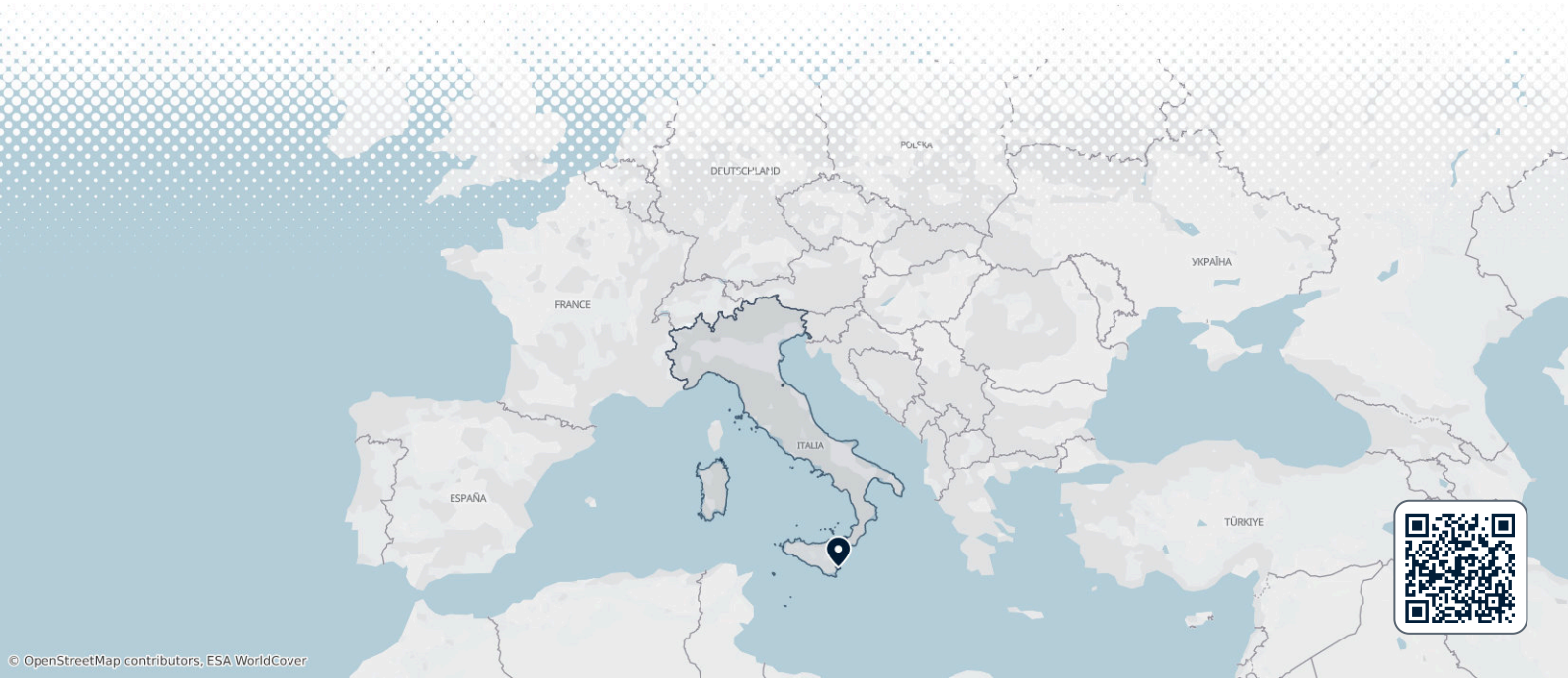


Syracuse

Sicily · Italy

TRAVEL GUIDE

Tripomatic



Overview

Syracuse was one of the greatest cities of the ancient Greek world, and its 2,700-year history is easy to see. Greek temples, a huge rock-cut theatre and Roman ruins sit next to Baroque churches and a lively seafront. The scientist *Archimedes* was born here.

The city has two halves. Ortigia is a small island of pale stone lanes, squares and sea views, where most visitors stay. The mainland holds the big archaeological park and the main museum. Two or three nights is enough to see both, eat well and swim from the rocks. Syracuse also makes a good base for the Baroque towns and nature reserves of south-eastern Sicily.

When to visit

Spring and autumn are the best seasons: warm, sunny and good for walking. Summer is hot and humid, but the sea is at its warmest, and swimming stays pleasant into October. Winter is mild and green, with some rainy days and few visitors.

