

# Historical and cultural ITINERARY

## 1) Piazza Duomo

The "Piazza Magna" has always been the main square of the city and is overlooked by important baroque monuments such as the Cathedral entitled to St. Agatha, the City Hall, the Clerics' palace and Uzeda doorway.

In the middle is the symbol of Catania, 'u Liotru', made in lavastone and representing an elephant surmounted by an obelisk. The monument was realized between 1735 and 1737 by the architect Giovan Battista Vaccarini.

## 2) La Cattedrale

Founded on the remains of ancient Roman Baths between 1086 and 1090 during the Norman conquest, the Cathedral had the characteristics of an "ecclesia munita", with huge lavastone apses ending in crenellations. The dome and the transept were spared by the destructive 1693 earthquake. The restoring works for the new building began in 1709 and were entrusted in 1730 by bishop Galletti to the architect Giovan Battista Vaccarini. On the right side of the main altar is St. Agatha's Chapel, where the relics of our Holy Patron St. Agatha are conserved, the so-called "cammareda" (the little room).

## 3) Palazzo degli Elefanti

To its construction, occurred after the 1693 earthquake, contributed the architects Longobardo, Vaccarini and Battaglia; the monumental staircase was later realized in XIX century by the architect Stefano Ittar. The entrance hall houses the two eighteenth-century Senate carriages on which the authorities parade on the first day of the celebrations in honour of St. Agatha. In the Hall of Honour on the first floor, titled to the famous musician Vincenzo Bellini, you can admire the works by the painter Giuseppe Sciuti.

## 4) Fontana dell'Amenano

The Carrara-marble fountain created by the Neapolitan sculptor Tito Angelini in 1867 is a tribute to the River Amenano, represented by a young man holding a cornucopia from which pours out a wide flow of water, seen by the inhabitants of Catania as a sheet, "linzolu", which gives the fountain the popular name of "acqua 'o linzolu".

## 5) Palazzo dei Clerici

The clerics' seminary, today Clerics' palace, was rebuilt after the 1693 earthquake and has maintained the original sixteenth-century plan. It's one of the highest baroque expressions in the City and incorporates on its right side the Fountain of the seven channels located at the entrance of Pescheria, the famous fishmarket considered one of the most beautiful open markets in the Mediterranean. A flyover upon Uzeda doorway connects it with the Cathedral.

## 6) Porta Uzeda

Entitled to the Spanish viceroy Giovanni Francesco Pacco, duke of Uzeda, it was opened in 1696 in a segment of sixteenth-century Charles V's walls overlooking the sea, called Porta grande della Marina (Big Door of the Marina) as well.

## 7) Terme Achilliane

The Achilliane Baths are one of the most significant buildings of the Roman Imperial period in Catania and are situated underneath the floor of the Cathedral; you can get into them by the parvis. The spa, fed by the river Amenano, was brought to light after the catastrophic earthquake of 1693 at the behest of Prince of Biscari, Ignazio Paternò Castello.

On the vaults are still visible stuccos with cupids, animals, tendrils and grapes. In the middle of this room there is a bathtub originally covered in marble as well as the rest of the pavement.

## 8) Badia di Sant'Agata

The church, which faces the northern façade of the cathedral, was destroyed by the earthquake of 1693. From 1735 to 1767 the architect Giovan Battista Vaccarini worked at its reconstruction and in 1742 the dome was set up on lavastone arches; its plan is centric and hosts side chapels.

## 9) Palazzo Biscari

At the end of the seventeenth century, after the 1693 earthquake, the noble family of the Biscari princes wanted to build it on a stretch of Charles V's old walls on a project by the architect Alonzo Di Benedetto. The

palace is one of baroque wonders in Catania and contains rooms with high ceilings, frescoed, still used for ceremonies and events. The Salone delle Feste, entirely covered with mirrors and decorations, overlooks the Marina through seven magnificent windows realized by the sculptor from Messina Antonino Amato.

## 10) Palazzo Platamone (Palace of Culture)

Evidence of late medieval and Renaissance architecture, the palace owes its name to the Platamone family, one of the most eminent in Catania in XV century. Donated to the religious and become the Monastery of St. Pacido, it was destroyed by the earthquake of 1693. Today only a loggia surmounted by a balcony remains of it, still visible at one end of the courtyard. Referred to nowadays as Palace of Culture, it hosts contemporary exhibitions and cultural events.

## 11) Teatro Greco e Romano

Brought to light at the end of the nineteenth century, its construction dates back to the imperial Roman era (II century d. C.). Implanted on a Greek theatre, the cavea, the orchestra and some parts of the scene have been preserved. In the hilly part, to the east, it contemplates a minor theater, dating back to the same period, of semicircular shape, called Odeon, whose function was to host musical and dance performances, as well as rehearsals of the performances held in the immediate theater.

