ACIREALE, SICILY

THINK EXQUISITE

PALAZZO MUSMECI

A sumptuous and highly prestigious baroque residence dating back to the first half of the 17th century, Palazzo Musmeci graces the historic centre of Acireale, one of Sicily's lesser-visited gems. The current owners of the *palazzo* have breathed new life into their beloved home, painstakingly restoring the florid artistry, the flawless craftsmanship, and the ingenious architectural flourishes of its grand halls, salons and bedrooms. At the same time, they've allowed the property to evolve by adding 21st-century comforts, contemporary artworks and designer furnishings. A stay in this magnificent home – which has hosted King Ferdinando IV of the Two Sicilies and King Umberto I of Savoia during its illustrious history - is an awe-inspiring, life-enhancing experience.

PRICES, AVAILABILITY AND BOOKING →

Service

Features

Sumptuous, character-filled interiors
A real sense of historical wonder
Refined, sophisticated accommodation
A leafy courtyard garden with gorgeous pool
In-villa cook service for three meals a day
Walking distance to restaurants, cafés and shops

Nearby

Email us: info@thethinkingtraveller.com
Or call us: +44 (0)20 7377 8518 or toll free in the US or Canada 1-800-490-1107
Palazzo Musmeci is exclusively available through The Thinking Traveller, you won't find it anywhere else.

ACIREALE, SICILY

PALAZZO MUSMECI

ABOUT THE VILLA

12 GUESTS 6 BEDROOMS 6 BATHROOMS

Inside:

Accommodation at Palazzo Musmeci develops over two floors connected by an imposing staircase and a lift.

The *palazzo* has been gloriously and painstakingly restored to a state of dazzling perfection. Original features abound, with antique-tiled flooring, awe-inspiring frescoed ceilings, and numerous other artistic details combining to cast a spell on guests. Where conservation has not been possible, architects, master craftsmen, and the *palazzo*'s owners have collaborated in perfect harmony, carefully devising colour schemes, procuring lavish wallpapers, designing built-in furniture, and installing luxurious, classically styled bathrooms. Each room has its own very distinctive character, but everything is perfectly in-keeping with the building's baroque aesthetics.

An impressive doorway opens from Piazza San Domenico into a covered entrance with lofty, groin-vaulted ceilings, lava stone floors, leafy plants, and views through to the courtyard, with its baroque fountain and statue of Poseidon.

On the left, a couple of steps up, is the entrance hall proper. Its ochre walls, leaping, white-vaulted ceilings, central chandelier, and vivaciously coloured, antique Sicilian cart set the scene for what's to come. Straight ahead is a suite of interconnected reception rooms, while to one side, is a guest bathroom in pastel pink, and a grand staircase leading up to the first floor, where we'll begin our tour.

The first floor

On the *piano nobile* (first floor), the historical and artistic interest of this ravishing old *palazzo* is at its peak. Both the stairs and a lift open into a double landing, combining a lobby and an exotically decorated sitting room.

To the left, double doors open into to a stately, generously proportioned salon,

whose rich, Savoy-blue patterned wallpaper has been recreated with painstaking precision from fragments of the original. Four antique sofas, upholstered in the same blue as the wallpaper, surround a centrally positioned circle of mustard-yellow armchairs. Original Palermitan tiles grace the floor, a series of large mirrors with ornate, gilt frames hang on the walls, a sparkling chandelier enlivens the atmosphere, and intricate baroque cornicing elevates the space still further. Completing this delightful room is a grand piano and a pair of large French windows looking out over Piazza San Domenico.

To the far end of the Blue Room, another set of double doors allows the space to flow into the *palazzo*'s pièce de resistance: a spectacular ballroom that is reminiscent of scenes from The Leopard. While this room is not included as part of the rental, the owners or staff will be delighted to give you a tour. Should you wish to reserve it for a special dinner or event with your guests, this can be arranged on request at an extra cost. Antique patterned floor tiles from Caltagirone set the colourful scene, while the ruby-red patterned wallpaper (reclaimed and restored by master artisans) brings warmth and vivacity. Large panels with 18th-century paintings and frescoed wooden door surrounds compete for attention; marble-topped consoles with rococo, gilt supports transport us back in time; a sparkling chandelier twinkles with good cheer; and Murano glass sconces add yet more vivacity. Notwithstanding all this splendour, one's gaze soon alights on the vast ceiling, which is decorated with a streaming garland of frescoes picked out in gold. Two sets of French windows open onto balconies delimited by goose-breasted iron balustrades, and a third allows the space to flow out onto a long, wide terrace that runs along the side of the *palazzo*. A door in the ballroom opens to reveal a secret, opulently decorated little chapel.

