

**8th European Nautical and Cultural Winter Meeting in the Mediterranean
SAGA-ICCY in Palermo from 15 to 19 March 2016
Discovering the Norman Kingdom of Sicily**

Invitation and Programme

Tuesday 15 March p.m. - Welcome of participants – opening of the meeting

2 p.m.: Welcome of guests either in Palermo (airport or harbour) or at Catania airport, where a special bus will await them. Transfer, installation in rooms and welcome drink in the hotel *Politeama* in Palermo. Panoramic Tour via Monte Pellegrino and Utveggiro Castle (depending on arrival time of the bus from Catania). Dinner in town.

Wednesday 16 March - Palermo and Monreale : the Norman Kingdom of Sicily

The day will start with a guided visit of the capital of Sicily, from the remnants of the old Phoenician walls to the 'liberty style' palaces, its baroque churches, the squares, its noble residences, fountains and gardens. The highlights of this visit (on the theme of the Norman Kingdom of Sicily and the sacred art) will be the Palace of the Norman kings with its 'Palatine Chapel', the Cathedral and its graves, among which the grave of Frederik II of Hohenstaufen, as well as the Byzantine Church of Martorana. Lunch will be taken in town. The afternoon will be dedicated to further exploring the Norman theme with a transfer to Monreale (on the slopes of Monte Caputo, 8 km SW of Palermo) and a guided visit to the masterpieces of the Cathedral and Convent of Monreale (among the most beautiful mosaics worldwide). They are all emblematic of the Norman Kingdom of Sicily.

Thursday 17 March - The Coast from Palermo to Cefalù and back via the *Parco delle Madonie* (*Madonie National Natural Park*)

Continuation of our 'Norman Ariane's thread' with a guided visit of the city of Cefalù (75 km East of Palermo), an exceptional site against the backdrop of a impressive rocky hill and a inviting sandy beach. The site still bears the imprint of King Roger II of Sicily ('duomo', Maria Palace) as well as of the European Middle Ages (narrow streets, wash houses and fountains, San Leonardo Church). If the weather is fine, one can see the Aeolian islands. Lunch on the spot.

There will be numerous stopovers on our outward trip and a countryside stop on our return route: in the village of Castelbuono (423 m above sea level) the surrounding hills of which are covered in almond, olive and ash trees. In the Madonie Natural Park there is an ecological example to be followed of refuse collection carried out by donkeys! The castle of the Vintimiglia family dating from the 14th century and its 'Palatine Chapel' will be visited. Both are remarkably restored. Back in Palermo in the late afternoon.

Free evening.

Friday 18 March - End of guided visits, strolls and gala evening

In the morning: continuation of the guided visit, on foot, of the city of Palermo (street markets, development of themes such as the Normans, sacred art, Baroque, the 'liberty style' and today's Sicily, with a final visit of the Museum-arsenal of the Royal Marine)

Lunch will be taken in town.

Free afternoon for walking, new discoveries and shopping, according to each one's taste.

Gala dinner with exchange of pennons with the local leaders of the *Lega Navale*. A representative of the public authorities of Palermo will attend the ceremony.

Saturday 19 March – End of Meeting - Goodbyes

End of the meeting after breakfast in the hotel. Then transfer of participants to Palermo airport or to Catania.

Marseilles on 18 december 2015