## 12) Casa Museo Vincenzo Bellini

The House-Museum Vincenzo Bellini, where the musician was born on the night between 2 and 3 November 1801, is located inside the eighteenth-century palace Gravina Cruyllas on Piazza San Francesco. You get into the birth house through a small entrance leading to the original rooms of the time with the hexagonal tiles, the cross vaults, the small balconies overlooking via Vittorio Emanuele, the well and the suggestive alcove, in which the little genius was born, and you end your tour in the little funerary room, originally used as a kitchen.

## 13) Casa Museo Giovanni Verga

The House-Museum of Giovanni Verga in Catania was the native home of the famous Italian writer. The apartment used as a literary museum is located on the second floor of a building in the historical centre of Catania, where Verga spent his childhood and later several years with his family. The interiors are still the original ones. The writer's complete library you can admire in the room which was his own private studio, is composed of 2600 volumes placed on six walnut bookcases. In the display cabinets are also distributed copies of Verga's manuscripts.

## 14) Piazza Università

One of the most beautiful and scenographic squares in the historical centre, it displays on the west side the University Palace founded originally in 1434 by Alfonso V of Aragon and rebuilt in 1695. On the east side, you can admire Sanguliano Palace, built in 1738 on the project by the architect Giovanni Battista Vaccarini for the marquis of San Giuliano belonging to the family Paternò-Castello. The square hosts four artistic bronze candle holders realized in 1975 by the local sculptors Mimi Maria Lazzaro and Domenico Tudisco representing four ancient indigenous legends: Gammazita, the Uzeda Paladin, the Pious brothers and Colapesce.

## 15) Basilica di Maria SS. dell'Elmosina la "Collegiata"

This Church existed already in the fifth century as a little niche dedicated to Holy Mary of alms, better known as the "Collegiata". It's a masterful example of Catanese Baroque. Following the earthquake in 1693, it was rebuilt on the ruins, in the same zone but back to front in its current orientation.

Rebuilt in the first years of the eighteenth century, on a project by the Jesuit Angelo Italia. In the church there is an apsidal wooden choir, it's the second one most important after that of the Cathedral.

## 16) Via Crociferi

Realized in the XV/III century, it's a monumental street in Catania's historical centre, the synthesis of the Catanese Baroque. It owes its name to the Crociferi

Fathers who had their convent there and the adjoining church of San Camillo. In the short space of about 200 metres there are four churches and annexed monasteries: San Benedetto, San Giuliano, San Camillo and the Jesuit College.

At the southern side you can see Benedettine's Arch, so - called "dammusu" while at the north one there is Villa Cerami, built between 1724 and 1727 by Domenico Russo Scammacca, prince of Cerami.

## 17) Anfiteatro Romano

The Roman Amphitheatre, with its elegant elliptical shape, it's one of the most significant monuments of Catania's Roman Period, built around the middle of the II century AD.

The largest in Sicily, it can be compared with others in Italy like Colosseum. The monument was built in lava stone, the sittings and the podium were covered with marble and also the colonnades. It was used for performances, naumachia and gladiator fights.

## 18) Giardino Bellini

The oldest part of the garden dates back to the eighteenth century and belonged to Prince Ignazio Paternò Castello di Biscari, who wanted it according to the types of that time with mazes of hedges, statues and gushing fountains. Inaugurated on January 6, 1883, it is considered one of the most beautiful in Europe; in the west we can find the "Viale degli Uomini Illustri" which houses the busts of the most famous people of Italian and Catania history.

## 19) Il Monastero dei Benedettini

The Benedictine Monastery in Piazza Dante is an excellent example of late Sicilian Baroque. The monastic building, which was built in the 16th century and has developed up to the present day, is an example of architectural integration between the ages. Today it is a UNESCO World Heritage Site. It houses a Roman domus, cloisters and a splendid vertical garden.

## 20) Chiesa di San Nicolò l'Arena

The Church of San Nicolò l'Arena, whose facade remained unfinished in 1796, is one of the largest in Europe. In its interior you can admire along the transept a suggestive sundial built in 1841 with zodiacal figures. In the high altar a beautiful wooden choir introduces the big eighteenth-century organ by Donato del Piano. You can also visit a Memorial in memory of the fallen soldiers during the First World War.

## 21) Castello Ursino

Built at the behest of Frederick II between 1239 and 1250, the Ursino Castle, designed by the architect Riccardo da Lentini, it has a square plan delimited by four circular towers at the corners and four semitowers, two of which were destroyed by the earthquake of 1693. Over the centuries the castle has played prominent roles becoming a royal seat, first with the Aragoneses, then in the sixteenth century with the Spanish Viceroys. From the seventeenth century it was used as a prison, as evidenced by the graffiti and inscriptions made by prisoners still visible on the ground floor of the building. Due to the eruption of 1669 the lava flowing towards the sea surrounded it, leaving it almost intact.