Heading back to the sitting area of the double landing, a wide corridor provides access to the remaining accommodation on the first floor:

• a spacious, well-equipped kitchen with a centrally positioned breakfast table, views out over the main courtyard, and walls decorated with vertical bands of white and mint that converge at the apex of the vaulted ceiling
• a spacious double bedroom with Japanese-inspired wallpaper depicting blossoming trees, a pair of antique wooden wardrobes, courtyard views, and an en-suite shower room with double sinks, a walk-in, marble-clad shower, and a separate WC
• two guest WCs
• the master suite, where the *palazzo*'s most eminent guests – from King Ferdinando IV of the Two Sicilies to King Umberto I of Savoia - would have

slept. The bedroom, which is as exuberant in its baroque magnificence as the ballroom, features vibrant golden wallpaper, a large, centrally positioned ottoman, and a traditional sleeping alcove hosting a double bed. Beautifully painted panelled doors open into the largest bathroom we have ever seen, a majestic space with more of those original floor tiles, a chandelier, a contemporary tub, a sink inserted into a gilt, marble-topped console, a curvaceous corner divan, and a voluminous, three-sided mirrored cubicle enclosing both a walk-in shower and a WC. French doors open out onto the large side terrace.

The ground floor

Accessed from the entrance hall, with its antique Sicilian cart, is a suite of reception rooms. The first is a dark mulberry-hued lounge bar with white ceilings and a gathering of comfy armchairs. This leads through to a well-furnished salon, whose pale green colour scheme creates a calming ambience. Last in this triptych of free-flowing spaces is a “room of curiosities”, which features a centrally positioned elongated-oval wooden table and various other prestigious pieces of furniture topped with bibelots, books and artworks. Along one of the walls is an expanse of bespoke, glass-fronted cabinetry and bookshelves exhibiting a variety of family heirlooms and collectibles.

At the centre of the ground floor, accessed from the entrance hall (passing the lift), and the first and third reception rooms, is a wide gallery decorated with works of art. From here one may access the four ground-floor bedrooms, each one with high vaulted ceilings, octagonal terracotta-tiled flooring, and direct access to the central courtyard:

• a generous double-twin with a wonderfully voluminous en-suite bathroom with patterned floor tiles, marble wall surrounds, double sinks, a self-standing tub, a large walk-in shower, and French doors opening out into the courtyard
• a spacious double with a desk, a pair of armchairs, a walk-through wardrobe, and an en-suite shower room with colourful floor tiles and double sinks
• a super-sized double with a contemporary, iron four-poster bed, a sitting area, a walk-through wardrobe, and an en-suite shower room with more exuberant floor tiles, double sinks, and a large walk-in shower clad in olive leaf-motif tiles
• a slightly smaller (but still good-sized) double with a beautifully decorated antique bedstead, and an en-suite shower room

Accommodation at Palazzo Musmeci is completed on the opposite side of the

covered entrance (remember that?), where there is a convivial dining room and the *palazzo*'s original kitchen, a generous, fully equipped and character-filled space where your chef will prepare your meals.

Outside:

Most al fresco living at Palazzo Musmeci plays out in the secluded central courtyard, a wide-open space that develops over several distinct areas.

First, at the open end of the covered entrance, and presided over by a baroque statue of Poseidon, a cool, shady fountain, and various heraldic emblems sculpted out of stone, is the main al fresco dining area. Served by the main kitchen, this is an enchanting spot for lazy lunches and long, convivial dinners under Sicily's starry skies.

A luxuriant variety of exotic plants and flowers borders this al fresco dining area, creating a delightfully green and fragrant ambience. As might befit a *palazzo* owned by the proprietors of one of Europe's largest plant nurseries, this floral, leafy theme continues in all the other outdoor spaces, and any keen horticulturalists in your group will be delighted to explore the abundance of plants, trees and shrubs on show.

