



# Wings, Wines, & Wonders of SICILY

October 4–17, 2014

*We first visited Sicily in 2007 and were at once mesmerized by island's rugged beauty. After multiple trips, we have since fallen in love with a Sicily that most of the world has yet to experience. Inhabiting this spectacular landscape is one of the most diverse peoples on the planet, and reflected in the island's dynamic history is a culture that is uniquely Sicilian. The warm, inviting hospitality; the incredible Mediterranean seafood; the endemic island wines; and the fascinating archaeological wonders; all of these contribute to an experience that is truly magical. We are excited to introduce you to the Sicilian people, combined with Sicily's geographical position as a hub for migratory birds, to offer you an adventure you will remember forever. We look forward to seeing you in Sicily this fall!*



*Your host and lead guide, Stephen Shunk*

## TOUR SUMMARY

What follows are a basic summary and itinerary for our adventure to Sicily in October 2014. Once we have received your registration materials, we will send you more detailed descriptions of the activities and necessary preparations for the trip. It is important to note that birding is only part of the tour, and we will spend plenty of time eating, drinking, shopping, sightseeing, etc., to enjoy the full Sicilian experience. The pace will be relatively slow, although there will be plenty of opportunities for long walks and even some rugged hikes for those who choose them.

Leading our tour from the Italian side, we are thrilled to introduce you to one of the best naturalists we have met anywhere, Sicilian native Andrea Corso. Andrea has seen more birds in Italy than anyone in the world, and he literally wrote the book on the birds of Sicily, *Avifauna di Sicilia*. But Andrea's knowledge goes far beyond the island's birdlife. He knows the archaeology, architecture, and viticulture; he will take us to the best gelato and the freshest seafood; and he will entertain us with colorful stories and music of his homeland. Having Andrea as our local guide makes this trip truly world-class.



We will take a minimum of five and a maximum of eight people on the tour, and we will travel in a comfortable passenger van. Your tour fee includes transportation from Catania Fontanarossa Airport in Catania, Sicily; two meals per day (usually breakfast and one large meal, either *pranzo* or *cena*, what we typically call lunch and dinner); 13 nights lodging in comfortable hotels, inns, or villas; the interpretive and hospitality skills of two guides, one American and one Sicilian, throughout the tour; service-related gratuities; and entry fees to parks and preserves. Not included are light meals, snacks, and *café* during the day; alcoholic beverages; museum entry fees; and souvenirs.



Birding objectives will take us in search of Sicilian specialty birds, which are generally species with limited ranges or those that are difficult to find elsewhere. We will also visit productive wetlands and areas of concentrated migrant birds. We will encourage you to carry binoculars on most outings, whether or not birds are the objective, so that you can become familiar with the common species of Sicily.



Our highest-priority birds include 3 European endemics: Sicilian Rock Partridge, Sicilian Long-tailed Tit, and Sicilian Marsh Tit. Other local specialties include Bonelli's Eagle, Greater Flamingo, Squacco Heron, Audouin's Gull, many possible shorebirds, Eurasian Hoopoe, and Blue Rock Thrush. Common birds throughout the tour will include: Gray Heron, Black-headed and Yellow-legged gulls, Common Buzzard, Eurasian Kestrel, Common Wood-Pigeon, Eurasian Magpie, Hooded Crow, Common House-Martin, Blue and Great tits, Cetti's Warbler, Zitting Cisticola, Sardinian Warbler, European Robin, Spotless Starling, Cirl Bunting, European Goldfinch, and Italian Sparrow. A complete list of the birds found on our 2009 and 2013 tours is attached.

### TRAVEL TO SICILY

Many major airlines fly to Rome, and most schedules from the U.S. arrive at Fiumicino (FCO) airport sometime in the morning. Adding the Sicily leg of the tour to your U.S.-to-Rome itinerary often adds an exorbitant cost to the ticket. Instead, we recommend that you purchase separate one-way tickets through one of many small European air carriers, which do not show up on a search through Orbitz or Expedia. A few of these airlines include Wind Jet, Air One, Meridiana, and Blu-Express.



One place to search for flight options is <http://www.bestofsicily.com/> (also one of the best general resources for “all things Sicilian”), although if you do a little Googling, you will find other low-cost airlines. Note that we will begin and end the tour at Catania Fontanarossa Airport (CTA).

### TENTATIVE ITINERARY

Our tour route will take us to Sicily’s most memorable and spectacular destinations, including the temples at Segesta, the beaches of San Vito lo Capo, the pasticcerie at Erice, and the wetlands of Vendicari. The itinerary below is a sample of how our days might look, but it could easily change, depending on where our local guide, Andrea, decides to take us.

Oct. 4–6 (Sat–Tue)— Meet in early afternoon 10/4 at Catania airport (CTA), Sicily. First three nights outside Sircusa.

*Birding sites may include:* Cava Grande della Cassibile nature reserve, Vendicari wetlands reserve, Pantalica reserve, and the harbors and shores at Marzamemi and Capo Passero.

*Cultural highlights may include:* the market and town of historic Ortygia, the necropolis at Pantalica, the Roman amphitheater at Siracusa, and the historic wine region of Avola.



Oct. 7–8 (Tue–Wed)— Next two nights near Agrigento.

*Birding sites may include:* Bosco di Santo Pietro reserve, Sughereta di Niscemi reserve, Foce del Fiume Platani reserve, and the scenic southern coast of Sicily.

*Cultural highlights may include:* the renowned Greek temples at Valle dei Templi (Agrigento), the ceramics of Sciacca, the Greek temple at Selinunte, and the seaside promenade at San Leone.



Oct. 9–11 (Thu–Sat)— Next three nights in Custonaci.

*Birding sites may include:* Zingaro reserve, Monte Cofano reserve, Trapani and Marsala salt pans, and the ponds at Cave di Cusa.

*Cultural highlights may include:* the scenic medieval town of Erice, the historic saltworks of Trapani and Marsala, the restored Phoenician island of Mozia, and the wineries of the Marsala region.

Oct. 12–13 (Sun–Mon)— Next two nights in the Madonie region.

*Birding sites may include:* the high-elevation scenic habitats of the Madonie Mountains parks.

*Cultural highlights may include:* the scenic and historic town of Cefalu, the castle and panettone of Castelbuono, and the many small mountain towns of the Madonie.

Oct. 14–17 (Tue–Fri)— Final three nights in Randazzo, at the foot of Mt. Etna.

*Birding sites may include:* the many varied habitats of Mt Etna, the Nebrodi Mountains, and the Alcantara River.

*Cultural highlights may include:* mountain towns built from the lava of Mt. Etna, the pistachio region of Bronte, the cultural center and museums of Randazzo, and Isole dei Ciclopi at Aci Trezza.

*We will have our final pranzo at Aci Trezza, returning to the Catania airport by 2 p.m.*



## TOUR FEE

Approximately \$4,750 U.S. per person, double occupancy. Add approximately 10% for single occupancy. A non-refundable \$95 deposit is required to hold your space, with 50% of the balance due on May 1, and the balance due August 1. We will settle on a firm tour cost by May 1; this will depend in part on the exchange rate between the U.S. dollar and the Euro.

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact us at [steve@paradisebirding.com](mailto:steve@paradisebirding.com) or by phone at 541-408-1753. We look forward to hearing from you!