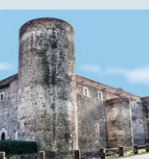
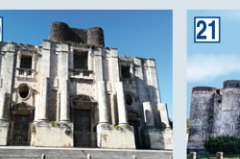
Acquired by the Municipality of Catania in 1932, it was used as the Civic Museum of Catania in 1934 and houses the collection of the Benedictine Fathers, the Finocchiaro's, part of that of prince Biscari and part of that donated by baron Zappalà-Asmundo.

## 22) Porta Garibaldi

Initially called Porta Ferdinandea on the occasion of the wedding between Ferdinand I of the two Sicilies and Mary Caroline Hapsburg-Lorraine, it is a triumphal arch built in 1768 on the project by the architects Stefano Ittar and Francesco Battaglia. It is located in the district Fortino, so called in memory of a fortified position built after the 1669 lava flow which had damaged the western side of the city by breaking down the medieval defenses.

## 23) Exhibition Center Le Ciminiere

Functional complex, born from the recovery of sulfur refineries of the late nineteenth century. Inside there are: the cinema museum, the museum of the 1943 landing and the exhibition of ancient maps of Sicily.



## INFO POINT

**Bureau Turismo** - Via Vittorio Emanuele II, 172  
T. 095 7425573 - 800 841042 - Lun/Sab. h. 8.00/19.00  
Domenica e Festivi h. 8.30/13.30.

## Bureau Turismo Aeroporto - Area arrivi

T. 095 7239682 - Lun/Sab. h. 8.00/19.00  
Domenica e Festivi h. 8.30/13.30.

## MUSEI E BIBLIOTECHE - MUSEUM AND LIBRARIES

### Museo Civico del Castello Ursino

P.zza Federico II di Svevia - T. 095 345830

### Museo Civico Belliniano

Piazza S. Francesco D'Assisi, 3 - T. 095 7150535

### Museo Emilio Greco

Via Vittorio Emanuele II, 121 (Palazzo della Cultura)  
Tel. 095 7428008

### Museo Diocesano

Via Etna, 8 - T. 095 281635

### Casa Museo Regionale Giovanni Verga

Via Sant'Anna, 8 - T. 095 7150598

### Centro Fieristico Le Ciminiere

Viale Africa - T. 095 401111

### Museo del Cinema

Piazzale Rocco Chinnici - T. 095 4011928

### Museo Storico dello Sbarco in Sicilia

Piazzale Rocco Chinnici - T. 095 4011929

### Mostra Permanente Collezione La Gumina

Carte Geografiche Antiche

Piazzale Rocco Chinnici - T. 095 4013072

### Museo Paleontologico

Via Borgo, 12 - T. 095 438531

### Monastero dei Benedettini

Piazza Dante, 32 - T. 095 7102767 - 334 9242464

### Palazzo della Cultura (ex Convento San Placido e Palazzo Platamone) - Via Vittorio Emanuele II, 121

T. 095 7428038

### Orto Botanico

Via Etna, 397 - T. 095 430901

### MACS

Via S. Francesco D'Assisi, 30

T. 095 6172035 - 342 3017376

### Chiesa Monumentale di S. Benedetto

Via Teatro Greco, 2 - T. 095 7704981 - 349 5023822

### MF Museum&Fashion

Via Museo Biscari, 16 - T. 095 2503188

### Museo Tattile Multimediale

Via Etna, 602 - T. 095 500177

### Archivio di Stato

Via Vittorio Emanuele II, 156 - T. 095 7159860

### Archivio Storico Catanese

Via Sant'Agata, 2 - T. 095 7422761

### Biblioteca Regionale Universitaria

Piazza Università, 2 - T. 095 7366111

### Biblioteca Ursino Recupero

Via Biblioteca, 13 - T. 095 316883

### Teatro Museo dei Pupi Siciliani Fratelli Napoli

Via Reitano, 55 - T+39 347 0954526

### SITI ARCHEOLOGICI - ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITES

#### Anfiteatro Romano

Piazza Stesicoro - T. 095 7150508

#### Teatro Greco Romano e Odeon

Via Vittorio Emanuele II, 266 - T. 095 7150508

#### Terme Achilliane

Piazza Duomo - T. 095 281635

Acquisto biglietti presso il Museo Diocesano

#### Terme della Rotonda

Via della Mecca - T. 095 7150508

#### Terme dell'Indirizzo

Piazza Curro - T. 095 7150508

#### Pozzo di Gammazita

Via San Calogero - Visite su prenotazione

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Vigili del Fuoco 115

Soccorso in Mare 1530

Guardia Medica 095 377122

Piazza Municipale 095 531333

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