

Sicilia

Because I am able to trace my Italian heritage back to Sicilia, I have decided to learn and write about Sicilia. From doing this research, I have learned much about the history of Sicilia. Over 2500 years ago, Sicilia began as a cultural crossroads. Because of its strategic location in the Mediterranean, it attracted many nations to its shores. As the largest island in the Mediterranean Sea, Sicilia is also the largest region of the modern state of Italy. Its central location and natural resources ensured that it has been considered a crucial location due in large part to its importance for Mediterranean trade routes. No where else have Phoenicians, Greeks, Romans, Byzantines, Arabs, Normans, French, Spanish, Italians and British left such a lasting impression. The Arab culture gave us the cannoli, the Greeks awesome temples, the Romans beautiful mosaics and the Normans and Spanish remarkable Cathedrals. Today the vibrant cities of Palermo, Taormina, Syracuse and Cefalu reflect that unique history.

There are many beautiful sites in Sicilia, beginning with Agrigento, which holds the most magnificent Greek temple ruins existing in the world today. Also very beautiful, is the impressive Norman cathedral in the town of Monreale, which is adorned with breathtaking mosaics. The City of Taormina boasts an ancient Greek theatre, while the Cefalu Roman and Syracuse Spanish Churches are unrivaled. The Roman Villa of Casale has recently unearthed its historic and beautiful mosaic floors. Sicilia, holding many fascinating man-made structures, also holds natural beauty with its volcanic peak of Mt. Etna, the luscious green of the vineyards, and the sparkling blue waters on the coast. Mt. Etna, Europe's largest, highest and most active volcano, has erupted about

150 times, yet there are many settlements, filled with people disregarding its danger, located as near as 9 miles from its radius.

When many think of Italy, images of pasta, pizza, and gelato come to mind, but few think of the incredibly genuine flavors of the Mediterranean diet. The diet of Sicilians was sculpted by its location in the world, which features long growing seasons, mild climate, and its proximity to the Mediterranean Sea. The temperatures never dip below 50 degrees or peak higher than 90 degrees, frequently in the comfortable range of 60-80 degrees. The beautiful climate has created a vast array of colorful fruits and vegetables, olives and its oils, rich wines, varieties of nuts, and fresh fish. Despite these natural and fresh staples, Sicilians take pride in the quality of their cheeses, salami, and sausages.

I was also able to learn that Sicilia is home to the delicious cannoli. Making cannoli is something that I cherish and look forward to enjoying as a family on holidays. I have also enjoyed working the cannoli booth at the annual ItalianFest with my grandparents. My family's Italian heritage is something that we love to celebrate through sharing Italian meals together, discovering our Italian ancestry, and even vacationing there.

Works Cited

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