



Creative Writing in Sicily
with our guest author, Alice Greenway

Saturday 15th to Sunday 30th September 2018

Target flights (based on 2017 schedule)
15/09/2018 - London Gatwick/Palermo 16:30/20:25
30/09/2018 - Catania/London Gatwick 14:05/16:25

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Sicily has inspired many authors to write about its very rich history, the fabulous food, the ebb and flow of power, and the 20th/21st century phenomena of the Mafia. The lovely climate, abundant harvests from both the land and the sea, the delicious wine and its range of scenery have drawn people here for conquest, for a better life and to write. Join us as we travel through the island and gently experiment with writing in response to what we see, hear, eat and drink, do and imagine. We are in the company of Alice Greenway whose two novels, *The White Ghost Girls* (2006), and *The Bird Skinner* (2015) have been well received (the former as BBC Book at Bedtime as well as being longlisted for the Orange Book Prize). *The Bird Skinner* was a finalist for the New England Book Awards. No writing experience necessary, and writing is not compulsory! Most days will feature readings from selected authors and suggested prompts to help you to pen your own words inspired by the places we visit. We may opt to write at café tables, or amongst the ruins. We will be comfortably accommodated in five agriturismos and hotels during our fortnight on this lovely island. The tour is led by Rufus Reade.

Itinerary

Day 1 Arrival by air into Palermo airport, and catch the airport bus into Palermo, with a short walk to the Hotel Opera (www.hotelplaza-opera.com) in Palermo city centre. Independent late supper.

Day 2 Our local guide will lead us on foot for a morning tour of Palermo. Free time in the afternoon to sit in cafes and write. Independent lunch. We will eat dinner together at a local trattoria. Second night in the Hotel Opera. [B, D]

Day 3 After breakfast we will drive out to Monreale, an Arab Norman town located on the hills outside Palermo. Here we'll see the wonderful cathedral which was decorated in the 12th century by the Normans.

We'll have time for an independent lunch in Monreale with time to write. Returning to Palermo we'll hear a talk about the Mafia, with interesting references to this phenomena by writers such as Sciascia and Tomasi di Lampedusa. Independent arrangement for lunch and dinner today. Third night at Hotel Opera. [B]

Day 4 We'll leave Palermo for the western corner of the island, pausing at Scopello, a tiny village developed around an ancient 'baglio' (literally a courtyard indicating a 'fortified country estate') dating back to the 17th-century. The small village can rightfully claim to be one of the most picturesque places in the province of Trapani, known for the tuna fishing yard (tonnara), which was one of the most productive in Sicily

during the 1500s. One of the village's two squares would be a nice place to have an independent lunch, or you can take a picnic down to the tuna station where you might also care to swim. In the afternoon we'll drive to Segesta, with its well preserved Greek temple. In the late afternoon the light can be lovely. We'll drive on to the Agriturismo Fontanasalsa (www.fontanasalsa.it/index.php) for the first of three nights. This evening we'll have dinner at the agriturismo. [B,D]

Day 5 After breakfast we'll drive to the hill town of Erice. It has long been regarded as a sacred site, and the late medieval town with its cobbled lanes and many churches has a distinct atmosphere which is very attractive. It has become famous for its almond pastries partly as



JOURNEY DETAILS

Location: Sicily
Dates: 15 to 30 Sept 2018
Duration: 15 nights
Max: 15 travellers
Price: £3960
Single room supplement:
£395
Deposit: £400
Tour Code: RR 03/18

What's included: 3 star Accommodation (including agriturismos, all rooms with attached facilities), some meals (3 lunches and 5 dinners) as per itinerary [B=breakfast, L=lunch and D=dinner], all land transport by road as described in the itinerary, entry to the 5 sites mentioned, and all tips.

What's not included: your international flights, personal travel insurance, drinks, laundry, phonecalls, meals as per itinerary and all beverages.

Your writing tutor: the tour is accompanied by our guest author Alice Greenway. The tour is escorted by Rufus Reade.

Walking: All walks rated easy to moderate.

