

Kent Area Visit to Sicily – September 2017

The Sicily visit, organised most efficiently by Heritage Group Travel, was greatly enjoyed, and the huge amount of information on ancient archaeology much appreciated by Kent members. We travelled to Syracuse, Agrigento and Palermo with so much to see of wonderful archaeological sites. One of the best was in the Neapolis quarter of Syracuse - superb Ancient Greek and Roman remains, Roman amphitheatre (still used for plays and music festivals), stone quarries including the "Ear of Dionysos" with its incredible acoustics.

We viewed several museums with amazing collections of ancient artefacts, many ancient temples dating back to the 5th century BC in the Valley of the Temples near Agrigento also several wonderful cathedrals.

One of the most special sites was the 4th century Villa Romana del Casale beside the hill town of Piazza Armerina, believed to be the villa of Maximianus Herculeus, with truly amazing and beautiful mosaics depicting mythological scenes and scenes of daily Roman life.

Palermo gave much fascinating Sicilian history - a magnificent 12th century cathedral, many churches with wonderful mosaics giving so many bible stories. Perhaps the Cathedral of Monreale (close to Palermo) was one of the most splendid, it contains wonderful mosaics - a mixture of Arab, Byzantine and Norman artistic styles said to be one of the world's greatest displays of 12th century art. Sicily's National Gallery, Galleria Regionale, built in 1490, gave us much to view.

Members also enjoyed our journeys from city to city - a beautiful island with splendid mountains and valleys with good green agriculture, especially the vineyards!

An excellent visit - we all learnt much from our guide, Giorgio Paonita, of the ancient history of Sicily and viewed so many wonderful archaeological sites.

Valerie Coleman
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