

## 1

## The Best of Sicily

The largest island in the Mediterranean Sea, **Sicily** is a land of beauty, mystery, and world-class monuments. It's an exotic mix of bloodlines and architecture from medieval Normandy, Aragonese Spain, Moorish North Africa, ancient Greece, Phoenicia, and Rome. Much of the island's raw, primitive nature has faded in modern times, as thousands of newfangled cars clog the narrow lanes of its biggest city, **Palermo**. Poverty remains widespread, yet the age-old stranglehold of the Mafia seems less certain because of the increasingly vocal protests of an outraged public. On the eastern edge of the island is **Mount Etna**, the tallest active volcano in Europe. Many of Sicily's larger urban areas (**Trapani**, **Catania**, and **Messina**) are relatively unattractive, but areas of ravishing beauty and eerie historical interest are found in the cities of **Syracuse**, **Taormina**, **Agrigento**, and **Selinunte**. Sicily's ancient ruins are rivaled only by those of Rome itself. Agrigento's **Valley of the Temples**, for example, is alone worth the trip.

### 1 The Best Travel Experiences

- **Wandering Around Palermo's La Kalsa:** The ancient quarter of La Kalsa, created during the city's Arab domination, is as close as Sicily comes to having a casbah typical of the North African cities to the south. Although there are safer places to be, this densely populated district of narrow streets and markets provides a view of local Sicilian life unlike anywhere else on the island. To make your experience more authentic, you'll naturally purchase some *babbaluci* from one of the many vendors. These are marinated baby snails sold in paper cornets for devouring on the spot. Head for Piazza della Kalsa, the heart of the quarter, and the day is yours. See "The Major Attractions" in chapter 4.
- **Walking Among the Dead:** Outside Palermo, the Catacombe dei Cappuccini amazingly preserve the lifelike corpses of some 8,000 Palermitans entombed here from the late 16th century until 1920, when the last victim, a 2-year-old *bambina*, was laid to rest. In dimly lit, damp, murky, subterranean corridors, you can wander among these mummies. It's a gory sight, but it's absolutely fascinating. Not only is the clothing preserved but so are the skin, hair, and eyes of some of these corpses, attired in their Sunday best, giving you gruesome smiles. See "The Major Attractions" in chapter 4.
- **Close Encounters with the Sicilian Apennines:** The island isn't all coastline, even though most visitors rarely dip into the hinterlands. For a close-up view of life as lived in the "Sicilian Alps," head inland to explore Sicily's greatest national park, Parco Naturale Regionale delle Madonie, sprawling across 39,679 hectares (98,007 acres). The town of Cefalù makes the best base for exploring the park. Castles

## 2 CHAPTER 1 · THE BEST OF SICILY

dotting the park's lofty villages evoke the Middle Ages and the fiefdom of the ruling Ventimiglia families who presided over post-Angevin Sicily. This is the "breadbasket of Sicily," and you'll pass through pretty farms and vineyards. There's no better place on the island to picnic in the summer, with fields giving way to downhill skiers in winter. See "Cefalù" in chapter 6.

- **Climbing the Volcano:** Follow in the footsteps of the "disgraced" Ingrid Bergman, who came here in 1949 with her "scandalous" lover and director, Roberto Rossellini, to make the ill-fated film *Stromboli*. On the Aeolian island of Stromboli, the most spectacular of its archipelago, you can witness showers of flaring rock and sparks from its volcano. For the most dramatic viewings, visit at night, when you can witness up close the channels from which the lava flows toward the sea along *sciara del fuoco*, or "trails of fire." At the top you're treated to fiery explosions, a great show that's gone on for centuries. Just wear something over your coiffure so that you, too, don't light up the night. See "Stromboli: Climbing the Volcano" in chapter 7.
- **Cooling Off in Gole dell'Alcantara:** Often visited from Taormina en route to Mount Etna, the Alcantara lava gorges are the best place to experience almost freezing

waters when the temperatures in eastern Sicily soar to cauldron conditions. These gorges were carved by a river of the same name into rock-hard basalt, the creation of one of Mount Etna's ancient eruptions. You can rent thigh-length boots, but many prefer to take along "a swimming costume," as Victorian guidebooks advised. This wonderland is the place to be a kid again, splashing around in the cooling waters off eastern Sicily from May to September. There's nothing quite like it in all of Sicily. See "Taormina: Farther Afield to the Alcantara Gorges" in chapter 8.