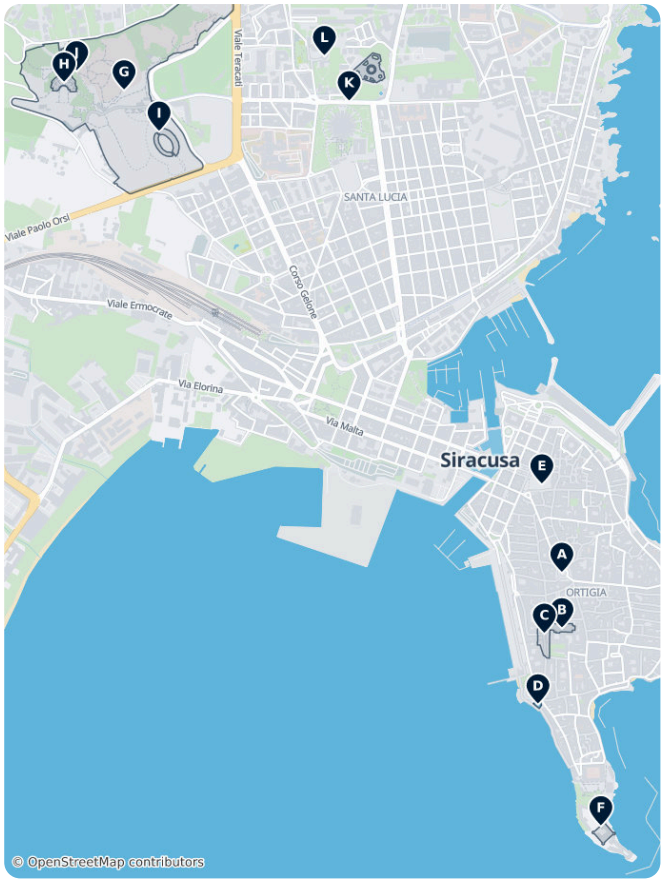
The biggest annual event is the season of classical plays in the Greek Theatre. Ancient Greek tragedies and comedies are staged at sunset in the 2,500-year-old theatre from spring to early summer. Book tickets early, as many nights sell out.

MONTH	CONDITIONS	DAY °C avg / max	NIGHT °C avg / min	
January	Good Good for sightseeing	15° / 18° Feels like 11°	10° / 6°	Dry air
February	Good Good for sightseeing	15° / 18° Feels like 11°	9° / 6°	Dry air
March	Good Good for sightseeing	16° / 20°	10° / 7°	Dry air
April	Great Great for sightseeing	19° / 22°	13° / 10°	Dry air
May	Great Great for sightseeing	23° / 27°	16° / 13°	23 sunny days · Calm winds
June	Great Great for the beach	27° / 32°	20° / 17°	25 sunny days · Humid air · Calm winds · UV 9 (Very high)
July	Great Great for the beach	31° / 34°	23° / 21°	30 sunny days · Muggy, humid air · Calm winds · UV 9 (Very high)
August	Great Great for the beach	31° / 34°	24° / 22°	28 sunny days · Muggy, humid air · Calm winds · UV 8 (Very high)
September	Great Great for the beach	27° / 31°	21° / 18°	20 sunny days · Muggy, humid air · Calm winds
October	Great Great for sightseeing	23° / 27°	18° / 15°	Humid air · Calm winds
November	Great Great for sightseeing	19° / 23°	15° / 11°	Dry air
December	Good Good for sightseeing	16° / 19° Feels like 13°	11° / 7°	Dry air

Best months: April, May, June, July, September, October, November

Climate data: NASA POWER + Copernicus ERA5-Land and ERA5 · 1996–2025

Top sights



A Ortigia is the historic heart of Syracuse and the best place to start. Walk its lanes and seafront, and allow time for the squares and churches.

B Cathedral of Syracuse is built around the Doric columns of a Greek temple from the 5th century BC. You can still see them inside and along the outer wall. It stands on **C** Piazza Duomo, the most elegant square in the city.

D Fonte Aretusa is a freshwater spring right next to the sea, planted with papyrus. Greek myth says the nymph Arethusa became this spring.

E Tempio di Apollo greets you as you cross onto Ortigia. Its 6th-century BC ruins are among the oldest Doric temple remains in Sicily.

F Castello Maniace guards the southern tip of the island. The emperor *Frederick II* built it in the 13th century, and its walls give wide views over the sea.

G Neapolis Archaeological Park is the city's main archaeological area on the mainland. Inside are the **H** Greek Theatre, the **I** Anfiteatro romano di Siracusa and the **J** Ear of Dionysius, a tall cave cut into an old quarry and famous for its echo. Go early in the day in summer, as there is little shade.

K Paolo Orsi Archaeological Museum is one of the largest archaeological museums in Europe. It covers Sicily from prehistory to the early Christian period.

L Catacombe di San Giovanni are a maze of early Christian burial tunnels under the church of San Giovanni. Visits are by guided tour.

