

Pomp and decay - Sicily 2014

POMP AND DECAY - SICILY 2014



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We had blocked the two weeks prior to Easter for quite some time. But Freya's problem with the back returned in January and for weeks it was unclear how it will develop.

Finally we booked a trip to Sicily last minute. The idea was to hike a little bit and to use our rental car to visit the places of interest nearby. In the short period of time a halfway decent preparation was impossible. So we grabbed a travel- and a hiking-guide and hoped for the best.

On the way to Sicily

We start from Stuttgart this time. Departure time is late in the morning, so we don't have to leave too early and are in Sicily in good time nevertheless.

We leave home at the same time like on every working day and drive the highway to Stuttgart. The A8 is crowded, but that's quite usual as well. Our Garmin tells us to leave the highway in Wendlingen to avoid a traffic jam and so our time buffer is gone. But that's what a time buffer is for ☺.

We have booked a place at Airparks. This is a provider that has parking areas at quite some airports and rents it to travelers for a fair price. The shuttle bus appears after 10 minutes and off it goes.

The flight is calm and we arrive in Catania after two hours. We don't have to wait for our luggage too long and make our way to Avis.

Some of the car rental companies have moved to a new building 300 meter away. Don't ask us why Avis has not removed their signs at the old building. So we go to that place first, just to find a piece of paper at the old counter that they have moved away. In the new building we are two of very few customers

(the day we returned the car, the line went down to the street). We just have to decline the attempt to fob us off with unnecessary insurances and alike and we have our car. A brand new, black Peugeot 208.

In the end we were really happy to have a small sized car. In general the road

conditions are halfway decent. But even bigger roads pass through small villages and turn into small, steep alleys.

And anyway – Sicily and the car drivers: Traffic rules are at best a rough indication. To give the right of way? How unnecessary. One just drives and someone will slow down. Parking ban? Why, no problem to park in the second or third row. If someone wants to leave he should horn and I will come.

In the end having Freya as a second driver in the contract was totally useless. She didn't even pretend to ask if she should drive.

The weather is worse than at home. All the clouds gather at Mount Etna. We

pass by and continue to drive north; Slowly the sun gains control.

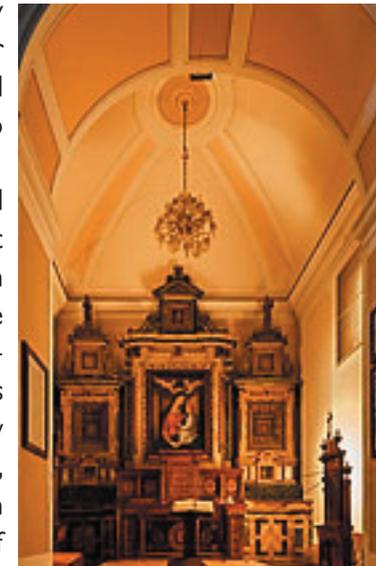
Everything is green and in bloom. Different shades of yellow are interrupted by the grayish green of the cactus pears, the agaves and the olive trees. Everywhere you find oranges, tangerines and lemons.

As a welcome our Garmin directs us through some very small back roads and villages to Francaville where we will stay the next days in the hotel D'Orange d'Alcantara.

It's still early in the afternoon and we decide to take a look around. In a cake shop we stop and eat one of those great small, but fat sweets you can get here all around.

We continue to the former Capuchin monastery a little bit out of town that

was converted into a museum. As the season has not started yet the museum is still closed, but that old man beckon us over, has a key and is so enthusiastic that we follow him. In fact it is forbidden to take photos, but he pressed us to take some. The museum is quite nice, but the



Convento die Frati Cappuccini -
Francavilla di Sicilia

best for sure was our guide ☺.
Just below the monastery is a graveyard with some beautiful marble angels. Who wants to be buried here, is willing to invest quite some money. Huge, elaborated graves and mausoleums are the rule and not an exception.

The choice of restaurants in Francavilla is quite limited. Luckily one belongs to our hotel.
Beside ourselves a big English trekking group is here. They are sitting on a long table, having a four course dinner every day. We are sitting on a small table nearby and are eating a la carte.
The portions are plentiful and good. Nothing fancy, rather good home



graveyard - Francavilla di Sicilia

cooking. Even the table wine tastes good.