- **Visiting Medieval Erice:** This once heavily fortified and walled mountain town, left over from the Middle Ages, is suspended 755m (2,478 ft.) above sea level. Ancients called the city Eryx, and a glorious golden temple dedicated to Aphrodite at the pinnacle of the town was like a gleaming lighthouse for ancient mariners. You can wander its cobblestone streets and peer into hidden, flower-filled courtyards along twisting lanes. Nothing seems as foreboding as a walk down a *vanelle*, an alley so narrow that only one person can pass at a time. Many Sicilian men journey here looking for a wife, as the women of Erice have been considered the most beautiful in Sicily for centuries. See "Erice" in chapter 13.

## 2 The Most Romantic Getaways

- **Atelier Sul Mare** (Castel di Tusa; ☎ 0921-334295): Sicily's most unusual hotel lies far off the beaten path. The most iconoclastic hotel on the island was created by an artist who has anointed himself the "Ambassador to Beauty." Some of the bedrooms are the creative

statements of renowned artists who lived on the premises for months and made their rooms works of art. See page 145.

- **Hotel Villa Sonia** (Castelmola; ☎ 0942-28082): High above the resort of Taormina, this 1974 old-style villa is one of Sicily's most

appealing hotels and a retreat for escapists. Its rooms opening onto spectacular views, it is a cozy, tranquil nest, with beautiful public areas. Its restaurant is so excellent you won't want to leave the premises at night. See page 187.

- **Palazzo San Domenico** (Taormina; ☎ 0942-613111): No other hotel in Sicily offers the sweeping majesty of this time-tested icon whose rooms were installed in a 15th-century monastery. Grand comfort on a deluxe level goes hand-in-hand with such charming ecclesiastical touches as Madonnas in wall niches and centuries-old depictions of saints praying in ecstasy. See page 181.
- **Villa del Bosco** (Catania; ☎ 095-7335100): Few island hotels evoke the grand and stately aristocratic life of the 19th century as does this estate lying 5km (3 miles) south of the center of Catania. Once a private home, it has been

successfully converted into a first-class hotel that often attracts celebrities. Its on-site restaurant is another good reason to stay here. See page 209.

- **Eremo della Giubiliana** (Ragusa; ☎ 0932-669119): A stone-built estate in sunny isolation, this is a baronial compound of refinement and grace. A stay here is like a visit to the grand country estate of some Sicilian don of the non-Mafia type. All the luxuries of the 21st century are found here, as well as fine dining, but the aura is definitely Old World. See page 273.
- **Foresteria Baglio della Luna** (Agrigento; ☎ 0922-511061): This is one of the grandest country inns of Sicily, having been meticulously restored by an antiques dealer and turned into a glamorous oasis of style, comfort, and elegance. Agrigento never had such a stylish place to stay. See page 286.

### 3 The Best Museums

- **Galleria Regionale della Sicilia** (Palermo; ☎ 091-6164317): This is the most magnificent collection of regional art in all of Sicily—in fact, the gallery is one of the finest in Italy itself. Housed in the Catalán-Gothic Palazzo Abatellis, its superb collections trace Sicilian painting and sculpture from the 13th to the 18th century. Some of its paintings, such as *Triumph of Death* from 1449 or *Eleanora of Aragon* from the same century, are among the most impressive masterpieces in the south of Italy. See “The Major Attractions” in chapter 4.
- **Museo Archeologico Regionale** (Palermo; ☎ 091-6116807): One of the greatest archaeological museums in all of Italy is filled

with a virtual “British Museum” collection of rare finds that is particularly rich in artifacts from the Greek and Roman colonizations of the island. The metopes dug up from the city of Selinunte alone are worth the visit here, as it was one of the great cities of Magna Graecia. See “The Major Attractions” in chapter 4.