An opening near Poseidon allows the space to flow into a wider expanse of paved courtyard, which is also accessed directly from the ground-floor bedrooms. Here there is a shady, fabric-covered sitting area, and a scattering of seats under a towering, shade-giving magnolia tree.

A few steps up from here, a lockable gate opens to reveal the irresistible aquamarine pool, whose herringbone tiling and wide, gentle steps ooze sophistication and style. Loungers flank two sides, and an al fresco shower with emerald-green, leaf-shaped tiles offers refreshment. Gazing out over the pool is a glorious shady portico, whose grand arches frame a sociable lounge area and bar that's ventilated by gently whirring ceiling fans. A door from here opens into a vestibule, off which is a guest WC.

The remaining outdoor space at Palazzo Musmeci is found on the first floor, where, accessed from the master suite, is a long, wide terrace with views over Piazzo San Domenico, the *palazzo*'s courtyard gardens, and the rooftops of Acireale. Featuring an original baroque stone bench, furnished with plenty of comfy seating, and bordered by lemon and banana trees and a riot of flowering plants, this is the perfect spot for early-morning yoga, or lazy afternoons with a book.

CONSIDERATIONS

Please note that the ballroom is not included in the rental, but may be booked on request and for an extra fee for any special dinners or events you wish to organise during your stay (for your group, only).

Due to the nature of the property, which includes terraces, low walls and several drops, children must be supervised at all times.

The terrace of a neighbouring bishop's palace partially overlooks the pool. However, the terrace in question is hardly ever used.

There is a lift connecting the ground and first floors, but the number of steps that must be negotiated to get around the property might make it unsuitable for people with limited mobility.

The discreet and helpful owners occupy a separate half of the palazzo but will not disturb in any way, unless of course you need local advice. Their terrace overlooks the central courtyard but will not be used while guests are staying.

Please note that Palazzo Musmeci is located in the historical centre of Acireale and therefore has neighbours.

PRICES, AVAILABILITY AND BOOKING →

Amenities

Accommodates (max)	12
Bedrooms	6
Double beds	5
Flexible (double or twin)	1
Bathrooms	6
... of which en suite	6
Fully serviced [1]	✓
Gated pool [2]	10x5m
Hydromassage pool	✓
Short walk to shop(s) / restaurant(s)	✓
Bar	✓
Walking distance to restaurant(s)	✓
Poolside bar	✓
Wine cellar	✓
Pizza oven	✓
Walking distance to shop(s)	✓
Daily maid service	✓
Barbecue	✓
Table tennis	✓
Table football	✓
Private parking	✓
Fibre Wi-Fi Internet	✓
Air conditioning	✓
Heating	✓
Laundry service [3]	–
Bluetooth speakers	✓
Hairdryer	✓
Iron	✓
Ice maker	✓
Safe	✓
Dishwasher	✓
Staff on the grounds	✓

[1] including a cook, who will prepare breakfast, lunch and dinner daily.

Please note that the cost of ingredients for lunches and dinners is not included and should be paid for locally. Please see the Services section below for more information about dining at Palazzo Musmeci

2 a salt-water pool

3 provided by an external supplier at an extra cost

✓ = yes/present

– = optional/on request

PRICES, AVAILABILITY AND BOOKING →

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EXPLORING THE LOCAL AREA

Palazzo Musmeci rises proudly in the centre of the history-filled, buzzing town of Acireale above Sicily's east coast. Famous throughout Italy for its carnival celebrations, **Acireale** boasts numerous architectural treasures, and a great selection of excellent restaurants, cafés and bars. It does, despite its many charms, fly somewhat under the tourist radar.

Down on the coast below Acireale is Santa Maria La Scala, a characterful working fishing village, still relatively untouched by tourism except during August and summer weekends when it attracts locals from Catania in search of the sea. Its harbour (where you can hire a boat), sea-front fish restaurants, bar and bathing platforms make it a great place to spend a day or two. It is possible to walk there in about 30 minutes.

Other lovely fishing villages, such as Aci Castello and Acitrezza, dot the coastline.

Taormina is just a short drive up the coast, fascinating **Mount Etna** awaits exploration behind you and multi-layered, historic **Catania** should not be missed.