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What to experience

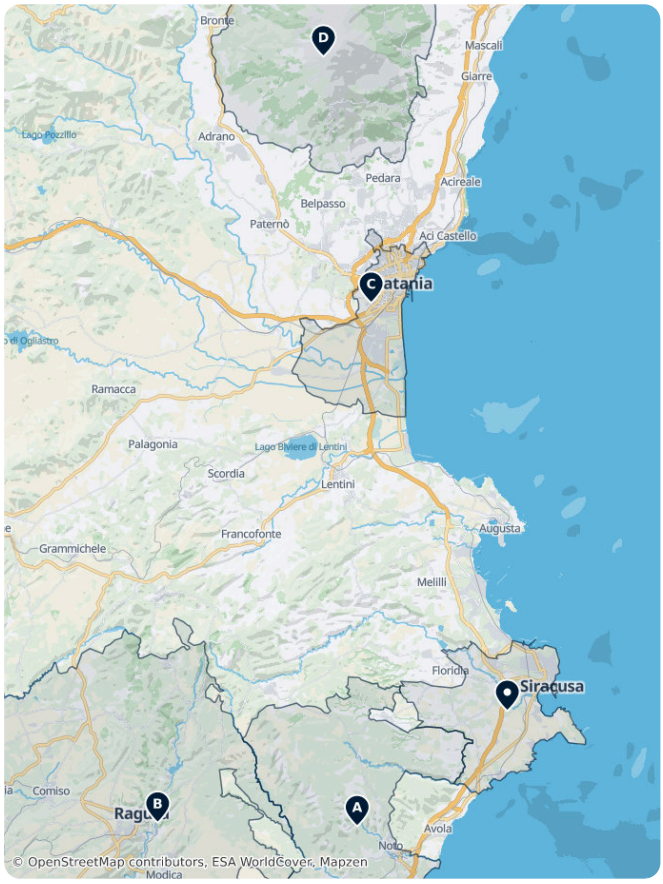
Some of the best moments in Syracuse are about the sea and the city's living traditions.

- **Swim from the rocks of Ortigia**: in summer, wooden platforms are set up on the rocks along the eastern seafront. Locals swim there straight from the old town.
- **Take a boat trip around Ortigia**: small boats leave from the harbour for a tour of the island's walls and the sea caves to the south.
- **See a traditional puppet show**: the Teatro Dei Pupi performs Sicilian *opera dei pupi*, with knights in armour fighting in old legends.
- **Join the Feast of Saint Lucy**: on 13 December, the silver statue of the city's patron saint is carried in a large procession from the cathedral to the Basilica Santuario di Santa Lucia al Sepolcro.
- **Watch the sunset on the seafront**: the western promenade of Ortigia faces the big harbour, and locals stroll there every evening.

Day trips

South-eastern Sicily is full of Baroque towns, beaches and ancient sites. Many are within an hour of Syracuse.

- A Noto — about 30–35 minutes by train, or about 1 hour by bus. A small town rebuilt in golden stone after the 1693 earthquake, with a famous Baroque main street.
- **Vendicari Nature Reserve** — about 40 minutes by car. Lagoons with flamingos in season, sandy beaches and a coastal path south of Noto.
- **Pantalica** — about 1 hour by car. A wild limestone gorge lined with thousands of rock-cut tombs, shared with Syracuse on the UNESCO list. Wear good shoes.
- **Modica** and B Ragusa — about 1–1.5 hours by car, longer by bus. Two hillside Baroque towns. Modica is known for its grainy chocolate, and Ragusa Ibla for its old quarter.
- C Catania — about 1 hour 15 minutes by train or bus. A lively city of black lava stone with a famous fish market.
- D Mount Etna — about 1.5–2 hours by car. Europe's most active volcano, with craters, lava fields and cable car rides. Most visitors join a tour.



Where to explore

Syracuse sits in the south-east of Sicily, close to the island's best Baroque towns and to the volcano.

- **Baroque towns nearby**: Noto and Ragusa.
- **Heading north**: Catania, Mount Etna and the hilltop resort of Taormina.
- **Across the island**: Palermo, the Sicilian capital.

Getting there

- **By air**: Catania Fontanarossa Airport (CTA) is the gateway. Direct Interbus coaches run to Syracuse many times a day and take about 70 minutes. They stop on Corso Umberto, a 15-minute walk from Ortigia. Buy tickets before boarding, online or at the airport ticket office.
- **By train**: Regional trains link Syracuse with Catania in about 1 to 1.5 hours, and with Taormina and Messina further north. Some trains stop at the station near Catania airport. Siracusa station is about 20 minutes on foot from Ortigia. Trenitalia
- **By bus**: Regional coaches connect Syracuse with Catania, Noto and other towns in the south-east. They are often more frequent than trains.

Getting around

- **On foot**: Ortigia is small and best explored on foot. The Neapolis archaeological area and the main museum are about 2–3 km north, a 30–40 minute walk.
- **Buses**: SAIS Autolinee runs the city buses, which link the station, Ortigia and the Neapolis area. Buy tickets before you board, in the SAIS app, online or at a ticket office. SAIS Autolinee
- **Free shuttles**: Free shuttle buses link the main car parks with Ortigia.
- **Taxi**: There are taxi stands at the station and at Piazza Pancali at the entrance to Ortigia. A taxi is the easiest way to reach Neapolis in the summer heat.
- **Cycling**: The seafront and the flat streets around Ortigia are pleasant by bike. Traffic is heavier on the mainland.

Getting around on foot & by bike

WALKABILITY

High

Ortigia is compact and best seen on foot; the Neapolis archaeological area is a 30–40 minute walk or a short bus or taxi ride away.

CYCLING INFRASTRUCTURE

Moderate

Pleasant along the seafront and around Ortigia; mainland traffic is heavier and there are few bike lanes.

Driving

- **Is a car worth it?**: Not for the city itself. Ortigia is walkable and parking is limited. A car is useful for beaches, nature reserves and inland sites that buses serve poorly.
- **Restrictions**: Ortigia has a **limited traffic zone (ZTL)**. Non-resident cars are not allowed in during set hours, and fines are sent to rental companies. Ask your hotel before you drive onto the island.
- **Parking**: Use the large Talete car park on the northern edge of Ortigia, or the car parks near the bridges. Street parking with blue lines is paid.