After dinner we enter the elevator to bring us upstairs. We get in, the door closes and it gets dark – energy saving. Freya knocks the door and before Jürgen could dig out the phone to light up, the lady from the reception appears, opens the door and tells us that we have to push the buttons harder. No problem. However, for the rest of the trip Freya will always fix the finger on the button for the 2nd floor.

Gole dell'Alcantara and Ragusa

This morning we're driving to the gorge of the Alcantara River. Here, not far from our hotel, the river carved its way through high rocks. Like in Zion National Park in the U.S. you can walk through the river to a waterfall. We know that this is not allowed anymore and it would be too cold anyway. But we heard that where the river leaves the gorge, it should be quite nice too.



Gole dell'Alcantara

There are two entrances. One is at the parking lot from where you can go down to the river with an elevator for quite some money. But there is still the original one where you can walk down some stairs. This one is just a few meters away following the street to Francavilla. We read that the stairs should be steep and complicated, but in fact they are totally easy. Whoever wants to visit villages like Ragusa can do these stairs as well.

As we get down we are disappointed. That we will not be allowed to enter the gorge, we knew before. But they blocked the beach near the entrance with thick bars so that it's hard to take a picture without them. Jürgen tried to go behind,

but very quickly a guy appears and asks him to get out. Supposedly there is danger of falling rocks.

We go to a different location, but overall we are quite disappointed and spend much less time here than intended. At least we were so early that we are all alone. All the coach tours, which are of course also carted hither, are yet to come.

Back at the parking lot we found a post with some regulations for the gorge in different languages. The German version is so weird that we will not try to translate it (one is something like: "Distance below the throats up to the cases of Venere with mute equipment and Flu-Bassistenten" – if you don't understand, no problem. We don't understand the German version either). By the way: No word about the closure up here.

As we've finished here quite early we rearrange our planning. We will go to Taormina on another day and drive to Ragusa today.

Ragusa is one of these villages that have been planned and reerected in baroque style after the earthquake of 1693.

It consists of three parts. The old, baroque Ragusa Ibla, the older and the modern Ragusa.

We park at the city limits of the older part. Ragusa and Ibla are situated on

two opposite hills and are connected via a significant number of more or less steep stairs.

The ravages of time have significantly added to the buildings and only very sporadic attempts are made to stop the decay. This picture will be repeated almost everywhere here in Sicily and we feel like being in the cities of the old GDR shortly after reunification.



in Ragusa

Thanks to preseason the amount of people walking around is limited, but there are definitely more tou-

rist than locals. Preseason also stands for a lot of restaurants and cafes being closed for lunch. Finally we manage to find a restaurant below the cathedral and have a really good late lunch.

After that Jürgen decided to climb the stairs to old Ragusa again. It isn't as gray as this morning and he wants to use the afternoon light to redo some pictures.

On the way back to the hotel we stop by at Modica. This village is quite near to Ragusa and another

of these baroque towns. Again we park outside the city center and have to climb quite some stairs to visit the cathedral. Afterwards we grab a tasty ice and start our return.

Back at the hotel we're beaten up and tired. So we just have some pasta for dinner and go to bed.



Ragusa Ibla



Cathedral San Giorgio - Modica

To hike or not to hike

For today we chose an easy track from our hiking guide. This one is not exactly around the corner, 70 km one way to the trail head. But on the other hand: Doing so, we can take a look at the area northwest to our hotel.

We're creeping across the countryside. 70 km are a long way if you can drive only 50 km/h at the max. In villages and because we have to go up- and downhill quite often, we have to slow down to 20 km/h. Freya likes it – but she is not the one to drive.

In Tortorici our Garmin tries sends us wrong way into a one-way street. We're taking some extra laps before we find a small street leading out of town. This is the equivalent to a state road? After some more kilometers we have to change to a country road going uphill. Branches and boulders are lying on the street. In an SUV no problem, but with our Peugeot? We give it up and turn around. Ok, so the journey was the reward. But what's now?