Further afield, **Syracuse** is about an hour's drive away, but also suitable for day trips are the UNESCO World Heritage towns of **Noto**, **Ragusa**, **Modica** and **Scicli**. There's even a golf course within striking distance if you fancy a round.

PRICES, AVAILABILITY AND BOOKING →

Distances

Catania airport: 30km-18.6miles-40mins
Palermo airport: 256km-159miles-3hr5
Trapani airport: 337km-210miles-3hr45
Nearest shops, restaurants, shops and other amenities: just outside your door
Nearest sea access and beaches: Santa Maria La Scala - 4km-2.5miles-12mins; Fondachello - 22.7km-14miles-35mins; Marina di Cottone - 29.5km-18.5miles-30mins
Taormina: 39.5km-24.5miles-40mins
Mount Etna cable car: 29.5km-18.5miles-45mins
Catania centre: 19.2km-10miles-30mins
Syracuse: 85.5km-53miles-1hr10
Noto: 112km-70miles-1hr30
Modica: 150km-93miles-1hr50

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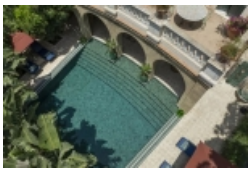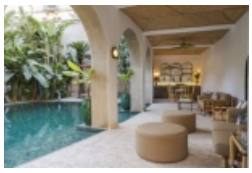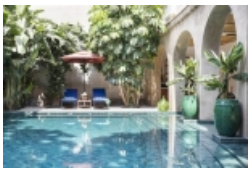