Food & drink

Syracuse cooking is built on fish, citrus, almonds and the vegetables of the south-east. Look for pasta with anchovies and toasted breadcrumbs, fresh swordfish and raw red prawns. For breakfast or a hot afternoon, try granita with a soft brioche. Finish with cannoli or almond pastries. Local wines include Nero d'Avola and the sweet Moscato di Siracusa.

The best place to eat is Ortigia. The morning street market near the Tempio di Apollo sells fish, fruit and cheese, and its stalls make sandwiches to order. In the evening, the lanes of the old Jewish quarter and the streets around Piazza Duomo are full of small restaurants.

What to eat & drink

LUNCH

Pizza Margherita
Thin-crust pizza topped with tomato, mozzarella, and basil, invented in Naples and still best there.

DINNER

Spaghetti alla Carbonara
Pasta with egg, cured pork cheek (guanciale), pecorino cheese, and black pepper, a Roman classic.

Risotto alla Milanese
Creamy saffron-infused rice dish from Milan, often served alongside braised veal shank.

Lasagna · Lasagne al Forno
Layered baked pasta with ragu, bechamel, and cheese, a staple of Emilia-Romagna cooking.

SNACKS & STREET FOOD

Prosciutto and Cheese · Prosciutto e Formaggio
Cured ham paired with regional cheeses, a common antipasto plate found nationwide.

SWEETS & DESSERTS

Gelato
Dense, slow-churned Italian ice cream, traditionally lower in fat and air than American-style ice cream.

Tiramisu · Tiramisù
Layered dessert of coffee-soaked ladyfingers and mascarpone cream, dusted with cocoa.

DRINKS

Espresso · Caffè
A short, strong shot of coffee drunk quickly, usually standing at a bar counter.

Wine · Vino
Italy is one of the world's largest wine producers, with regional styles from Piedmont's Barolo to Tuscany's Chianti.

Aperol Spritz
A bittersweet orange aperitif mixed with prosecco and soda water, a staple of the early-evening aperitivo.

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Safety & health

Syracuse is a safe city for visitors. Normal care is enough: watch your bags in crowds, on buses and at busy evening spots in Ortigia.

In summer, the heat is the main risk. Carry water and avoid the open archaeological sites at midday. When swimming from rocks, use the ladders and platforms and take care on slippery stone. Pharmacies are easy to find.

History

Greek settlers from Corinth founded Syracuse in the 8th century BC on Ortigia. The city grew rich and powerful, and its rulers built the Tempio di Apollo and the temple to Athena that is now part of the Cathedral of Syracuse. In 413 BC, Syracuse defeated a huge Athenian army, one of the great events of the ancient world. Thousands of prisoners were held in the city's stone quarries, like the one around the Ear of Dionysius.

The city's most famous son, *Archimedes*, designed war machines to defend it against Rome. He was killed when the Romans took Syracuse in 212 BC. The Romans left the Anfiteatro romano di Siracusa, and early Christians dug the Catacombe di San Giovanni. Byzantines, Arabs, Normans and Spanish rulers followed. The emperor *Frederick II* built Castello Maniace.

A major earthquake in 1693 destroyed much of south-eastern Sicily. Ortigia was rebuilt in the Baroque style you see today. In 1953, a small image of the Virgin Mary was said to weep, and the huge Madonna delle Lacrime Sanctuary was later built to house it. Since 2005, Syracuse and the necropolis of Pantalica have been a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

Country facts

Quick practical facts for Italy at a glance:

CURRENCY
EUR €

EMERGENCY
112

ELECTRICITY

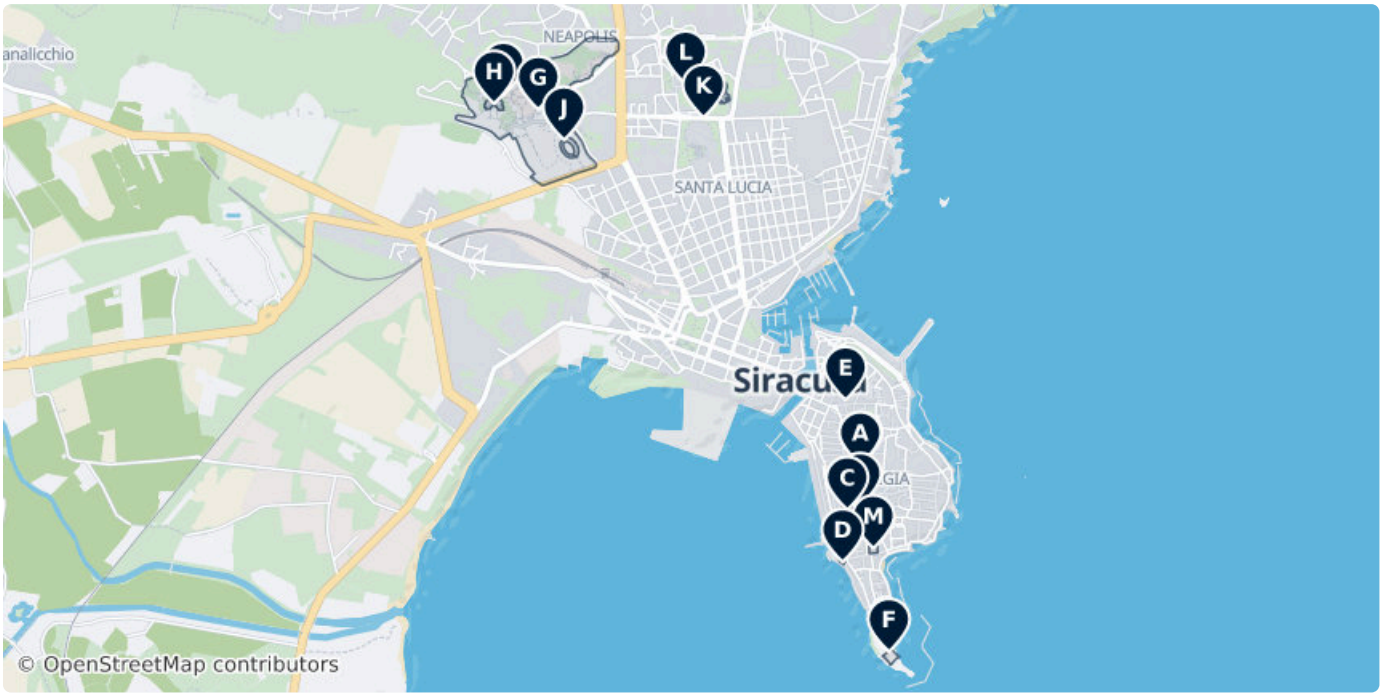
Type C / Type F / Type L
230 V · 50 Hz

LANGUAGES
Italian

TAP WATER
Safe to drink

Syracuse Unmissables

Syracuse's history spans more than 2,500 years, centred on the island of Ortigia and the Neapolis Archaeological Park. Ortigia holds the Baroque Cathedral built around a Greek temple, the Temple of Apollo, the Fountain of Arethusa and Castello Maniace. On the mainland, Neapolis brings together the Greek Theatre, the Roman Amphitheatre and the Ear of Dionysius, with the Paolo Orsi museum and the Catacombs of St John close by.





A Ortygia

The small island that forms the historic centre of Syracuse, joined to the mainland by bridges and packed with Baroque churches, palaces and seafront walks.

Ortigia, 96100 Syracuse, Italy (37.06124, 15.29381)



B Cathedral of Syracuse

A Baroque cathedral built around the Doric columns of a 5th-century BC Greek temple to Athena, still visible inside and along the side wall.

6 Piazza Minerva, Ortigia 96100, Italy (37.05957, 15.29381)

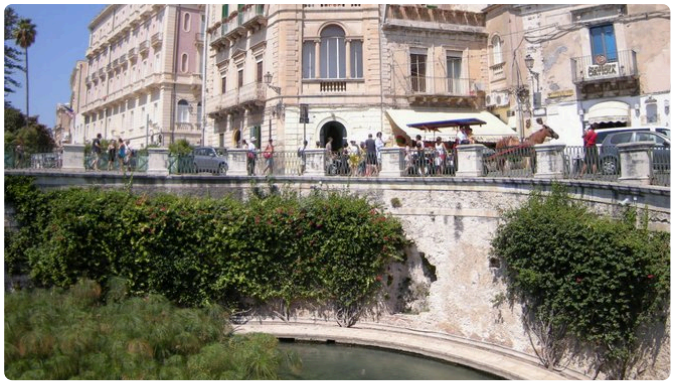
arcidiocesi.siracusa.it/chiesa-cattedrale/



C Cathedral Square

Ortigia's elegant main square, a long, pale-stone space framed by the Cathedral, Baroque palaces and the church of Santa Lucia alla Badia.

16 Piazza Duomo, Ortigia 96100, Italy (37.05941, 15.29314)



D Arethuse Fountain

A freshwater spring by the sea on Ortigia, planted with papyrus and tied to the Greek myth of the nymph Arethusa.

Largo Aretusa, 96100 Siracusa SR, Italy (37.05728, 15.29290)



E Temple of Apollo

The ruins of one of the oldest Doric temples in Sicily, from the 6th century BC, at the entrance to Ortigia.

Piazzale della Stazione, 21, 96100 Siracusa SR, Italy (37.06390, 15.29305)



F Castello Maniace

A 13th-century fortress built for Emperor Frederick II on the southern tip of Ortigia, with sea views and a vaulted great hall.

Isola di Ortigia, 96100 Siracusa SR, Italy (37.05361, 15.29528)

Tu–Sa	08:30–18:00
Su	14:30–18:00

+39 0931 464 420



G Neapolis Archaeological Park

The main archaeological area of Syracuse, with the Greek Theatre, the Roman Amphitheatre, the Altar of Hieron II and the ancient quarries.

12 Via Luigi Bernabò Brea, 96100, Italy
(37.07577, 15.27730)

Mo–Su 08:30–17:30



H Greek Theatre

A large Greek theatre cut into the Temenite hill in the 5th century BC, still used for classical plays in summer.

