

TRAVEL

Sicily, Italy | Best Wine Destinations 2017

Explore a hotspot of beaches, volcanoes, ancient ruins and great wine and food.

BY KERIN O'KEEFE



Cottanera

Sunny Sicily, the largest island in the Mediterranean Sea, sits just off the tip of the boot-shaped peninsula of Italy. Dotted with ancient Greek temples and Norman cathedrals built by former invaders, the island has a rich history and multifaceted cultural legacy. It also boasts miles of pristine beaches, breathtaking scenery and the highest active volcano in Europe, Mount Etna.

On top of those wonders, Sicily makes fantastic wines from native and international grapes. It produces everything from full-bodied reds to vibrant, mineral-driven whites. Pair them with the fantastic local cuisine, and you understand why this is a wine-lover's paradise.



Where to Dine

At **La Madia**, a two-Michelin-starred restaurant in Licata, Chef Pino Cuttaia makes -delicious renditions of local dishes that complement a cracking wine list. In Linguaglossa, near Mount Etna, a high-end meal at winemaker-favorite **Shalai** is a must. In Palermo, stop in at **Antica Focacceria San Francesco**, which serves up traditional cuisine and is beloved by locals.



10 Best Wine Travel Destinations of 2017

Where to Stay

Palermo makes a great base for day trips to wineries on the western part of the island. Stay at the centrally located and elegant **Mercure Palermo Excelsior City**. For visits to southeastern wine locations, lodge at the charming **Masseria degli Ulivi**, a converted farmstead in the Val di Noto. On the slopes of Mount Etna and surrounded by estate vineyards, relax at the delightful **Tenuta San Michele**.



Shalai

Other Activities

Sicily's pristine coastline offers world-class beaches and resorts that provide plenty of outdoor fun. The island also has a number of ancient monuments and archaeological sites. In Agrigento, the **Valley of the Temples** is a tour of some of the world's best-preserved Greek temples. It dates to the 5th century BC and is a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

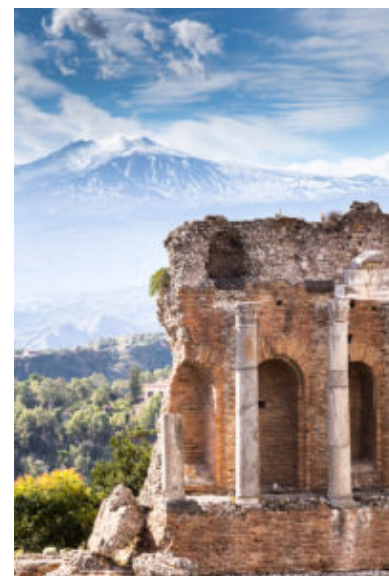
Budget Tip

Learn from the locals: Spend a day at the small seaside resort of **Mondello**, just a short bus ride from Palermo. Relax on the beach and swim in its turquoise water.

When to Go

To enjoy the beaches and wine country, visit Sicily between late spring and early fall.

“Of all the stunning views on Etna, a hike up to the small, extinguished volcano of Mojo offers one of the most beautiful landscapes on the big volcano.”



Ruins and columns of antique theater in Taormina, with Mount Etna in the background

Where to Taste

Wine is produced across the island. Many areas now have official wine roads, or **Strade del Vino**, that make touring wine country easier. Although producers encourage visitors to come and taste, make an appointment ahead of time. In Marsala, a visit to the historic cellars of the award-winning **Donnafugata** winery is a must. Be sure to stop in at leading estate **Tenuta Rapitalà** in Camporeale, near Alcamo. In the southeastern province of Ragusa, plan a visit to cult bio-dynamic producer **COS** in Vittoria. A trip to **Tasca d'Almerita** at its Regaleali estate, between Palermo and Caltanissetta, should also be on every wine lover's itinerary. In the northeast, tour Mount Etna's breathtaking wine country and plan a visit to **Cottanera**. The award-winning **Planeta** firm has five estates across Sicily, and it offers visitors an unparalleled journey into Sicily's winemaking territories.



Tentuta San Michele, Sicily / Photo by Andrea Savini

Prominent Wines

Many producers make sunny renditions from international grapes like Merlot, Syrah, Chardonnay and Cabernet Sauvignon, but most firms focus on the island's native grapes. From the hot plains of Marsala, try Grillo, a crisp and savory white, as well as Marsala, a fortified dessert wine that's making a comeback. Smooth and juicy Nero d'Avola, at its best in the Noto area, is the island's flagship red. From the Vittoria area, don't miss the polished Cerasuolo di Vittoria or bright Frappato, the perfect summer red. Elegant, mineral-driven reds and whites from the slopes of Mount Etna are among the most exciting wines coming out of Italy.

Local in the Know

Celebrated wine producer **Alessio Planeta** suggests a visit to the northern zone of Mount Etna, where you can walk in the woods and through vineyards. "Of all the stunning views on Etna, a hike up to the small, extinguished volcano of Mojo offers one of the most beautiful landscapes on the big volcano. Heading up to almost 3,300 feet, you'll find the grands crus, ending at the lava flow from 1991, showing all the great energy of the mountain."

See the rest of our 10 Best Wine Travel Destinations.

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