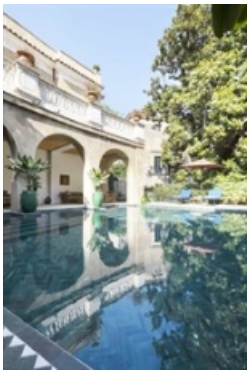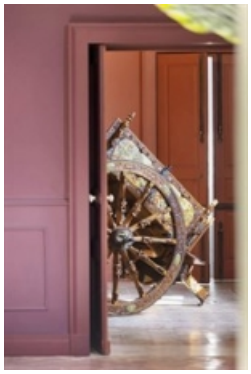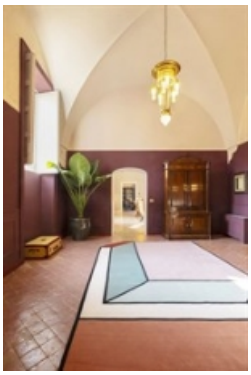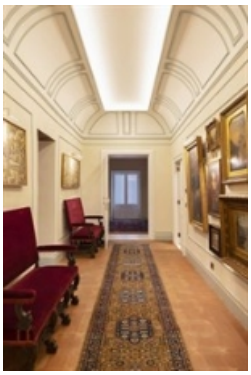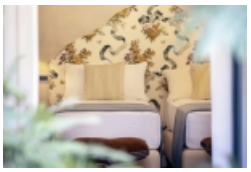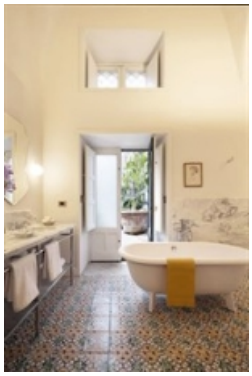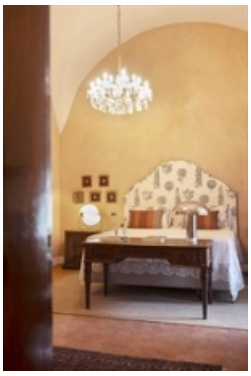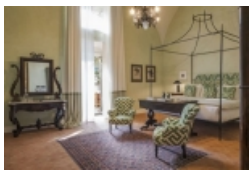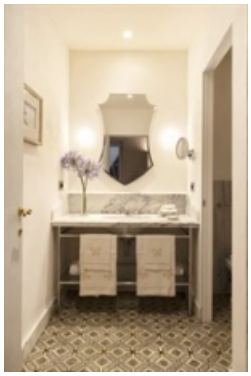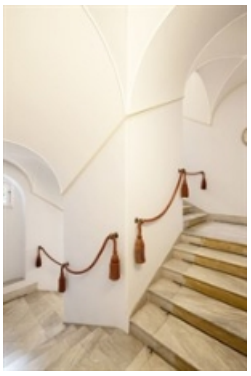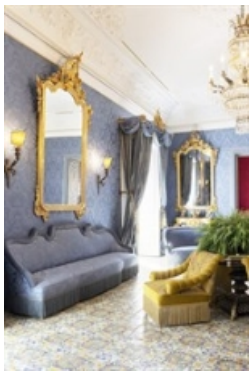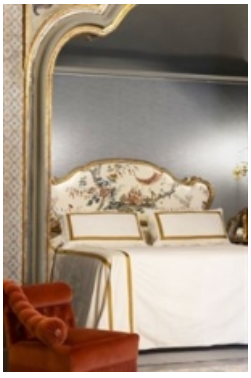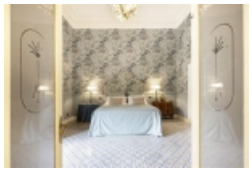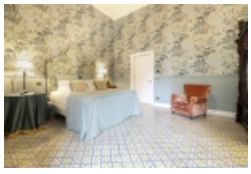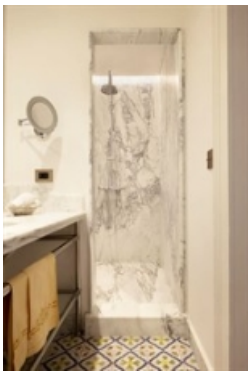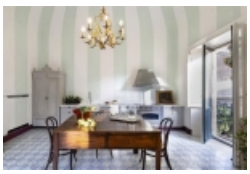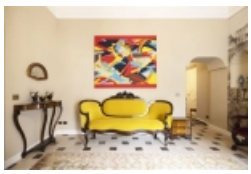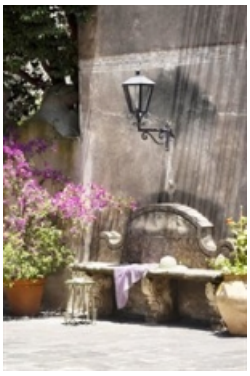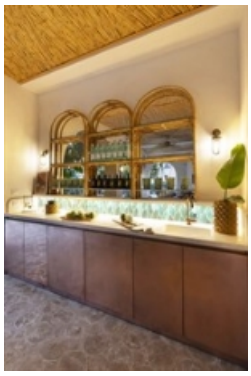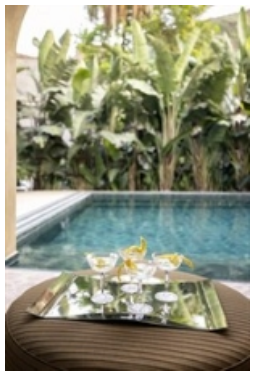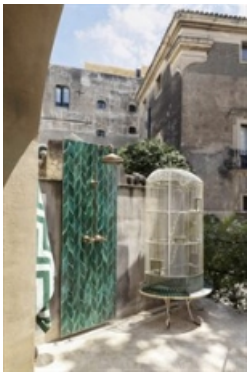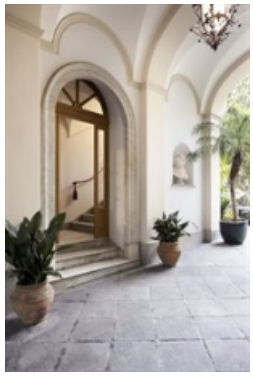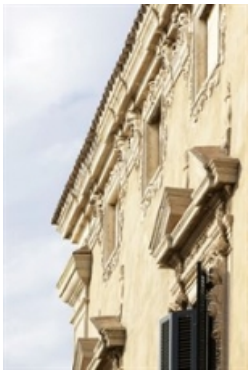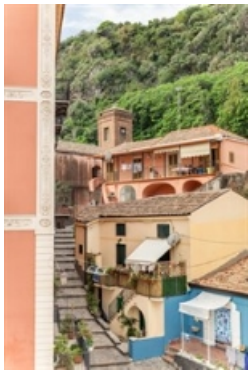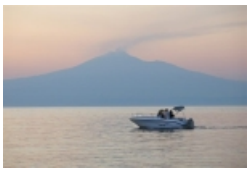
GALLERY