Via dei Sepolcri, 96100 Syracuse SR, Italy
(37.07600, 15.27504)



I Ear of Dionysius

A tall, ear-shaped cave carved out of an ancient limestone quarry, famous for its echo.

Via Paradiso, 14, 96100 Siracusa SR, Italy
(37.07634, 15.27552)



J Roman Amphitheatre of Syracuse

A large Roman amphitheatre, largely cut from the rock, where gladiator games were once held.

Via Francesco Saverio Cavallari, 96100 Siracusa, Italy
(37.07453, 15.27862)



K Paolo Orsi Archaeological Museum

One of Europe's major archaeological museums, covering Sicily from prehistory to the early Christian period, including the Venus Landolina.

Viale Teocrito 66, 96100 Siracusa, Italy (37.07544, 15.28579)

Tu–Su 09:00–18:00, 09:00–13:00

parchiarcheologici.regione.sicilia.it/sirac... , +390931489511



L Catacombs of St. John

A large network of early Christian burial tunnels beneath the church of San Giovanni, visited on guided tours.

Piazzale San Marciano, 3, 96100 Siracusa, Italy (37.07680, 15.28486)

+39 0931 64694



M Galleria di Palazzo Bellomo

An art museum in a medieval palace on Ortigia, best known for Antonello da Messina's Annunciation.

Via Giuseppe Maria Capodieci, 96100 Syracuse SR, Italy (37.05784, 15.29448)

Tu–Sa 09:00–19:00
Su 09:00–13:00

comune.siracusa.it/vivere-il-comune/luo... , +39 0931 69511



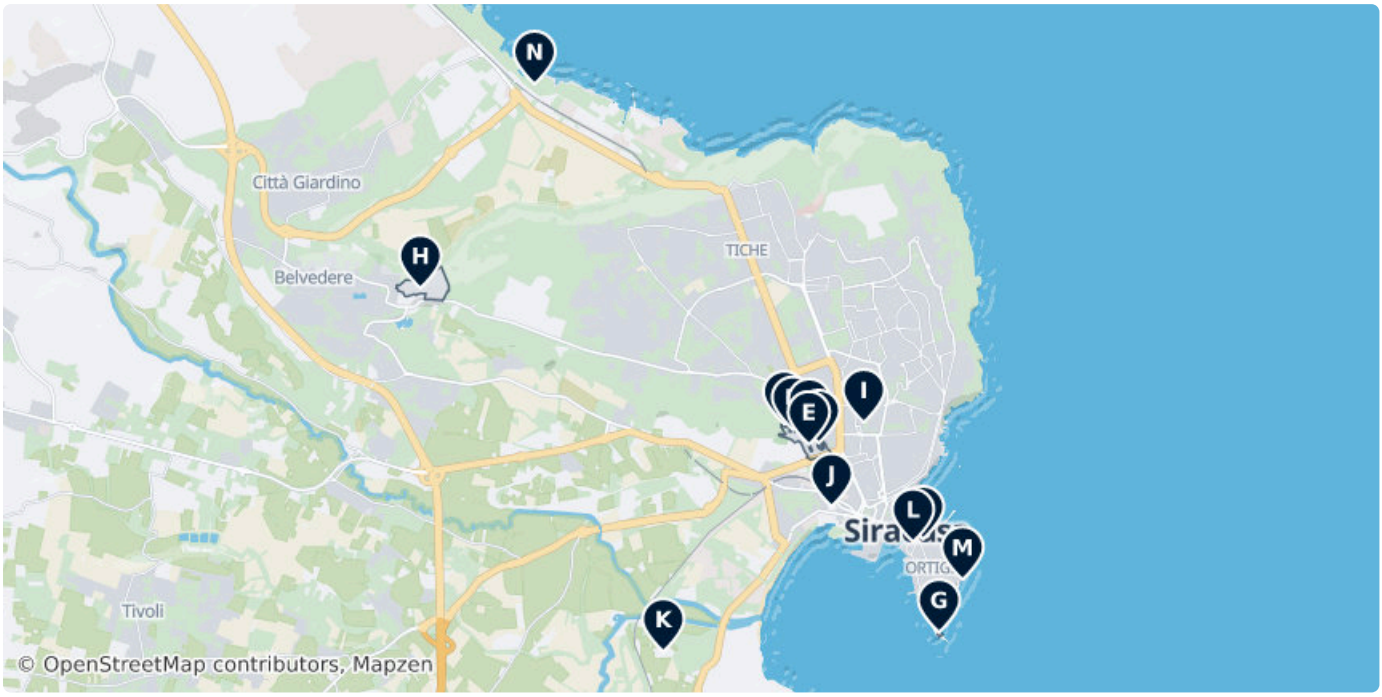
N Fountain of Diana

A 1907 monumental fountain by Giulio Moschetti in Piazza Archimede, showing the myth of Arethusa and the goddess Diana.

4 Piazza Archimede, Ortigia 96100, Italy (37.06125, 15.29386)

Ancient Sites and Fortresses

Syracuse was one of the largest cities of the Greek world, and its ruins are spread across Ortigia and the mainland. This list gathers the temples, theatres, quarries, burial grounds and fortresses that trace its history from Greek colony to Roman city to medieval stronghold.





