

EUTO: SITE VISITS & MEETINGS – SICILY 17 - 21 OCTOBER 2010

REPORT: BILL CAMERON, HISTORIC SCOTLAND, DELEGATE

Many thanks for making all the arrangements for what turned out to be a very interesting few days in the Milazzo area in north east Sicily. This was my first visit to Sicily and I confess to being quite ignorant of what the island and the area had to offer the tourist. As has been my experience on every one of several EUTO visits, I found many of the experiences inspiring, often surprising and always thought provoking. As is so often the case around the world, the success of a destination begins with a small number of far sighted individuals who not only recognise the potential, but are prepared to take positive action to realise that potential.

I was particularly impressed with the mountain side sculpture park, Parco Jalari. The owners, a sculptor and architect brothers, have created a masterpiece of sculptures and various buildings on what would otherwise have been a raw mountain face. The buildings blend into the landscape providing a reception point ; various small structures around the site housing displays featuring traditional crafts and equipment ; meeting facilities ; and a restaurant offering local produce. Their visitor mix reflects the facilities, attracting tourists, corporate, educational groups and weddings. Milazzo Castle was another excellent visit to a site with enormous potential, both because of the views from its prominent position and especially because of its fascinating history. Other visits included a Spa Hotel in the area, a local family owned winery and a local family owned pottery factory. Milazzo is also the hub for numerous ferry options to seven nearby small islands, which attracts tourist coaches from across Sicily every day and Mount Etna, with various tour options, is only a short drive away.

With such a rich mix on offer for the tourist in this small, but very attractive area of Sicily, I was surprised by the apparent lack of co-ordination or partnership approach to the wider offer. It appeared to me that an opportunity was being missed, which in turn might be reducing the potential economic benefits to the area. The simple premise that together we are stronger, is something which I believe has worked well in Scotland. By pooling resources it is possible to promote a destination much more effectively than any one operator or local tourist board could manage on their own. The benefit of working together comes from heightening the profile of the destination and what it has to offer and growing the number of visitors to the area along with increasing dwell time and bed nights.

EUTO continues to give members the opportunity to share best practice, to see their destination through fresh eyes and most importantly to enhance the offer to their visitors. Europe is under increasing pressure from new destinations and global travel, it is vital that we continue to improve our tourism offer in order to compete for a growing, rather than diminishing share of visits.

Bill Cameron
Historic Scotland
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