- **Museo Mandralisca** (Cefalù; ☎ 0921-421547): Come here for no other reason than to gaze in wonder at Antonello da Messina's *Portrait of an Unknown Man*, painted in 1465. It is the masterpiece of this great Sicilian artist. While here, you can check out the other art treasures of this impressive regional museum, including everything from a Chinese puzzle

## 4 CHAPTER 1 · THE BEST OF SICILY

in ivory to a 4th-century-B.C. vase. See “Cefalù: Seeing the Sights” in chapter 6.

- **Museo Regionale** (Messina; ☎ 090-361292): A former silk mill has been successfully converted into one of the island’s most impressive regional museums, one that contains Sicily’s greatest collection of art from the 15th to the 17th century. See “Messina: Exploring the City on Foot” in chapter 6.
- **Museo Civico** (Termini Imerese; ☎ 091-8113557): Housed in a 14th-century *palazzo* (palace) is one of the finest regional museums in Sicily, devoted to art and archaeology. The Hellenistic and Roman pottery is among its greatest treasures, and the museum is also rich in medieval and Renaissance art. See “Termini Imerese: Exploring the Town” in chapter 6.
- **Museo Archeologico Eoliano** (Lipari; ☎ 090-9880174): One of the great archaeological museums of Italy lies hidden away on the volcanic Aeolian island of Lipari. Among its many celebrated exhibitions are a stunning collection of ancient vases, many from the 4th century B.C., and a magnificent trove of theatrical masks unearthed from tombs of the same era. See “Lipari: Exploring the Island” in chapter 7.
- **Museo Civico Belliniano** (Catania; ☎ 095-7150535): This museum pays homage to the composer Vincenzo Bellini, who was born here on 1801. The rather drab five-room apartment evokes old Catania and is filled with Bellini memorabilia, including original folios of his operas, his death mask, and even the coffin in which his body was transferred from Paris. See “Seeing the Sights” in chapter 9.
- **Museo Archeologico Regionale Paolo Orsi** (Syracuse; ☎ 0931-464022): This is a showcase for some of the most important archaeological finds of southern Italy. Especially intriguing are the showrooms devoted to the Greek colonization of Sicily, including the celebrated *Landolina Venus*. See “Syracuse: Seeing the Ancient Sights” in chapter 10.
- **Museo Regionale di Arte Medioevale e Moderna** (Syracuse; ☎ 0931-69511): One of Sicily’s greatest art collections is housed in the 13th-century Palazzo Belomo. The collections are the finest in the painting and decorative arts of southeastern Sicily and include such masterpieces as *The Burial of St. Lucia* by Caravaggio. See “Syracuse: Exploring Ortygia Island” in chapter 10.

## 4 The Best Cathedrals &amp; Churches

- **Oratorio del Rosario di San Domenico** (Palermo): This 16th-century oratory is the stunning achievement of sculptor and baroque decorator extraordinaire, Giacomo Serpotta. To many, it is the equal of the also glorious Santa Cita oratory (see below). Serpotta’s stucco designs are among the greatest in southern Italy. See “The Major Attractions” in chapter 4.
- **Oratorio di San Lorenzo** (Palermo): This is yet another great oratory that shows the magnificent decoration of master sculptor Giacomo Serpotta, who created this masterpiece here between 1698 and 1710. See “The Major Attractions” in chapter 4.