A Temple of Apollo

The ruins of one of the oldest Doric temples in Sicily, from the 6th century BC, at the entrance to Ortigia.

Piazzale della Stazione, 21, 96100 Siracusa SR, Italy
(37.06390, 15.29305)



B Greek Theatre

A large Greek theatre cut into the Temenite hill in the 5th century BC, still used for classical plays in summer.

Via dei Sepolcri, 96100 Syracuse SR, Italy
(37.07600, 15.27504)



C Roman Amphitheatre of Syracuse

A large Roman amphitheatre, largely cut from the rock, where gladiator games were once held.

Via Francesco Saverio Cavallari, 96100 Siracusa, Italy (37.07453, 15.27862)



D Neapolis Archaeological Park

This archaeological park contains the city's most significant ancient monuments, including the Greek Theatre, the Roman Amphitheatre, the Altar of Hieron II and the Latomia del Paradiso quarries with the Ear of Dionysius.

12 Via Luigi Bernabò Brea, 96100, Italy (37.07577, 15.27730)

Mo–Su 08:30–17:30



E Ara di Ierone

The foundations of a huge Greek sacrificial altar from the 3rd century BC, inside the Neapolis Archaeological Park.

96100, Italy (37.07437, 15.27725)



F Via dei Sepolcri

An ancient road above the Greek Theatre, lined with tombs and niches cut into the rock.

Viale Giuseppe Agnello, 96100, Italy (37.07662, 15.27383)



G Castello Maniace

A 13th-century fortress built for Emperor Frederick II on the southern tip of Ortigia, with sea views and a vaulted great hall.

Isola di Ortigia, 96100 Siracusa SR, Italy
(37.05361, 15.29528)

Tu–Sa	08:30–18:00
Su	14:30–18:00

+39 0931 464 420



H Euryalus Fortress

The Euryalus Fortress located in the frazione of Belvedere was the key point in the fortifications of the ancient Greek city of Syracuse.

Viale Epipoli 286, 96100 Syracuse, Italy
(37.09161, 15.22347)



I Catacombs of St. John

A large network of early Christian burial tunnels beneath the church of San Giovanni, visited on guided tours.

Piazzale San Marciano, 3, 96100 Siracusa, Italy
(37.07680, 15.28486)

+39 0931 64694



J Ginnasio romano

A 1st-century AD Roman complex featuring a small theater, a quadriporticus, and a temple. Despite its name, it was likely a sanctuary or a meeting place for a religious cult rather than a traditional gymnasium.

Via Giuseppe Rubino, Siracusa 96100, Italy
(37.06751, 15.28039)



K Tempio di Zeus Olimpio

Known as the Olympeion, this 6th-century BC Doric temple was one of the earliest in Syracuse. Today, only two monolithic columns remain standing on a hill overlooking the Great Harbor.

96100, Italy (37.05149, 15.25709)



L City gate

Remains of an ancient Greek city gate on Ortigia, found near the Temple of Apollo.

23 Via 20 Settembre, Ortigia 96100, Italy (37.06362, 15.29167)



M Forte Vigliena

An 18th-century coastal defense battery on the eastern side of Ortigia. It was part of the complex fortification system designed to defend Syracuse from naval attacks.