Jürgen does not want to drive back the same way. So we decide to go nor-

thward and drive along the coast back to Francavilla.

We tell our Garmin to show the way to Patti. We start and right in the first village we have to stop. Everybody is boxed in and the through traffic is blocked. The Carabinieri are walking around, collecting the drivers who are blocking the



ancient city of Tyndaris



pilgrimage church - Tindari



pilgrimage church - Tindari

way. It takes some time, but then everything is sorted out.

Near Patti is, once again on a hill, Tindari with a pilgrimage church and the ruins of the ancient city of Tyndaris. At the base of the hill are a visitor center and a huge parking lot. We don't want to know

what's going on here during high season or on a Christian holiday. But today it's just a bus carrying a school class and three cars. As a consequence shops and the shuttle bus service are closed and parking is free. So we just walk uphill.

Churches in Sicily are closed about noon.

and we have a look inside. Well: From a religious point of view this church might be important, from a touristic one it's "quite nice" at the best.

We decide to leave the coastal road and drive to Taormina on the highway to be there early enough to have some nice afternoon light.

We leave the car at the Limbi car park and use the complementary shuttle to go to the city center. Here, for the first time, is a huge crowd of tourist. Like all of them we take a short detour to visit the famous theatre. Mount Etna hides behind some clouds but would have been in backlight anyhow. If you are keen to take that typical postcard picture, you have to look for a morning when Mount Etna is cloudless.

We walk through the pedestrian area and here are the houses restored quite nicely. But you can't miss the reason: Each and every house in the pedestrian area has a shop or restaurant downstairs. The whole town has a kind of artificial mood.

So we start with the ancient site. Like so many others this one has been restored with EU-funds. A small part is kept in order, but the majority is obviously returned to the overgrowing vegetation. For exactly what do we have to pay here?

After our tour the church is open again

Villa Romana del Casale

Given our yesterday's experience we decide to shift our hiking plans. In theory you could hike quite well in Sicily. But as the guide from the hiking group confirms, signposting (at least at the non-touristic hotspots) and accessibility is a big issue. As a consequence we drove much more than we've intended - in the end some 2500 km. Partly this was due to the location of our hotel. For that what we did in the end, a hotel near to Catania would have made much more sense.

So today we want to visit Villa Romana del Casale that is located in the southeast of the island. On the way we have to realize once more that Sicily looks different to what we have expected - much more green and hilly. More than once we felt like being in the foot-



Villa Romana del Casale



Villa Romana del Casale

hills of the Alps.

Late in the morning we reach the Villa Romana and here you can see how a prestigious premise has to look like.

The Villa is a roman, magnificent building from the third or fourth century AD. If it was owned by a roman Caesar or "only" a nobleman is still unknown.

All over the area you can find signs banning photography, but everybody, really everybody ignores them. There are really great mosaics on the floors. Some are telling a story, others are just ornamental. In the nursery for example you can see kids playing and a coach drawn by geese. It's really great here.

Unfortunately we are not alone with this point of view. One group of tourists after the other is pu-

shed through. Given that it is low season it's really full. Most of the time you walk on some elevated walkways above the mosaics. So you just have to join the queue and you'll be pushed through the rooms automatically.

After the visit it's time for lunch and Freya wants to pick a restaurant from the recommendation list of our guide book. "Look, this one is not in the middle of the historic center, but on this big road". Well, kind of. "Big" means that this one-way street has sidewalks and "not in the middle of the historic center" is 300 meters away.

On top of that: To get to the street we have to drive through all these small alleys in the center of Piazza Armerina. With a bigger car you would need to be afraid of losing your door mirrors. And as soon as the alleys get a little big wider, people start to park their

cars. By the way: Mostly these alleys are one-way streets - mostly.



in Piazza Armerina



in Piazza Armerina

As we enter the restaurant it's completely full. So we pick another one from the recommendation list. In the end lunch was ok, but nothing special.

What we notice here again are the many empty, partially rotting, wonderful old houses. Here doves live stately.

