flanking the coast for 2.5 km. A real pleasure for those who love cycling in very close contact with nature! The dirt trail comes to an end at the crossing with a road on the right that takes to the SP86 toward Ribera. Here you will continue to discover a natural path upwards the tunnels of SS115 that will give you splendid views over the entire coast, from the east to the west. At the feet of it you can find the “Golf Resort Verdura”. You will go ahead to the crossing with the SS115 toward Ribera, gaining about 150 m of altitude following a beautiful path more than six kilometres long. This path is very easy to cycle, it goes upwards the tunnels and offers spectacular visions, uncontaminated nature and an open view on every side. The natural level land at an altitude of about 60 metres offers a network of visible paths, easy to pass, that allow the cycle tourist to linger there. The exit on the state road presents a critical point, yet spectacular; a path only dug by the time, around tender trubi (geological formations) eroded by rainwater. The path can be passed riding your bike only if your technique is advanced. However there are only 200 metres to hike over carrying your bike due to the uneven ground surface. A sign will indicate "bici a mano" (carry your bike). A few metres southward this path there is a railway tollgate of the old Agrigento/Castelvetrano line. A little bit further on the right there is the lovely bridge on the Verdura Resort, partly located on the old railway and then on the SS386. Then there is the crossing with the SS115. Here the longest state road part of the path gets started. This means it is also the most dangerous section of the entire cycle path in the Province of Agrigento. It has to be crossed very
carefully. It takes to Sciacca by entering the street called Via E. Ghezzi, for a total amount of 5.2 kilometres inside the built-up area. Here you will find a tourism signpost informing you that where you are is a nodal point. It is in the street called Via Figuli nearby the Hospital. The cycle tourist who wants to walk through the city will be informed that the indications he will find in the Port area will allow him to keep on going along the path. Similarly in the port area another sign will inform that in order to continue the path you will need to go to Via Figuli, nearby the Hospital, as indicated on WP of the roadbook.

- Arrival at the chosen Bike Hotel and dinner.

Day 6 Sciacca-Porto Palo di Menfi-Selinunte-Marsala

- Breakfast in hotel
- Leaving for Trapani going across Selinunte, where the famous archaeological area stands. You will go on to the Reserve of Marsala Salt works by crossing a vast area of Sicilian vineyards whose wine productions are excellent. The path is about 32.9 km long up to Porto Palo di Menfi. It guides the cycle tourist to the beautiful port area of seafront Colombo until he accesses the street "Al Lido" toward Quarter San Marco on the SP79 provincial road. The path (quarter San Marco and quarter Maragani), is a very attractive 8 km long route because most of it offers a view over the sea. You also have the change to climb down on the numerous beaches or bays; its altimetry varies from a few metres to 80 metres. Once accessed the SP50, you will get to Menfi after 4.5 kilometres. At the nodal point there will be indications, this time right at the entrance of the very enjoyable cycle path. This is found on the remaining ground of the Agrigento/Castelvetrano railway line that after six kilometres takes you to the seaside area of Porto Palo on a bicycle only path. From Porto Palo, there will be the last section of 6.5 kilometres on secondary roads, then on the SP79 until it reunites with the SP56 (Trapani territory). This signs the border between the two provinces. From here on you will be able to go toward Selinunte then to Marsala after crossing the salt works.
- Arrival at the chosen Bike Hotel in the evening and dinner.

Day 7 Marsala-Trapani

- Breakfast in hotel
- Healthy walk in the salt works Reserve area to admire the windmills that represent the background of a unique location. You will then continue toward Trapani where you will arrive in the earl afternoon. Walk in Trapani city centre, full of local stores that sell traditional and handcrafted products.
- Transfer to the airport and departure for Malta
- Arrival in Malta and transfer to the chosen Bike hotel
Day 8 Malta

- Breakfast in the chosen bike hotel in Malta
- You will start biking along the Southeast route of Malta. This route gives you the opportunity of cycling across 5500 years of history! The tour proposes a starting point in Rabat, near the Roman Villa that today has become a museum with mosaics and examples of Roman architecture in Malta. The tour goes through the main villages such as Qrendi, Mqabba and Siggiewi, where you can admire how these small villages have slightly changed during the centuries.
- Return to the hotel for check out
- Transfer to Gozo and accommodation in the chosen Bike hotel. Overnight in Gozo

Day 9 Gozo - Malta

- Breakfast in the bike hotel.
- Tour along the path on Gozo coast. The green panorama of this rich island offers archaeological sites, secret bays and indented coasts. You can enjoy it all while cycling across 14 interesting villages, each with its own character and attractions. You will see the fortified and dominant Citadel with its museums; the Temples of Ggantija, dating back to 5500 years ago (also a UNESCO world heritage), and the Ta’ Kola Windmill discovered by Grand Master Manoel de Vilhena in 1720 to face the strong population growth of that period. These two diverse but equally massive sites, can be found in Xaghra. Along the road, the cyclist can go through the small town of Saint Lawrenz and be captured by the fascinating small square. Among these beautiful places, the cyclist can admire the breath-taking views of the channel of Gozo and Comino on the road to Qala, the panorama of Obija, the natural window of Wield il-Miehlah, the rocky coasts of Wield il-Ghasri and Ramla Bay.
- Check out and return to Malta in the chosen bike hotel

Day 10 Malta

- Breakfast in hotel
- You can freely choose between visiting the cultural sites around the island and cycling along the Northwest route. This route can be described as a cycling excursion that gives you the opportunity of discovering the rural aspect and the natural panorama of the northwest side of Malta.
- Transfer to the airport and departure in the afternoon