26 Via Nizza, Ortigia 96100, Italy (37.05943, 15.29852)



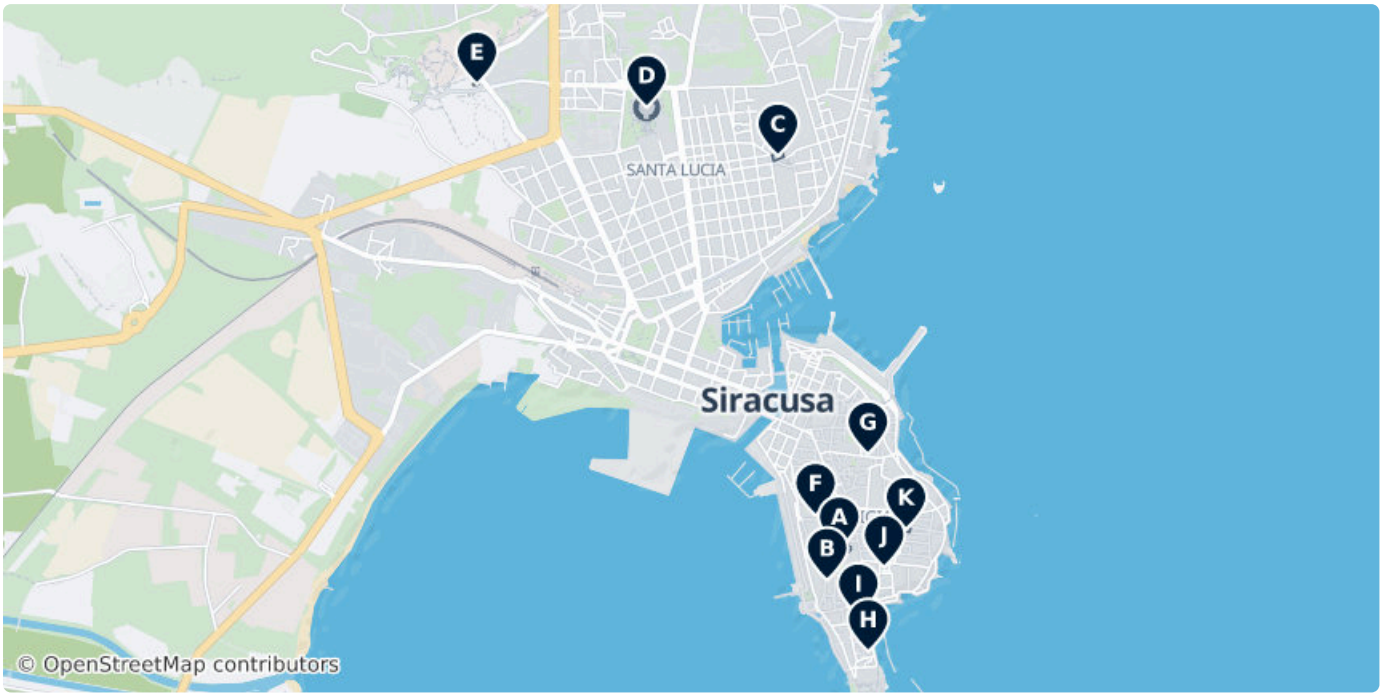
N Stentinello

A prehistoric Neolithic settlement site north of Syracuse, giving its name to the Stentinello culture characterized by distinctive impressed pottery dating back to the 5th millennium BC.

Via Stentinello, 96100, Italy (37.11413, 15.23926)

Historic Churches

Syracuse's churches span from a cathedral built inside a Greek temple to the modern cone of the Madonna delle Lacrime sanctuary. In between are Norman churches, the shrine of Saint Lucy, the city's patron, and the Baroque churches of Ortigia.





A Cathedral of Syracuse

A Baroque cathedral built around the Doric columns of a 5th-century BC Greek temple to Athena, still visible inside and along the side wall.

6 Piazza Minerva, Ortigia 96100, Italy (37.05957, 15.29381)

arcidiocesi.siracusa.it/chiesa-cattedrale/



B Santa Lucìa alla Badìa, Siracusa

A Baroque church on the south corner of Piazza Duomo, rebuilt after the 1693 earthquake and now used for exhibitions.

8 Via Pompeo Picherali, Ortigia 96100, Italy (37.05850, 15.29329)



C Basilica of St. Lucia

A church of Norman origin built where Saint Lucy, the patron saint of Syracuse, is said to have been martyred, with catacombs beneath.

Via L. Bignami 1, 96100 Siracusa, Italy (37.07306, 15.29117)

Mo–We	09:00–12:45, 15:30–19:00
Th	11:00–12:45, 15:30–19:00
Fr–Su	09:00–12:45, 15:30–19:00

basilicasantalucia.com, +39 0931 67946



D Madonna delle Lacrime Sanctuary

A huge cone-shaped modern sanctuary, completed in 1994, that houses a small image of the Virgin Mary said to have wept in 1953.

Via Timeo, 96100 Siracusa Province of Syracuse, Italy (37.07472, 15.28552)

Mo–Sa	07:30–12:30, 15:30–19:30
Su	07:30–12:30, 15:30–20:30

madonnadellelacrime.it



E Chiesa di San Nicolò dei Cordari

An 11th-century Norman church located at the entrance of the Neapolis Archaeological Park, built atop a Roman-era water cistern.

12 Via Luigi Bernabò Brea, 96100, Italy (37.07552, 15.27822)

+39 0931 66206



F Chiesa del Collegio

A 17th-century Jesuit church showcasing a grand Baroque facade and a spacious interior with marble altars and religious paintings.

9 Via del Collegio, Ortigia 96100, Italy (37.06072, 15.29279)



G Chiesa del Carmine

Originally dating to the 14th century and rebuilt after the 1693 earthquake, this church features a simple facade and houses various artworks dedicated to the Carmelite order.

44 Via Vincenzo Mirabella, Ortigia 96100, Italy
(37.06283, 15.29504)



H Chiesa dello Spirito Santo

Built in the 18th century, this Baroque church is situated on the eastern seafront of Ortigia and features a distinctive white facade overlooking the sea.

5 Ronco Esculapio, Ortigia 96100, Italy
(37.05605, 15.29505)



I San Martino, Siracusa

One of the oldest churches on Ortigia, with a Gothic portal and early Christian origins.

8 Lungomare D'Ortigia, Ortigia 96100, Italy
(37.05728, 15.29463)

J Church of San Giuseppe

An 18th-century Baroque church in Ortigia, featuring a concave facade and an interior decorated with intricate stuccoes and a silver-leafed altar.

Piazza San Giuseppe, 96100 Syracuse, Italy
(37.05894, 15.29574)

siracusaturismo.net/public/cosa_vedere/Chiesa_di_Piazza...

K Chiesa di San Filippo Apostolo

This church is notable for its multi-level underground area, which contains a crypt and an ancient well used for ritual purifications.

6 Vicolo Secondo alla Giudecca, Ortigia 96100, Italy
(37.06025, 15.29668)

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