On the way back to the highway we make a brief stop at a flashy pink tree we already spotted this morning.



near Enna

Around Mount Etna

Our hotel in Francavilla is quite near Mount Etna. You can't see him if you're in town, but on our way to the coastal highway we saw him every day. Before we arrived, Jürgen's plan was to hike somewhere on the top, but Freya and a snow cover you could even see from far distance, stopped him. So today we want to circle him by car.

At breakfast we get the tip that there's a market in Francavilla today. This one is every day in a different town and Friday he stops in Francavilla. Something like that is unknown to the British guests and so they really like it. For us it was

quite boring. Some fruit and vegetables, quite some booths and rummage tables with cheap clothing. In 10 Minutes we've made it.

This morning the weather is really nice. Even the locals have taken off the winter coats. The mountain lies in front of us and no cloud is blocking the sight.

We have to drive further to the east than planned before we manage to change to the panorama road north of Mount Etna. All the small villages we are crossing are pretty nice and for a Friday morning a lot of people are walking around the streets. Our first destination is Casteglione di Sicilia, actually a neigh-

boring place of Francavilla.

Nearly we skipped the visit. Outside a small village we have to cross (actually only a few houses), someone is burning wet tree trimming or so. Dense smoke moves across the street and is blocking the view. Freya is strictly against passing through. So back to the next U-turn. Then a car is coming from behind, he honks, we give him some room, he passes by and through the dense smoke - we follow. He would have been the one stopping any oncoming traffic the hard way 😊.

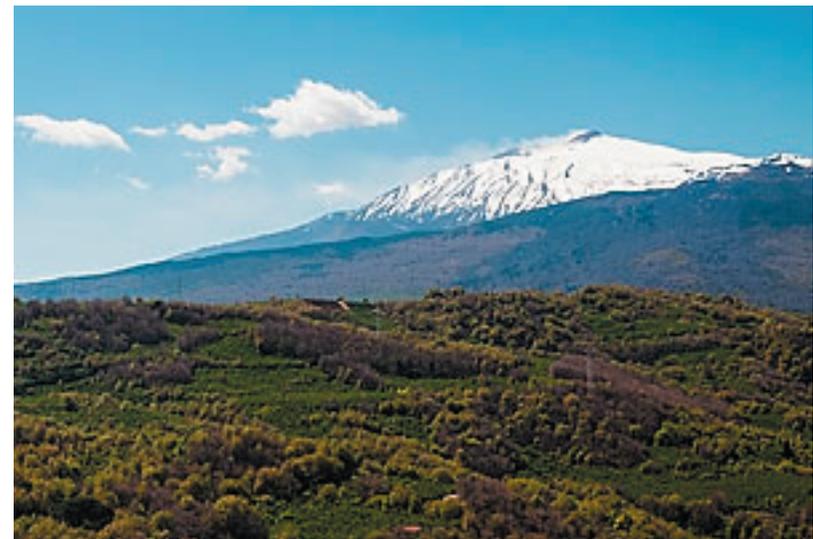
We leave the car at the unexpected huge sports ground and walk upstairs. Casteglione is a nice village with a lot of

small alleys and a castle. Nothing special, but very typical for Sicily.

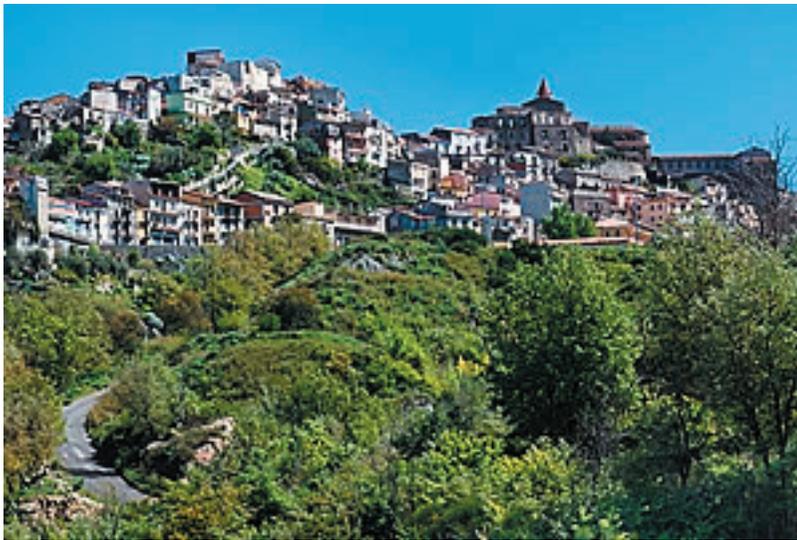
Next stop on our tour is Randazzo. We pass this village the day before yesterday as we tried to reach the trailhead for our intended hike. The mix of different styles of the church we saw was interesting enough to take a look around. And it's time for lunch, too.