- **Chiesa di Santa Cita/Oratorio del Rosario di Santa Cita** (Palermo): The church of Santa Cita, bombed in World War II, is visited mainly for its stunning oratory, representing the crowning architectural achievement of sculptor Giacomo Serpotta, who labored on it between 1686 and 1718. His oratory of cherubs and angels is a real romp. See “The Major Attractions” in chapter 4.
- **Monreale Duomo** (Monreale): This grand cathedral represents the pinnacle of the glory of Arab-Norman art and architecture. Launched in 1174 by William II, the Duomo is the most stunning of the Norman churches of Sicily, the mosaics in its interior rivaling those of the celebrated Cappella Palatina in Palermo. See “Monreale” in chapter 5.
- **Duomo** (Cefalù): One of Sicily’s most magnificent Norman cathedrals, built by Roger II, stands in this charming little north coast town. The cathedral is known for its grand array of Byzantine-Norman mosaics completed in 1148. They are a virtual tour de force of this type of painstaking art. See “Cefalù: Seeing the Sights” in chapter 6.
- **Duomo** (Catania): Dedicated to the martyred St. Agatha, this cathedral was built on the orders of the Norman king, Roger I, and was largely destroyed in the earthquake that devastated Catania in 1693. What was left was redesigned with parts that survived the catastrophe. The great composer of operas, Bellini, is buried here, as are several Aragonese kings. See “Seeing the Sights” in chapter 9.

## 5 The Best & Most Evocative Ruins

- **Tyndaris** (Capo Tindari): Tyndaris was a bustling place at its founding by Dionysius the Elder in 396 B.C. Later destroyed by pillaging conquerors, Tyndaris has now been unearthed, and the ruins of everything from a basilica to a Roman theater can be seen. The view of the coast and sea is reason enough to visit. See “Cefalù: Easy Excursions” in chapter 6.
- **Teatro Greco** (Taormina): Opening onto a view of Mount Etna in the background, this Greek amphitheater was hewn out of a rocky slope on Mount Tauro. What you see today is what’s left after destruction by the Arabs in the 10th century. See “Taormina: Exploring the Area” in chapter 8.
- **Ortygia Island** (Syracuse): Famous in Greek mythology, this island is filled with ancient ruins such as the Tempio di Apollo, the Greek temple dedicated to Apollo that dates from the 6th century B.C. and the oldest peripteral (having a single row of columns) Doric temple still left in the world. See “Syracuse: Exploring Ortygia Island” in chapter 10.
- **Parco Archeologico della Neapolis** (Syracuse): Two of the greatest attractions of Sicily—both from the world of the ancients—lie in this city in southeastern Sicily. The Greek Theater is one of the great theaters of the classical period still remaining. The other attraction is the Latomia del Paradiso, or the “Ear of Dionysius,” the most famous of the ancient quarries of Syracuse. See “Syracuse: Seeing the Ancient Sights” in chapter 10.
- **Villa Romana del Casale** (Piazza Armerina): This is one of the grandest of all Roman villas to

## 6 CHAPTER 1 · THE BEST OF SICILY

have survived from the classical era. It contains a total of 40 rooms “carpeted” with 11,340 sq. m (37,800 sq. ft.) of some of the greatest and most magnificent mosaics in western Europe. Its most reproduced mosaics are those of 10 young women dressed in strapless two-piece bikinis that would not be out of style today. See “Piazza Armerina: Seeing the Sights” in chapter 11.

- **Valle dei Templi** (Agrigento): Containing the largest and greatest collection of ancient Greek ruins in all the world, the “Valley of the Temples” outside the city of Agrigento opens onto the southern coast of Sicily. The temples are especially stunning and evocative at night when they are floodlit. The most impressive temples are those dedicated to Juno (from the mid-5th c. B.C.) and to Concord. Concord is the most magnificent of all, with 13 wind-eroded

columns still standing. See “Agrigento & the Valley of the Temples” in chapter 12.

