



Rick Steves[®]

SICILY

FIRST EDITION

and calls both places home. His strength is the archaeological areas of Sicily, such as Mozia and Segesta, but he also guides in the Palermo area (€150/half-day, mobile 339-440-9377, www.masitourguidesicily.com, masiandrea63@libero.it).

Food Tours

Streaty Food Tours provides a combination of nibbles and history on its entertaining tours. Marco and his colleagues will take you on a four-hour walk, sampling street food and delving into areas that a typical tourist might miss. This is a great way to spend time exploring Palermo with an energetic local (€35-40, maximum 12 people, www.streaty.com, info@streaty.com).

Market Tour and Cooking Class

Duchess Nicoletta, who rents apartments in her palace (see page 89), is also a well-known chef offering cooking courses. She'll lead you on a tour of a local market, then return to her palace for cooking instruction and lunch (€160/person, 5 hours including palace tour and lunch, usually Fri-Sat at 10:00-confirm ahead, mobile 333-316-5432, www.butera28.it, info@cookingwiththeduchess.com).

Palermo City Walk

On this self-guided walk, we'll loop from Teatro Massimo through the historic core of the city, exploring back streets and checking out churches. It's best to do the walk in the morning; if you finish by lunchtime, you can head to the Ballarò or Capo markets for street food (closed Sun). While this walk could be done without stops in an hour, there are several! sightseeing opportunities en route; the most worthwhile stops (Teatro Massimo at the beginning, three churches on Piazza Bellini at the end) add another two to three hours.

O Teatro Massimo

Close to the heart of Palermo and its people, Italy's largest opera house (and Europe's third-largest, rated *à.à.*) fills Piazza Verdi in a dramatic, Neoclassical fashion. Started in 1875, soon after the Risorgimento united Italy and Sicilian pride was at a peak, the massive theater took 22 years to build and became a symbol of the up-and-coming city as a magnet for arts and culture.



\$ Hotel del Centro offers classic elegance at a budget price. Their 27 rooms have high ceilings and original 19th-century details, but there are also modern conveniences (RS%-use code "ricksteves," air-con, elevator, Via Roma 72, tel. 091-617-0376, www.hoteldelcentro.it, info@hoteldelcentro.it, Giuseppe).

\$ Hotel Concordia, a floor above Hotel del Centro, is a simple, clean place with welcoming warmth a short walk from the train station. Friendly Dario mans the desk at his family's hotel, renting 12 colorful, good-value rooms (family rooms, air-con, elevator, Via Roma 72, mobile 324-091-7996, www.hotelconcordiapalermo.it, info@hotelconcordiapalermo.it).

\$ Palazzo Napolitano, just steps from the train station along busy Via Roma, has four spacious rooms in an elegant turn-of-the-century palace. The rooms combine antique architecture with sleek, modern furniture (air-con, elevator, Via Roma 28, mobile 392-279-0688, https://palazzo-napolitano.webnode.it, b.bpalazzonapolitano@gmail.com).

↳ **Balarm Hostel**, run by friendly Massimo, is an efficient, clean, and friendly option for the traveler on a shoestring. The 40 beds are in mixed gender or female-only rooms, and include breakfast and a communal kitchen, all for about the price of a pizza dinner (air-con, laundry room, Via Roma 41, mobile 392-152-9769, www.balarmhostel.it, info@balarmhostel.it).

LA KALSA

\$\$ Hotel Porta Felice, near the harbor, has a modern, masculine feel with a professional staff. The 33 rooms are decorated with leather and wood, and some have hot tubs (air-con, elevator, Via Eutera 45, tel. 091-617-5678, www.hotelportafelice.it, info@hotelportafelice.it).

\$\$ Butera 28 is an actual palace, still lived in by the duke and duchess, relatives of the famous author of *The Leopard*. Duchess Nicoletta rents out 12 rambling apartments scattered around the palazzo, all filled with antique furniture, colorful tiles, and the ambience of bygone Sicily. A tour of their private apartments is included in your stay. Nicoletta also offers cooking classes, see page 41 (no breakfast, air-con, Via Eutera 28, mobile 333-316-5432, www.butera28.it, info@butera28.it).

NORTH OF THE CENTER

While not as central or characteristic, this area, near Teatro Politeama, has easier access to parking and more modern conveniences.

\$\$\$ Palazzo Pianeta rents seven apartments in a classy palazzo near a lively district. The elegantly furnished units have cozy living areas, kitchens, and washing machines. The property is run by a wine_{r,y}, so you'll find complimentary wine and olive oil stocked in