But before we can take a look around we have to find a place to park the car. Not inside the historic center – that's clear. But also outside the city walls you just find 1000 parking prohibitions. In the end we find a square east of the historic center where we can leave the car.

In the end this place was not bad at all.



Mount Etna



Castiglione di Sicilia

We are near to one of the old town gates and we find a restaurant nearby. We have lunch at the Trattoria San Giorgio e il Drago. This is not a pure touristic place – half of the guests are obviously locals and each of them is welcomed ebulliently. The meal isn't bad, but the meat is quite marbled and the side dish you have to order separately isn't really what we expected. But the "best" is that the waitress has to ask if the kitchen has some milk for a cappuccino.



Cathedral Santa Maria - Randazzo

After lunch we walk across the old city center. Of course all churches are closed now, but they look quite nice from the outside, too. On the whole this reflects the whole city. Quite nice if you are nearby anyhow, but nothing you have to make a big detour for. Last but not least we find a cafe where we buy ice-cream and one thing is clear: Italians know how to make ice-cream 😊. In the meantime the clouds have appeared and the upper part of

Mount Etna is hidden again. Nevertheless we decide to continue with our circle and head southward. Just the side trip to the mountain road is skipped. Hiking was canceled anyhow and driving through fog is nothing we are keen of.

Along the country road near Catania we see a lot of rubbish. This is the first time we realize something like that over here. The houses are often run down, but never dirty. Just the other way round: Everywhere it smells like freshly washed laundry. No wonder: They dry it on almost every balcony.

Noto and the Vedicari Reserve

Today the members of the English hiking group are leaving and the guide is going to Catania to pick up the next ones. He tells us that he stays in Francavilla for 9 weeks every spring and recommends us a bakery here in Francavilla and the fishmarket in Catania. The latter is on our list anyhow.

As usual we drive to the highway via Giardini Naxos and today again way down to the south.

Noto, like Ragusa, is one of these baroque villages in southeast Sicily. The his-



Eurasian Spoonbill - Vedicari Reserve

toric centre isn't on the top of the hill this time, but more on a plateau.

not worth to spend 5 or 6 Euro entrance fee for each of them.

Although the parallel street above the pedestrian area is also quite nice, the

aforementioned traffic is annoying. So we decide to take the pedestrian zone again and walk back to the car.

We are early enough to find a parking with a parking meter directly in front of the city gate. The main avenue is a pedestrian zone – the rest of the city isn't and therefore, the traffic squeezes through these narrow alleys. It would have been much better if they would have closed a huger part of the city center like they did in Taormina.

Like Taormina Noto lives on tourism and all the nice, old houses are renovated. But the difference is: You don't have to walk from one shop window to the next. So you have a much more natural felling and it's not as artificial as in Taormina.

We walk along the pedestrian zone, take a look inside the very nice cathedral and have a cappuccino in one of the many cafes. Here and there we throw a glance at the courtyard of an old manor. Nicely refurbished but



Porta Ferdinandea - Noto



Cathedral San Nicolo - Noto

All together we spent nearly three hours in Noto. I think this is the minimum you need, but you can spend a whole day there as well. But we have a second topic on our itinerary for today.

We're heading to the bird sanctuary of Vendicari. This is not far away, but sign-posted a little bit weird. We know that there is no big road for the last kilometers and authorities are discussing since quite some time to enlarge the road so busses are able to drive to the reserve. But the first gateways are quite rough dirt roads. Is this really the right way?



