**Churches and Sanctuaries of Eastern Sicily**

Duration: 4 days

**Day 1: Palermo**

Visit of the historic centre of Palermo which has countless places of worship, many of which have been declared a World Heritage Site by UNESCO. The religious symbol of the city is certainly the Cathedral where the relics of Saint Rosalie, Patroness of Palermo, are kept. You cannot miss a visit to another place that has made the capital famous all over the world: the Palatine Chapel; located inside the Norman Palace, it was erected in 1129 by King Roger II and dedicated to St. Peter the Apostle. In the historical centre and close to each other are the Church of Santa Caterina, which with its marble and frescoes is one of the most decorated in the city, the Church of Martorana, a perfect fusion of different artistic styles and the Church of San Cataldo famous for its red cups.

**Curiosity**: on the night between the 14th and 15th of July the feast of Santa Rosalia is celebrated in Palermo. Thousands of people accompany the "Carro della Santuzza" in a procession from the Cathedral to the Foro Italico. This event celebrates the liberation of the city from the plague in 1624, following the discovery of the relics of the Saint on Mount Pellegrino.

**Day 2: Palermo - Tindari - Messina (approx. 290 Km)**

Leaving Palermo to head to Messina we will visit the suggestive Sanctuary of the Black Madonna of Tindari. Built on a cliff overlooking the sea, it houses a unique statue of the Virgin Mary in cedar wood. Legend has it that this Byzantine statue was part of the cargo of a ship from the East that had found refuge from a storm in the bay above the Sanctuary today. Only when the Statue of the Black Madonna was deposited ashore, the ship was able to leave again. The afternoon is dedicated to the visit of Messina and another Sanctuary located on the Colle della Caperrina: the Sanctuary of the Madonna di Montalto. The history of this Sanctuary is linked to the war of the "Sicilian Vespers" in 1282, when it is said that the Madonna appeared under the robes of a White Lady who protected the people of Messina. According to the legend it was the flight of a white dove that determined the perimeter in which the church would be built.

**Curiosity**: the Cathedral of Messina is next to a bell tower about 60 meters high with a beautiful astronomical clock. At the stroke of noon the statuettes of the clock begin to move to the sound of the Ave Maria that echoes throughout the square.

**Day 3: Messina - Catania (approx. 95 Km)**

After breakfast departure to Catania, another city full of symbols and religious symbols. The main place of worship is the Cathedral of St. Agatha, located in the historic center and dedicated to the Virgin martyr and patron saint of the city. The Via dei Crociferi, one of the oldest streets of Catania, owes its name to the presence of four churches in a few hundred meters: the Church of San Benedetto, connected to the homonymous convent, the Church of San Francesco Borgia, the Jesuit College with its charming cloister and the Church of San Giuliano. Another religious place remarkable is the Monastery of the Benedictines, one of the largest monastery complexes in Europe.

**Curiosity**: in the month of February more than one million tourists and faithful arrive in Catania for the Feast of St. Agatha. During this religious celebration the remains of the Saint are transported in a silver coffin followed in procession by hundreds of devotees dressed in the traditional "sack". a tight white tunic and a black cap. The vara is followed by eleven "cannalori", wooden columns representing the city's arts and crafts guilds.

**Day 4: Departure**

After breakfast starts the round trip to destination