



SPAS: TOTAL WELLNESS IN THE ITALIAN TRADITION

ACIREALE SPA

There have always been various opportunities to perform thermal treatments in Italy. Various spas are located in Sicily, along the wonderful coasts and on the islands. Here we present Acireale Spa, known to be of very ancient origin

Spas, once places exclusively attended by old people or people who intended to cure specific medical problems, today attract different kinds of people and more of them, all looking for a new life style. The thermal waters take the medicine back to its origin, to favour man's needs. Therefore the results obtained at spas, the successful medicine, depend on the whole environment in which everything contributes to make people restore their psychological and physical harmony, getting back incentive and motivation that are created through the synergy of treatments. Synonymous with well-being, the tourism of the thermal baths has also evolved, in modern times, into the Beauty Farms, at the cutting edge of the Italian accommodation market, with large and attractive proposals.

Throughout the peninsula, there have always been plenty of opportunities to make effective spa treatments. Various spas are located in Sicily, along the coasts and on the islands. We would recommend Acireale Spa known to be of very ancient origin.

ACIREALE: SPA AND TOURISM

The origin of Acireale is said to be linked to the myth of Aci and Galatea, the impossible love between a youthful shepherd and a sea goddess that struggled against all. Beside the myth, Xiphonia (first name given by

tradition to Acireale) became Akis under Roman rule. Acireale entered a period of decline after the fall of the Roman Empire. In Byzantine times, it fought against the Muslims until 902. Twice destroyed and twice rebuilt, after ups and downs, in 1642 it was called Reale by Philip IV of Spain's decree. A visit to Acireale, a town surrounded by wonderful and wild nature, lets the visitor enter its conflicting position, between the volcano Etna and the Ionian sea. Its inhabitants are also particularly gifted in organizing events both for religious and non-religious celebrations (like Carnival or the exploits of knights and heroes played by the Teatro dei Pupi) that always involve and astonish everybody.

ACIREALE SPA

At Acireale Spa, tourists can have the opportunity to fully relax. The therapeutic properties of its sulphurous spring waters, flowing from Etna, were known since ancient times and were exploited by the Greeks who also built the first thermal system called Xiphonie, The Roman baths of S.Venera al Pozzo is one of the most interesting archaeological places of the area. Their popularity since then, has never failed, finding many illustrious admirers, such as Richard Wagner, King Umberto 1st and Queen Margherita. However, we had to wait until the 19th century to have the spa supplied with adequate facilities to host people. S. Venera Spa (also provided with a park and the magnificent Grand Hotel des Bains) with its splendid neoclassical façade, has become known as one of the most famous Sicilian Spas. Over the time, various structural changes have been done and in 1987 the most modern and best equipped thermal system of S. Caterina became operative.

CATERINA SPA

The mixture of the sulphurous water flowing from Etna and the subterranean sea water, at a temperature of 22°C, produce a kind of water containing, besides sulphur, also sodium, chloride, bromide and iodine. These characteristics make this water particularly therapeutic for various diseases. Bath treatments are provided with vegetable/mineral mud obtained through a process of volcanic clay grinding in the sulphurous water. The physiotherapy section takes care of physical and rehabilitative activities, especially useful for rheumatic and degenerative treatments, while the dermal-cosmetic section cures specific pathologies as well as dermal ameliorations. The mud therapy consists of mud and sulphurous bath treatments, sulphurous hydro-massage or normal massage and a specific orthopaedic examination.

Various other sections offer specific therapies to recover after relevant diseases. Among the “Well-being Routes”, planned in the medical advice at Acireale Spa, days dedicated to tonic, drainage, regenerative relaxing, anti-stress, toning up, slimming and anti-cellulite intents are suggested. The Spa is provided with a large park, a swimming pool, solarium terraces for helio-therapy where it is also possible to practise gym and relaxing activities. In summer time various cultural proposals are offered here: symphonic concerts, theatre, cabaret and cinema. There is a wonderful panorama ranging from Taormina to Acitrezza, from the Volcano Etna to the seaside villages and the ancient Acireale.

MORE BESIDES BEING SPA

A short distance away from the most beautiful towns of Eastern Sicily (Catania, Taormina, Siracusa, Piazza Armerina, Noto, etc.) Acireale itself would be sufficient, with its historical and cultural attractions, to meet the guests' interests. Wonderfully lying on a lavic ridge going straight to the sea, Acireale can be considered as a centre of tourist, historical, naturalistic and cultural interests in an island well-known all over the world. Acireale preserves magnificent architectural and monumental masterpieces, such as the Romanesque-Gothic Duomo of the XIV century, with the inside Chapel of S. Venera, patron saint of the town, and her golden statue. Significant evidences of the Baroque period characterizes this town. In fact, at Acireale, the 17th century was the golden age for architecture: Palazzo di Città, Basilica di S. Sebastiano, the palazzi of Via Dafnica and the simpler Via Galatea and Via del Suffragio, in the more popular districts. We can say that the whole town preserves Sicilian Baroque examples in its houses, streets, cultured masks on its lavic portals. A witness to the importance that culture has had in the history of Acireale is Library Zelantea. one of the oldest and richest Libraries in Sicily: founded in 1671, it contains about 200,000 volumes including many manuscripts, incunabula and rare editions.

Cuisine

The inclination towards celebrations and the ornamental talent, typical of the Sicilian populations, is present in their traditional gastronomy. The inventiveness of Acireale is also revealed in its cuisine and, most of all, in its rich and imaginative pastry made of marzipan, rolls with ricotta, custard or chocolate and the “zeppole” with rice, as well as the delicious and magnificent ice-cream cones and the incomparable lemon or almond flavoured water-ice. The cuisine itself is varied but, above all, the dishes based on fish stand out, thanks to its geographical position that characterizes Acireale as a sea and fishing town.

■ **Spiedini di pesce spada:** *Ingredients for 6 people: 1 Kg of swordfish, 3 lemons, 3 tomatoes. For the marinade: 2*

spoons of lemon juice, 2 spoons of olive oil, 1 teaspoon of onion juice, 1 and half teaspoon of paprika, 12 bay leaves, salt. For the sauce: 1 lemon juice, 2/3 spoons of olive oil, minced parsley.

Cooking: cut the swordfish into chunks and keep them immersed in the marinade, prepared with the mentioned ingredients mixed together, for 4-6 hours. Then strain the swordfish chunks, stick them, alternating with slices of tomato and lemon, in the skewers. Grill the “spiedini” for about 10 minutes, brushing them with the left marinade. Serve them with the oil, lemon and parsley sauce.

Getting to Acireale

By air: Daily flights from the main airports to Catania Fontanarossa Airport (15 kms)

By train: Daily connections from the main Italian towns with the railway station of Acireale along the Messina-Catania line.

By car: From Messina: A18 –SS 114 Messina-Catania; from Palermo: A19 Palermo-Catania; from Siracusa:SS 114 SR Catania-Messina

TERME DI ACIREALE SPA

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Gli Stabilimenti Termali sono aperti tutto l'anno (mattina)
ad eccezione della domenica e festivi.