Cathedral San Nicolo - Noto



Cathedral San Nicolo - Noto

Finally the road to the entrance is not good enough for coaches, but it's paved. At the end of the road an old man is sitting on a small table asking you to pay for a parking on a gravel space. The entrance to the reserve on the

other hand is free of charge. You just have to tell where you're from.

Maybe a hundred meters behind the entrance we enter a blind and watch some Eurasian Spoonbill in their shallow pool. We decide to take the way along the beach to the north. Here you can see the birds even better than from the blind. They are not distracted by the people walking around at all.

Up to the old tuna factory we are meeting quite some people, but the more we move on, the less people are there. A few minutes after passing this old fishers hut we turn around as we want to walk a little bit to the south as well.

On the place where you can enter the beach, some teens dared to make their feet wet, but for swimming it's still too cold. During summer this is a favorite place for a day at the beach for people from Syracuse.

Just after walking a little bit down to the south, Freya is starting to feel her feet and knees. For a change it's not her back this time ☹️. So we call it a day and head back to Francavilla.

Hiking again

Today we see the new group of British hikers for the first time and Jürgen gets a new job as coffee machine explainer. It rained last night and there are thick dark clouds in the sky. Jürgen looked for a forecast in the internet yesterday and in Taormina the weather should be half-way decent – at least it should stay dry. So we want to walk from Taormina to



in Castelmola

Castelmola what lies on a hill above the town. Do we really want that? Freya is not so sure, as she got problems already on a flat way yesterday.

Today we take the other car park of Taormina. This one can be entered via Na-

xos, but due to some unknown reasons the carabinieri have closed the street. OK, so back to the highway for just one exit. Directly aside of the entrance to the Lumbi car park is a tunnel crossing the hill. We do so and finally reach the chosen car park Porta Catania. This one is not only nearer to the starting point of our hike; you don't need to take a shuttle, too.



in Castelmola

Everybody is wearing jackets or sweater, we just t-shirts. We're starting to climb the stairs to the castle high above the town and soon we are not cold anymore. On our way we hear the ever repeating chant from the church below.

It blooms all around. Wild snapdragons and thistles, roses, acanthus and jasmine. We pass the castle and follow the street to Castelmola - higher and higher. Soon we are sweating despite the modest weather and pull out our rain jackets to avoid catching a cold.

At the ceramic workshop (you can't miss that one) a way leaves the road on the left hand side. This is signposted quite well. The way is actually a residential street and becomes steeper and steeper. We can already see our target high above and keep on hiking higher and higher. Freya's problems have disappeared over night and so we finally reach Castelmola. In the heat of the summer you better start very early.

The village is again "quite nice". If the weather is fine you should have a great view. We drink a

cappuccino and almond milk. The latter is surprisingly tasty and would be great refreshment on a hot day, but today the cappuccino is the better choice. Nevertheless: The almond compound makes it on our shopping list 😊.

In theory you can move on to Mount Veneretta. But we refrain from that, Freya puts her kneepads on and we start our decent.

We have lunch in a pizzeria in Taormina and drive back to the hotel. As the weather doesn't want to change we spend the rest of the day with reading, picture backups and alike.

Shopping at Etnapolis

The weather forecast for Catania is "ok" for the morning and "rain" in the afternoon. So we want to start with the fish market and if it really starts raining we have the Etnapolis as a backup. But the weather changes his mind and it's raining cats and dogs already on the highway. So the backup becomes our regular plan for today ☺.

permarket and an attached cinema.

The price level of the clothes shops is quite attractive. Other than that Sicily is not a cheap destination. The prices at the supermarket are at the same level as in Germany, restaurants are a little bit cheaper (the nuisance of coperto is still common here!). Expensive is especially the gas (some 20% above German level) and the, partly barefaced high, entrance fees.

best beef of the trip here.

We drive back through pouring rain, but in Francavilla the dark clouds retain the water. So we bring most of our stuff to the hotel room and drive towards Castiglione, where we can park on a gravel place and walk to the Alcantara River. Freya is more amazed by the various flowers than by the rapids - even marsh orchid are growing here.