- **Selinunte’s Archaeological Garden** (Selinunte, west of Agrigento): Guy de Maupassant called these ruins an “immense heap of fallen columns,” and so they are, but they are also the remains of one of the greatest colonies of ancient Greece. The temples date from the 6th century to the 5th century B.C. See “Selinunte” in chapter 12.
- **Tempio di Segesta** (Segesta): One of the world’s most perfectly preserved monuments from antiquity, Tempio di Segesta was constructed in the 5th century B.C. Amazingly, 36 of its Doric columns, supporting entablatures and pediments, still stand. A visit to this remote site in western Sicily also gives you a chance to see a large Greek *teatro* (theater) in ruins. See “Segesta” in chapter 13.

## 6 The Best Beaches

- **Mondello Lido** (Mondello): This is where the citizens of Palermo flock on a hot summer day to escape the stifling heat of the capital city. In Sicily, Mondello Lido is only outclassed in fashion by the beaches at the foot of Taormina. Its wide, sandy beaches extend for 2km (1¼ miles) from Monte Pellegrino to Monte Gallo. See “Mondello: Fun at the Beach” in chapter 5.
- **Mortelle**: The best sands in northeast Sicily are found at the resort of Mortelle, which is where the Messinese themselves go to escape the scalding heat in their capital. The resort lies 12km (7½ miles) north of Messina at the northeast tip of the island. The area is filled with good sandy beaches so you can take your pick.

The best-accessorized strip is called Lido dei Tirreno. See “Messina: Easy Excursions to the Beach” in chapter 6.

- **Spiaggia Sabbie Nere** (Vulcano): Completely off the beaten trail, “Black Sands Beach” is the finest in the Aeolian archipelago—that is, once you get over the fact that its sands are actually black and not powdery white. Beaching it here is something to tell the folks back home. See “Vulcano: Exploring the Island” in chapter 7.
- **Giardini-Naxos**: On the waterfront near Taormina, Giardini-Naxos is one of the best and most sophisticated seaside resorts of Sicily. The sandy beach, one of the island’s best, lies between Capo Taormina in the northwest, sweeping south to Capo Schisò in

the south. It may lack Taormina's medieval charm, but Giardini is filled with good hotels, fine swimming, and excellent restaurants. See "Giardini-Naxos" in chapter 8.

- **Lido Mazzarò** (Taormina): The best-equipped beach in Sicily, Lido Mazzarò is also one of the finest, a favorite sea-bordering strip of sand and gravel once frequented by the stars of Hollywood's Golden Age and still as interesting as ever. A 15-minute cable-car ride down from the medieval town of Taormina, the

beach is a hot spot from April to October. Bars and restaurants border the sands. See "Taormina: Exploring the Area" in chapter 8.

- **Marina di Ragusa**: Southeastern Sicily has a number of beaches, some of them quite tacky, but Marina di Ragusa is the best of the lot. This is quite an appealing area, and if Ragusa is too hot in summer you might anchor here in a hotel and visit the ancient city on a day trip. The resort also has the best ice-cream bars, popular pubs, and watersports in the area. See "Ragusa" in chapter 11.

## 7 The Best Luxury Hotels

- **Villa Igiea Grand Hotel** (Palermo; ☎ 091-6312111): This old villa built at the turn of the 20th century in the Art Nouveau style is the grandest address in Palermo. Surrounded by a park overlooking the sea, it provides an old-world atmosphere but has all the modern comforts. It was once a private villa but has been handsomely converted for guests. See page 51.
- **Grand Hotel Liberty** (Messina; ☎ 090-6409436): This is one of the grandest hotels on the eastern coast of Sicily. It was transformed in the mid-1990s into a bastion of comfort and tranquility, with some of the island's best and most plush bedrooms. In all, a stay here is a beautiful way to visit "messy" Messina. See page 131.
- **Villa Meligunis** (Lipari; ☎ 090-9812426): This hotel is as good as it gets in the volcanic Aeolian islands. A restored cluster of 17th-century fishermen's cottages forms the nucleus of the compound. All modern conveniences in this remote outpost have been added. See page 159.
- **Grand Hotel Timeo** (Taormina; ☎ 0942-23801): Liz Taylor and Richard Burton have long vamoosed, but this deluxe hotel still attracts the rich and famous who want to enjoy the stately comfort of a 19th-century neo-classical villa near Taormina's Greek theater. It's lighthearted and baronial at the same time. See page 181.
- **Excelsior Grand Hotel** (Catania; ☎ 095-7476111): This is the leading hotel of Sicily's second city, a monument to the modernism of the *La Dolce Vita* days of the 1950s when it was first constructed. The city may be in decay, but the hotel is completely up to date, housing its guests in luxury and comfort. See page 209.
- **Grand Hotel** (Syracuse; ☎ 0931-464600): This turn-of-the-20th-century hotel is so old it's new again following a major upgrade and renovation in the 1990s. Its stately, old-fashioned charm has been preserved, but its comforts are definitely 21st century. It's the best place to stay if you plan to visit the archaeological gardens of Syracuse. See page 251.

