



Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

Over the years we have been asked many many questions. Just in case you have a similar question or query, some of the most common ones are listed here for you. If there is anything else you would like to know that is not answered on these pages - please [email us](#).

FAQ Topics

Questions about the Villas

Questions about Payment

Questions about Car Hire, Driving & Eating Out

Questions about Language, Culture & Currency

Questions about Telephoning, Electricity, Water, Recycling & Refuse

Questions about the Mafia

Sources for further information

Questions about the Villas

Are the villas accessible?

Villa Anna is accessible to wheelchair users and baby buggies. In 2006 a wet-room style walk-in shower room replaced the old bathroom and the entire ground floor and surfaced garden are accessible to all. Villa May is not as accessible but can accommodate most users. A baby cot can be arranged in advance by request. Please contact us with any special requests.

How do I find the villa?

Between May-October one of us will meet you at Trapani Airport (or near the Marausa exit of the A29 Motorway if you land at Palermo) to guide you to the villa. A mobile phone will be of use to inform us of any flight delays so that we can ensure you will be met. A comprehensive route map will always be provided to assist your arrival.

What time are the keys available?

We are fairly flexible on this and with us only 2 minutes from the villas, we will work around your arrival time. We can accommodate most requests subject to booking availability.

Is there on-site help when we are there?

We are fluent Italian/English speakers and are a two minute walk from the villas during the May-October period. At other times, on-site assistance can be requested by phone and we will try to be with you within 1 hour.

Questions about Payment

When do I need to pay for the property?

A deposit of 30% is required to book the villa, reimbursable in part if the booking is cancelled more than 40 days prior to the start of the rental period. The balance must be paid in full either upon arrival (by agreement) or in instalments no later than 1 week prior to departure.

How do I pay for the property?

We accept both GB Sterling (£) and Euro (€) currencies for Advance Payment. Customers anywhere in Europe can pay in one of two ways 1 - Online by Credit or Debit Card via Paypal Secure; or 2 - Via BACS/SWIFT IBAN bank transfer. If you prefer, Cheques drawn on a UK (£) or European (€) Bank can be used to pay deposits and balances in advance. However, anyone paying the balance upon arrival must do so in Euro (€) Currency. Currency Exchange rates used will be those extant at the time of booking.

Is a breakages deposit payable?

A fee of €150 will usually be taken upon arrival as a safety deposit against breakages and damage to the property and its fittings. This will be refunded at departure once an accompanied inspection has taken place.



Questions about Car Hire, Driving & Eating Out

Is car hire recommended?

Yes. Although our online travel page provides links to bus, coach and rail services, if you intend to discover the island properly hiring a car is recommended. We can provide bikes for use on local roads, used at your own risk.

I'm worried about driving in Sicily, what advice have you got?

If you are used to driving in a big city you should be fine, but it's all about having confidence. Expect people to pull out in front of you in any urban area, and you won't go wrong. Cut-up drivers react with hot air and hand gestures in typical Italian style, but will rarely resort to verbal abuse or violence. Check the travel section of our website for more details.

How much does it cost to eat out?

A meal for two can cost between €15-25 including wine depending on where you go. The more touristy the place, the more you pay.

I'm vegetarian, will I be able to eat out in Sicily?

You'll be absolutely fine. Italian food is well known for its use of vegetables and non meat ingredients and Sicily is no exception. In the Trapani region you'll also find a variety of cous-cous dishes, a remnant of the Arabic traders that passed through centuries ago. Western Sicily is known for its many fish and seafood dishes, but menus and staff are normally clear. If in doubt just say 'vegeteriano'.

Questions about Climate, Language, Culture & Currency

What is the weather like and which are the best months to visit?

The rainy season tends to hit Sicily between January and March. By the middle of April, the temperature rises and people start to visit the beach. May and June temperatures tend to be similar to the *good* summers we have in SE England. July and August are the hottest months and on some days, the warm winds from Africa raise the temperature to above 40. September is akin to June and the sea and skies stay warm until the middle of October. With the cooler air, November and December are good times to go hill walking in Sicily.

What language is spoken?

Italian is the national language and we've left a few phrasebooks in the villas for you to use while there. If you hear the Sicilian dialect (a combination of Arabic, French and Italian) – just ask them to speak to you in Italian.

When it's night time in Italy, it's Wednesday over here...?

No, no no. Sicily is on Central European Time (CET) which is GMT +1 with similar seasonal adjustment dates as the rest of Europe. Life in Sicily is laid back and despite their love for horn honking and dislike of queues (they don't queue), they often snooze their afternoons away in the shade or in the town squares playing cards or bocce (boules). In the summer months the locals avoid the blistering heat by taking a siesta between 13:00 and 16:00 - leaving beaches, towns and roads deserted. Mad dogs and Englishmen as they say...

What religions are represented in Western Sicily?

Catholicism is the national religion of Italy, and therefore, Sicily. However, this part of Sicily lay on the trade route between the Middle East, Africa and Europe and has a strong Arabic and Muslim influence in not only religion, but architecture and cuisine too.

What currency is used?

The Euro. The Lire is no longer accepted. Most major credit cards are accepted. Cashpoints tend to work all week except on Sunday when the international networks go offline. Try not to use high denomination notes in smaller stores.



What are the typical shop opening times?