The tour is organised by Rufus Reade Tours, 40 Pilrig Street, Edinburgh EH6 5AL
rufusreade@blueyonder.co.uk
Tel 0131 554 1078

Flights: There are UK flights from the UK into Palermo, and out of Catania. Flight schedules have not yet been announced: Ian Dickson Travel, Edinburgh can book your flights, though we would suggest that you don't book until the tour is confirmed. Ian Dickson Travel can be contacted on 0131 556 6777.

a result of the book by Maria Grammatico and Mary Taylor Simeti, which tells Maria's story of a childhood of poverty and how she was brought up in a convent which specialised in making and selling almond cakes. There are many places to have coffee and cake, including Maria's, and a good choice of cafes/restaurants for



an independent lunch. This evening we will drive to Trapani for dinner. Second night at Agriturismo Fontanasalsa. [B,D]

Day 6 The landscape along the west coast of Sicily is characterised by windmills, and large salt pans. Leaving this landscape we will cross over to the island of Mozia, which was once a Phoenician settlement, probably dating to the eighth century BC, about a century after the foundation of Carthage in Tunisia. The colony of Phoenicians turned the island into a most affluent community, naturally defended by the lagoon as well as high defensive walls. Mozia nowadays is cared for by the Whitaker Foundation. After a brief introduction to the history of the island we'll have a free day to write and explore. An independent lunch may be had at the little bar and trattoria at the dock. We'll return to the Agriturismo Fontanasalsa for our third night. Independent supper arrangements [B].

Day 7 After checking out we'll drive towards the south coast of the island. On the way we'll stop

at the ruins of Poggioreale, the remarkable and evocative remains of a town which was destroyed in the January 1968 earthquake. One of the great books about Sicily is *The Leopard* (1958): in Santa Margherita Belice we'll visit the house and museum of the author Giuseppe Tomasi di Lampedusa. We plan to have lunch in the Paolo House. Our destination is the Belice Valley, a productive rural area with its own DOP (the Italian equivalent of protected designation of origin) sheep pecorine cheese, extra virgin olive oil and table olives. We'll check in to our Agriturismo Il Vigneto for three nights (www.ristoranteilvigneto.com). Independent dinner arrangements. [B, L]

Day 8 Our day will be largely spent in the fishing port of Sciacca. This will be an opportunity to observe the working life of the town and to write. We'll go to near-by Caltabellotta for our picnic lunch. Free time to write in the afternoon. For dinner we'll eat at a trattoria by the beach in Porto Palo di Menfi before returning to our Agriturismo Il Vigneto for our dinner and our second night. [B, L, D]



Day 9 Today there will be an optional visit to two classical sites in our minibus. The first is a quarry abandoned many centuries ago when the columns of the temples at Selinunte were being excavated. One day in about 400 BC the workers left the quarry and never returned. By the time demand for building materials had resumed smaller drums were required and the quarry was never used again. After our picnic lunch our next visit is to Selinunte, a large and beautiful site stretching back from the shore which was founded in the seventh century BC, and effectively destroyed in 409 BC. Our third night at the Agriturismo Il Vigneto; independent supper arrangements. [B, L]

Day 10 It's a long drive to the south-eastern corner of Sicily, which is well known for its Baroque architecture, created in response to the destruction following the massive 1693 earthquake. Our destination is Ragusa which is much used in the filming of

the Montalbano Detective TV series. Independent arrangements for lunch and dinner today. We'll check in to our hotel, the Locanda Don Serafino (www.locandadonserafino.it); independent supper arrangements. [B].

Day 11 Ragusa is regarded as two townships: the upper or Superiore and the lower, Ragusa Ibla. Narrow lanes link the two communities. There are cafes close to the Duomo and main square of the upper town where you might want to base yourself to write after a walk to see one of the lovely churches of the lower town. Independent arrangement for lunch and dinner today. Second night at Locando Don Serafino. [B]

Day 12 The history of Sicily involves a long period under Spanish domination so that there were curious influences from South and Central America, such as the processing of chocolate: we will visit the Baroque town of 100 churches, Modica, well known for making chocolate using the ancient Aztec cold-process method. In this process the sugar does not dissolve, creating a grainy texture and aromatic flavour. Independent arrangement for lunch and dinner today. Our third night in the Locando Don Serafino. [B]

Day 13 We'll drive today to Syracuse known in Italian as Siracusa. The city is divided in two, and we will stay on the pretty island of Ortigia, There are twenty-seven centuries of history in this city. It's lovely to wander through the narrow lanes inside the ancient city centre, or follow the sea wall and catch the

afternoon breeze. The city has evocative remains from the classical period, and in view of our creative writing theme it is worth mentioning the town's association with the cultivation of papyrus and a papyrus museum! Independent arrangement for lunch and dinner today. Our hotel for two nights is the very comfortable Domus Mariae with its location close to the sea walls. www.domusmariaebenessere.com [B]

Day 14 In the morning you might want to make your own way independently to see the ancient theatre, and the vast artificial cave, known as the Ear of Dionysius, as well as walking through part of the archaeological site to the stadium. Rest of the day free: you may want to see one of the excellent museums. We'll mark the end of our holiday with our final dinner together. [B, D]

Day 15 After breakfast we'll make our way to the bus station to catch the public bus to Catania airport [B].

