Spring in Sicily

**Ancient villas and perfumed gardens for a taste of spring in Trinacria**

* 4 overnights in farmhouse
* Half board treatment
* A botanical expert tour guide throughout the programme
* Admissions and visits to botanical sites and gardens as scheduled
* Transfers on site
* Medical and luggage insurance

1° day

Meeting at the airport of Catania. After having reached the capital of Etna, a short tour will lead you to the discovery of the city centre and of its architectural beauties. After free lunch in Catania, you can spend the afternoon walking through the green area of the city in the direction of the Botanical Garden which will allow you to cross the Bellini Gardens, recently renovated.
The Botanical garden, dating back to 1858, has a large number of palms, succulent plants of the Tropical forest and Sicilian wild plants. Since the end of the World War to date its structure, despite not having undergone profound changes, has gradually recovered its functions; so, in the spaces inherited from the nineteenth-century structure, it shows collections of great scientific and didactic significance. Moreover, in the library there are also many ancient herbaria created by famous Sicilian botanists: from here you can start treating the rich vegetation of the Etna woods.
This is ultimately followed by the arrival in Giarre, dinner and overnight in farmhouse .

2° day

Guided walking to the nursery *Piante Faro di Carruba di Riposto*, a leader company Europe for the production and sale of Mediterranean, subtropical and arid climates plants: pineapples, bougainvillea, bamboos and much more. In addition to productions in containers and in open ground which occupy more than 500 hectares, there are in the close vicinity 30 hectares of greenhouses destined to “ high quality “ cultivations. Back in Giarre, after a snack of your choice , a short route will lead you to the Park of the Kentie, a garden created in the nineteenth century for the acclimatisation of tropical plants in which many specimens have continued their growth thus creating a really spectacular garden.

Walking for a while you will reach the nursery Malvarosa, among the few in Italy specialised in tropical  Pelargonium and Jasminum: along with many different types of common geranium (zonal, ivy, Paris) there’s a wide harvesting of rare species and exotic varieties. Among the passions of the owner Filippo Figuera there are also some species of jasmines which are often difficult to be classified .
Dinner and overnight in farmhouse.

3° day

Transfer to Mascalucia and to the garden of Villa Trinità characterised by particular stone walkways called “rasule” and by irrigation channels called “saje”: protagonist of the whole park is the lava rock. Field irrigation with the ancient “saje” supplies water to a citrus orchards and to a vineyard; strolling through the park you can see a large collection of palm trees, succulents, iris, fruit trees and exotic shrubs. Possibility to have lunch in a typical restaurant .
 We will leave again after lunch towards Lentini, where we will stop at the Casa del Biviere, an elegant villa with garden containing a collection of succulents, orange trees, lush palm trees and blue Jacarandas, Parkinsonia with its solar blooming and old roses which embrace specimens of Yucca planted, loved and followed with great passion by Maria Carla Borghese.
Then we continue towards the village of Buccheri and of its farmhouse. Dinner and overnight.

4° day

Transfer to Chiaramonte Gulfi to visit the historical  Villa Fegotto, which is private and cannot be open to the public without guide, with its ancient cellar and the suggestive garden. The villa, immersed in the rich countryside of the Hyblean plateau, is a beautiful ancient farmhouse in excellent conditions, often used as setting for many films (I Vicerè, Montalbano..). You will have access to the garden by a magical walkway flanked on all sides by very high boxwoods, and then find yourselves in front of very high palm trees and other particular “rooms”, where you can see the old “saje” for the irrigation on the ground.
A short transfer will lead you to Ragusa.
Lunch of your choice in the city centre, then a short walk will lead you to the Hyblean garden, an ancient public garden.
Moving to Noto to admire Baroque palaces, built in the current site after the terrible earthquake of 1693. We cannot miss to have a sweet snack at the famous Café, in the city centre.
In the late afternoon we will reach the farmhouse of Noto for dinner and overnight.

5° day

After breakfast departure for Syracuse. Stop along the way at the mouth of the Ciane River, the only site in Europe where Papyrus grows wild (Cyperus Papyrus).
After reaching the city, we will visit the *Latomia dei Cappuccini*, an ancient stone cave with which the Greek colonizers built the city in the fifth century B.C., and which later became a prison and the garden of the Capuchin friars of the convent which stands at the entrance. A species present on the edge of the quarry is the Ficus, growing on the rock anchoring with its roots.

Possibility to have lunch in Ortigia in a typical restaurant.
In the afternoon transfer to the airport of Catania for return flight.

Price Euro 655 per person (adult in double room - group 12 participants)
From 27 to 31 March 2015
From 17 to 21 April 2015