



Palermo, City of Kings: The Heart of Sicily

Jeremy Dummett

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Palermo - the capital of Sicily - is a destination with a difference. The city is a treasure trove of original monuments and works of art, combined with architecture of grand proportions. Yet it also has a grittier side, exemplified by its mafia connections. Jeremy Dummett here provides the first concise history of Palermo, together with a survey of its most important monuments and sites.

Palermo became the capital of Sicily under the Arabs in the ninth century. Until this time Syracuse had been the leading city of Sicily. Palermo blossomed under the Arabs and the Normans and the influence of both can be seen in the city today. Later it became the scene of the Sicilian Vespers when the island rose against the French. In 1860 Sicily was freed from the rule of the Spanish Bourbons by Garibaldi and went on to join the newly formed Kingdom of Italy. Many prominent writers have fallen for the city and those that left accounts of their travels include Goethe, Henry Swinburne and Maupassant.

Palermo's monuments are striking and unusual, from the Byzantine mosaic of Christ Pantocrator in the Palatine chapel located in the Norman palace, to the sculptures by Giacomo Serpotta in the oratories, the decorative piazzas Pretoria and Quattro Canti, the Arab-Norman style Cathedral and the Norman complex of buildings at Monreale. Palermo has also produced world class writers and artists, including in modern times the writer Giuseppe Tomasi di Lampedusa and painter Renato Guttuso.

In addition to being an essential companion for visitors to Palermo, this book can be equally enjoyed as a standalone history of the city and its place at the heart of Sicily.

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