Rocca di Cefalu



Cefalu



Cefalu

For dinner we have a bottle of wine and the delicate tartlets from the bakery at Etnapolis.

Etnapolis is a huge shopping center at an arterial road. A lot of shops with clothes (mostly in Germany unknown chains, but also a Zara), a Mediamarkt (Germany based chain for electronics), a su-

We don't buy a lot. The highest bill is the one from the supermarket. Ironically we have lunch at a Western-Restaurant. The alternatives aren't convincing at all and in the end we get the

The cathedral of Monreale

Today we want to go to Monreale south of Palermo and so we have a long day full of driving ahead of us. The cathedral there supposed be so beautiful that we want to do it nevertheless and because the churches here are closed around noon, we set the alarm half an hour earlier than the days before.

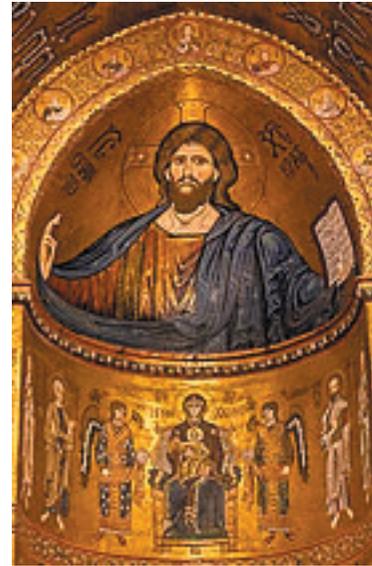
Unfortunately our Garmin has the habit to send us through the narrowest alleys and that quite some cars here look like they have participated on a stockcar challenge is not really comforting. We give up after some sweaty minutes on the streets of a mountain village and opt for a withdrawal. We look for the supposedly biggest roads in the area, what unfortunately means a significant detour. So the advantage of getting up early is lost and we change our plan. Instead on the way back, we take the break in Cefalu already now and drive to Monreale afterwards.

Cefalu is hectic. Even in the outskirts parking slots are scarce. Finally we find one and even save some meters on the ascent to the castle, that is situated above the town.

Meanwhile the entrance fee is 4 Euro per



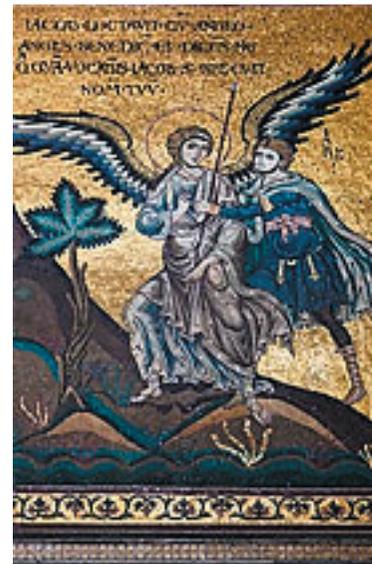
Cathedral of Monreale



Cathedral of Monreale



Cathedral of Monreale



Cathedral of Monreale

person and you better keep the ticket, because half way someone is waiting and checking it up- and downwards. Quite a nonsense, but that way they've created at least two jobs.

The walls of the fort enclose a large area of the hill. Inside is a loop route with a detour to the ruins of the castle. Freya skips that one and goes straight to the archaeological site. But they consist just of a few unspectacular ruins.

Both from the castle and from the walls above the city center you have a nice view down - bright blue sky and turquoise sea. This is a picture book Italy.

On the way back to the car we see a typical perversion of justice here in Sicily. A car travels backwards through the narrow one-way street. As another car comes up, the driver stops on one of the resident's parking places, gives way and then continues. For the last few meters he turned around and finally made it to the main road.

We continue towards Palermo. The highway runs along the coast and has quite some tunnels. Freya would have been interested to visit Palermo, but Jürgen refuses to drive the car to the city center and as Freya is not driving at all she needs to accept it. The small part of

the way that leads through the outskirts of Palermo completely confirms Jürgen's prejudices.

Coming from the north we ascend to Monreale and it is like everywhere here in Sicily – narrow alleys and everything is blocked. So we give it a second try and approach the town from the south. Here we easily find parking at the base of the hill. From there you have to climb the hill and that's something neither the Italians nor the typical tourists want to do.