Although opening hours vary from shop to shop, most stores close between 13:00 (1pm) and 16:00 (4pm) daily and close again at 19:30 (7.30pm). In the summer many premises operate an 'orario-unico' (single period) and close for the day at 13:00 (1pm). Markets start early and are gone by midday. Larger supermarkets in Trapani close at 20:00 (8pm). Bars stay open later in the summer, often till 02:00 (2am). Banks are normally open from 08:30 (8.30am) until 13:00 (1pm) and again 14:45 (2.45 pm) till 15:45 (3.45pm) weekdays. There is normally no weekend or public holiday opening. You must pass through a security air-lock for most banks in Italy. Cashpoints operate throughout the day, but international networks are often disconnected for a few hours on a Sunday.

Any unusual Insects or animals?

Ants have been in Sicily for millions of years and, unlike its peoples who have been overthrown by every empire that has invaded, the ants have survived. They are bigger than UK garden ants, but just as harmless. Mosquitoes (Zanzare) can be kept at bay with an outside curly-burner or a plug-in indoor repellent. Snakes are small, rarely seen and tend to rush to get away from humans.

Questions about Telephoning, Electricity, Water, Recycling & Refuse

Will my mobile phone work?

Vodafone, Telecom Italia Mobile (TIM) and Wind provide GSM services across Sicily. If your phone is a GSM Mobile from another European Country it should work fine. Triband cellular telephones from outside the EU should also work. Contact your service provider well in advance of your departure to enable International Roaming or discuss your phone's compatibility and roaming charges. There are some mountainous ranges along the coast where your signal may peak and trough, but generally reception is good.

How do I make a phone call?

The international dialling prefix in Italy is '00' followed by the country code you are calling. Italy is '39', the UK is '44' and the ROI is '353'. You must drop the leading '0' if you are calling the UK from abroad: eg 020 8765 4321 becomes (00 44) 20 8765 4321. Bear in mind that if you ring an Italian number from a UK mobile on Roam, the call is routed via the UK and you effectively pay for two calls. Alternatively, payphones accept credit cards, coins and phonecards from tobacconists.

What voltage of electricity is used?

220v with 50/60Hz. UK appliances are normally okay to use as these use 240v with 50/60Hz. However, we will not be held responsible for damage caused to appliances with incompatible voltages and you should check with your manufacturer before travelling. Localised power outages tend to be quite rare, but do bear in mind that Italy and therefore Sicily, imports most of its electricity from France.

Is the Villa tap water drinkable?

Yes. The water is a combination of mountain spring and de-salinated purified sea water. Both villas are connected to the mains network and have sealed underground drinking water reservoirs. However, there are plenty of roadside taps, fountains, and mountain springs around Sicily if you want to stop off and fill a bottle on your travels. Please don't waste water in Sicily - it is a precious commodity.

What do I do with my refuse and recycling?

If you're shopping in the markets you probably won't have much waste, but if you do, remember that there are no kerbside collections in Italy. Rubbish must be disposed of in the large communal Eurobins alongside main roads. Full recycling facilities exist for paper, glass, plastic and metal near the lighthouse and beside main refuse points. The map we will provide will show you where you can find these facilities.



Questions about the Mafia

What is the Mafia?

It's an underground criminal organisation whose origins date back to 1865. The name Mafia derives from a word used by Arabic settlers that described the islanders' dogged levels of self esteem, honour and courage in the face of countless invasions by most historical Empires. Misconceptions about the Mafia stem from the otherwise excellent Godfather films which were set in *the past!* The real life bloodshed in the 1960s and 1980s was short lived and most of the survivors were tried, sentenced and imprisoned during the famous Maxi Trials of 1986-7. Aside from the occasional high-profile arrest, the organisation has become elusive and invisible once more.

Does the Mafia pose a threat to tourists?

No. It's an *underground* criminal organisation and like most similar groups, the 'Cosa Nostra' (meaning 'Our Thing') operates on the fringes of society's spectrum. What happens in the criminal ether of any nation is rarely visible to residents, let alone tourists. The Mattanza's of the 1960s and early 1980s stemmed from infighting between families seeking to control the lucrative post-war building boom and latterly the US drug trade. Both issues are a documented part of the island's history now and its unlikely you will see anything untoward during your stay. If you want to read more on the subject you might like to read one of the books on the right.

Whilst tourists are safe, Sicilian shops and businesses still get pressured into paying a 'Pizzo' to the local Mafia for 'protection'. In 2004 a new movement started called 'Addio Pizzo' (Goodbye Pizzo) - which aims to end this protection racketeering. Establishments that are part of the movement display Addio Pizzo stickers so that customers know that their money is not contributing to the Mafia.

Sources for further information...

Where can I find out more about Sicily?

Lonely Planet, Rough Guides and Michelin all produce decent guidebooks detailing the delights and culture of Sicily. For the bookworms amongst you, we recommend travelogues 'Midnight in Sicily' by Peter Robb and 'On Persephone's Island' by Mary Taylor Simeti. Those of you who prefer films, try Guiseppe Tornatore's award winning 1989 'Cinema Paradiso', The Leopard, and Falcone.

Our online **Books & DVDs** page suggests a plethora of Sicilian guidebooks, cookery books, travel writing and DVDs. Our **Links** page contains links to local restaurants, language schools and other local tourist attractions. Independent information about Marausa and Trapani can be found on **Trip Advisor** and **WikiTravel**.

I have an unusual request, need special assistance or help with booking.

Whatever your question, don't worry - just ask us and we will try our best to accommodate your request and answer your enquiry honestly and in full. Please **email us** or use our website to choose the method of contact that suits you best.