## 8 The Best Moderately Priced Hotels

- **Palazzo Excelsior** (Palermo; ☎ 091-6256176): With its faded 19th-century nostalgia, this is a very appealing choice lying on the most prestigious street of Palermo, but in an isolated spot. Much of the interior is appealingly dowdy. It's not for everyone, but it attracts those discerning guests who like staying in a living museum. See page 56.
- **Hotel Grotta Azzurra** (Ustica; ☎ 091-8449396): On this remote island off the northern coast of Sicily is Ustica's finest accommodation, set on a wide plateau above the ocean. It's a lush resort-style Mediterranean vacation retreat, and the prices are most affordable. See page 122.
- **Villa Fabbiano** (Taormina; ☎ 0942-626058): Romantically positioned in a hilltop village, this affordable hotel is a little gem. You're in a beautiful setting amid good furnishings, but you pay only a fraction of the price charged by nearby competitors such as the deluxe Grand Hotel Timeo. See page 184.
- **Villa Mora** (Giardini-Naxos; ☎ 0942-51839): Its bedrooms opening onto views of the Ionian Sea, this is the ultimate beachfront retreat for those who prefer to be right on the water and not anchored in the hilltop medieval village of Taormina above. With private balconies opening onto the bay, this small hotel is an oasis of charm and tranquility, with good rooms and pleasantly aromatic Sicilian cuisine. See page 199.
- **Hotel Moderno** (Erice; ☎ 0923-869300): In spite of its dull and misleading name, this is quite a good hotel in Sicily's most enchanting medieval town. Rooms are in an attractively decorated main building or in an annex. All units have hints of 19th-century styling and open onto private balconies or terraces with views in all directions. See page 301.

## 9 The Best Restaurants

- **La Scuderia** (Palermo; ☎ 091-520323): At the foot of Monte Pellegrino, 5km (3 miles) north of the city, this is Palermo's grandest restaurant, with superb international and Italian cuisine. Talented chefs turn out a tempting array of dishes prepared with market-fresh ingredients and served on the town's prettiest flower terrace. See page 61.
- **Charleston Le Terrazze** (Mondello; ☎ 091-450171): At Palermo's fashionable beach resort, this restaurant serves a better cuisine than that found in the capital city itself. It's housed in a building from 1913. The chefs use the finest ingredients in preparing the Sicilian/international cuisine. See page 117.
- **Osteria del Duomo** (Cefalù; ☎ 0921-421838): Its location across from the town's most famous cathedral is touristy, but this first-rate restaurant is anything but. It's a bastion of some of the north coast's grandest cuisine, specializing in sophisticated Sicilian fare along with a discreet offering of international dishes that have attracted world celebrities. See page 142.
- **Casa Grugno** (Taormina; ☎ 0942-21208): Taormina has never had such a temple of gastronomy. One of the most creative and exciting restaurants in Sicily is

the culinary showcase for Andrea Zangerl, an Austria-born chef. His modern takes on Sicilian cuisine and sublime international dishes draw the world to his doorstep. See page 187.