So we walk uphill and to the cathedral. Indeed there isn't so much else to see in Monreale, but the cathedral is great and worth the long trip.

Everywhere it glows golden and the whole biblical story is told by mosaics on the walls. How much details you can find here. Wonderful building. The Sicilian King William II wanted to swank - this is succeeded.

For our way back we use the link road from Palermo to Catania. On this highway a bridge builder has run wild. Often the street doesn't cross a valley, but follows it – of course on the second floor.

Today we have dinner at the hotel again. Freya gets a good minestrone as a starter and then we both take these small

veal cutlets – one with white wine and one with Marsala. Not so bad either.



Palazzo Bicocca - Catania

Fish market in Catania

We didn't give up the idea of visiting the fish market in Catania. This morning we talked to the guide of the English group. Well, Catania: chaotic parking, luggage stolen from one of their cars, pickpockets – but the city is worth to visit.



in Catania

The service woman suggests to take the train from Giardini Naxos, but the guide has a better idea. Why not park at the airport and take a bus from there? And that's what we're going to do.

We park directly ahead of the termi-

nal at P1. There you can park for a few hours and the bus station is just around the corner.

A bus from route 457 is already waiting and Catania center sounds good too. You have to buy the ticket at one of the booths and to stamp it inside the bus. On the way to Catania we realized that it would have been a good idea to buy the tickets for the way back also at the airport. Inside the buses they don't sell them and there we would have known where the booths are. Never mind! We leave the bus at the main station and buy the tickets there.

From the main station it's not far to the city center and our main destination, the cathedral square. Again nice old buildings and again quite some of them are scruffy.

Before we go to the fish market we take a look inside the cathedral. But compared to the one in Monreale this one is uninteresting and so we leave quickly.

The fish (and as we find out vegetables, meat and various other things) market is situated directly proximate to the cathedral square. You just have to walk down some stairs and you are in the middle of it. The part with the fishes isn't really big, but the nice thing is that this is



fish market of Catania

a living market and not a touristic attraction. Here locals are selling to locals and the tourists are just an accessory.



fish market of Catania

and it takes some time until we realize that we don't have to look up, but that the place across the street contains the theatre. Unfortunately a big part is buried by this busy crossways and the buildings around. So it isn't really impressive.

Especially are we taken with these big swordfishes that are cut on customer's request.

We walk across the historic center and then to the north until we reach the relicts of the Roman amphitheater. This lies below street level and it takes some time until we realize that we don't have to look up, but that the place across the street contains the theatre. Unfortunately a big part is buried by this busy crossways and the buildings around. So it isn't really impressive.

Freya takes some pictures for her collection "wiring from all over the world". All the time the weather is fine, but not

too hot. Very pleasant.

As we get hungry we follow the recommendation by the English tourguide. In a side street near the cathedral we have antipasti, catch-of-the-day and potatoes with rosemary and bacon. Delicious!

Slowly but surely we have to find our way back. We've already figured out the bus stop we want to use during our way into the city this morning. The bus stop has an electronic sign to show how long you have to wait if the bus is somewhere near. Unfortunately there is no posting how frequently the service is ☹️. But we are lucky and have to wait just a quarter of an hour.

While the weather in Catania was quite nice, Mount Etna is already covered with clouds and it's quite windy. In Fancavilla even we are cold. Promptly for Easter the weather is getting worse.

On our way home

During the night it has rained heavily. The Sicilians are wearing winter clothes and even if it has just 10 degrees we are amused as we see the waiter of the restaurant in a thick coat. At least he doesn't wear gloves ☺️.

The car return is as fussy as we've never seen before. On the one hand side you can understand it if you see how they drive here. On the other hand: The car has a comprehensive coverage – but they can scrounge 50 EUR handling fee ☹️. But no luck with us.



im Fischmarkt von Catania

The flight is a little bit bumpy and Jürgen shows Freya the woman on the other side of the aisle. She got the bible from her hand baggage and now holds fast to it. It served

well, we arrive in Stuttgart without any problems.