



Syracuse, City of Legends: A Glory of Sicily

Jeremy Dummett

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Dubbed 'the greatest Greek city and the most beautiful of them all' by Cicero, Syracuse also boasts the richest history of anywhere in Sicily. Syracuse, City of Legends - the first modern historical guide to the city - explores Syracuse's place within the island and the wider Mediterranean and reveals why it continues to captivate visitors today, more than two and a half millennia after its foundation.

For more than 1600 years, from its settlement by Greeks in 733 BC, Syracuse was the leading city in Sicily and at times one of the most powerful in the world. As a Greek city-state it competed with Athens and Carthage and was for a while an important ally of Rome. When Sicily became Rome's first province, Syracuse was the island's capital and was an important centre for early Christianity. Under Byzantine rule, the Emperor Constans II even moved his court to Syracuse for five years. Capture by the Arabs in 878 AD marked the end of ancient Syracuse but the city continued to evolve and during the Spanish era Caravaggio created one of his masterpieces, The Burial of Santa Lucia, in the city. After a devastating earthquake in 1693, a major rebuilding programme gave the city the characteristic Baroque appearance it retains today.

Over its long and colourful life, Syracuse has been home to many creative figures, including Archimedes, the greatest mathematician of the ancient world, as well as host to Plato, Scipio Africanus, conqueror of Hannibal, and Caravaggio, who have all contributed to the rich history and atmosphere of this beguiling and distinctive Sicilian city. Generously illustrated, Syracuse, City of Legends also offers detailed descriptions of the principal monuments from each period in the city's life, explaining their physical location as well as their historical context. This vivid and engaging history weaves together the history, architecture and archaeology of Syracuse and will be an invaluable companion for anyone visiting the city as well as a compelling introduction to its ancient and modern history.

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