- **Osteria I Tre Bicchieri** (Catania; ☎ 095-7153540): Opening in 2002, this quickly became Catania's finest restaurant, immediately celebrated by the local press for its Continental cuisine. Naples-born wunderkind and chef Laquinangelo Carmine has won immediate acceptance with his succulent cuisine. He is known especially for his preparation of Mediterranean fish. See page 215.
- **Le Zagare** (Catania; ☎ 095-7476111): There is no finer Grand Hotel-style dining on the eastern coast of Sicily than at this citadel of haute cuisine, serving the best of island dishes along with a well-chosen sampling of Continental recipes. The baroque city around it may be in decay, but the good life still holds forth here. See page 215.
- **Il Barocco** (Noto; ☎ 0931-835999): Your finest dining in

this ancient but decaying town west of Syracuse is at this restaurant in a building that was converted from an 18th-century stable block for a historic palace nearby. Today, it's the setting for excellent Sicilian dishes, especially seafood from the Ionian Sea. See page 266.

- **Locanda Don Serafino** (Ragusa; ☎ 0932-248778): One of the finest restaurants in southern Sicily is set inside the cellars of a 17th-century palace. The Sicilian cuisine, based on market-fresh products, is elegantly presented here—dishes designed to appeal to the most discerning of tastes. See page 275.
- **Ristorante Il Dehor** (Agrigento; ☎ 0922-511061): In a grand villa of a hotel, Foresteria Baglio della Luna, this is one of the six best restaurants in all of Sicily, serving top-notch and refined Sicilian and international cuisine. Winning rave reviews from the press in Europe, this place tempts you with an array of fixed-price menus from a very talented chef. See page 292.

## 10 The Best Down-Home Trattorie

- **Lo Scudiero** (Palermo; ☎ 091-581628): The capital's finest moderately priced trattoria is set across from the landmark Politeamo Theater. Honest, straightforward Sicilian food is served here at very affordable prices. See page 62.
- **Bye Bye Blues** (Mondello; ☎ 091-6841415): Even though the name doesn't sound very Sicilian, this is one of the best places to go for true island cooking. A casual, relaxed place outside Palermo, this trattoria is run by a husband-and-wife team full of "passion" about feeding you well from the island's bounty. See page 116.
- **E Pulera** (Lipari; ☎ 090-9811158): For some of the best Aeolian cooking, head here for time-tested recipes and some of the best fish specialties in the island chain, including a delectable fishermen's soup. No one makes a better swordfish ragout than these folks. See page 160.
- **Granduca** (Taormina; ☎ 0942-24983): The most atmospheric choice in this chic resort looks like an antiques store with potted plants. It also contains an alluring terrace with panoramic views. But most people come here for the excellent food and repertoire of

## 10 CHAPTER 1 · THE BEST OF SICILY

both Sicilian and Italian specialties. See page 191.

- **La Grotta di Carmelo** (Acireale; ☎ 095-7648153): The setting looks touristy and gimmicky, as you dine in a cave carved into a rock-face wall. Constructed of black lava rock from Mount Etna, the restaurant serves really good food, both seafood and typical Sicilian fare. Much of the fish is brought in daily after a harvesting in the Ionian Sea. See page 237.
- **Don Camillo** (Syracuse; ☎ 0931-67133): One of the city's finest and most affordable dining rooms was constructed on the foundation of a 15th-century monastery.

The cuisine of seafood and Sicilian recipes is among the most creative in town. It's a charmer. See page 258.

- **Monte San Giuliano** (Erice; ☎ 0923-869595): In the medieval hilltop village of Erice, the most spectacular in Sicily, you can dine at this undiscovered garden hideaway after making your way through narrow, labyrinthine streets. Most of the foodstuff is plucked from the sea, and is enjoyed in a rustic setting. Some of the dishes, such as a seafood couscous, are North African-inspired. See page 302.