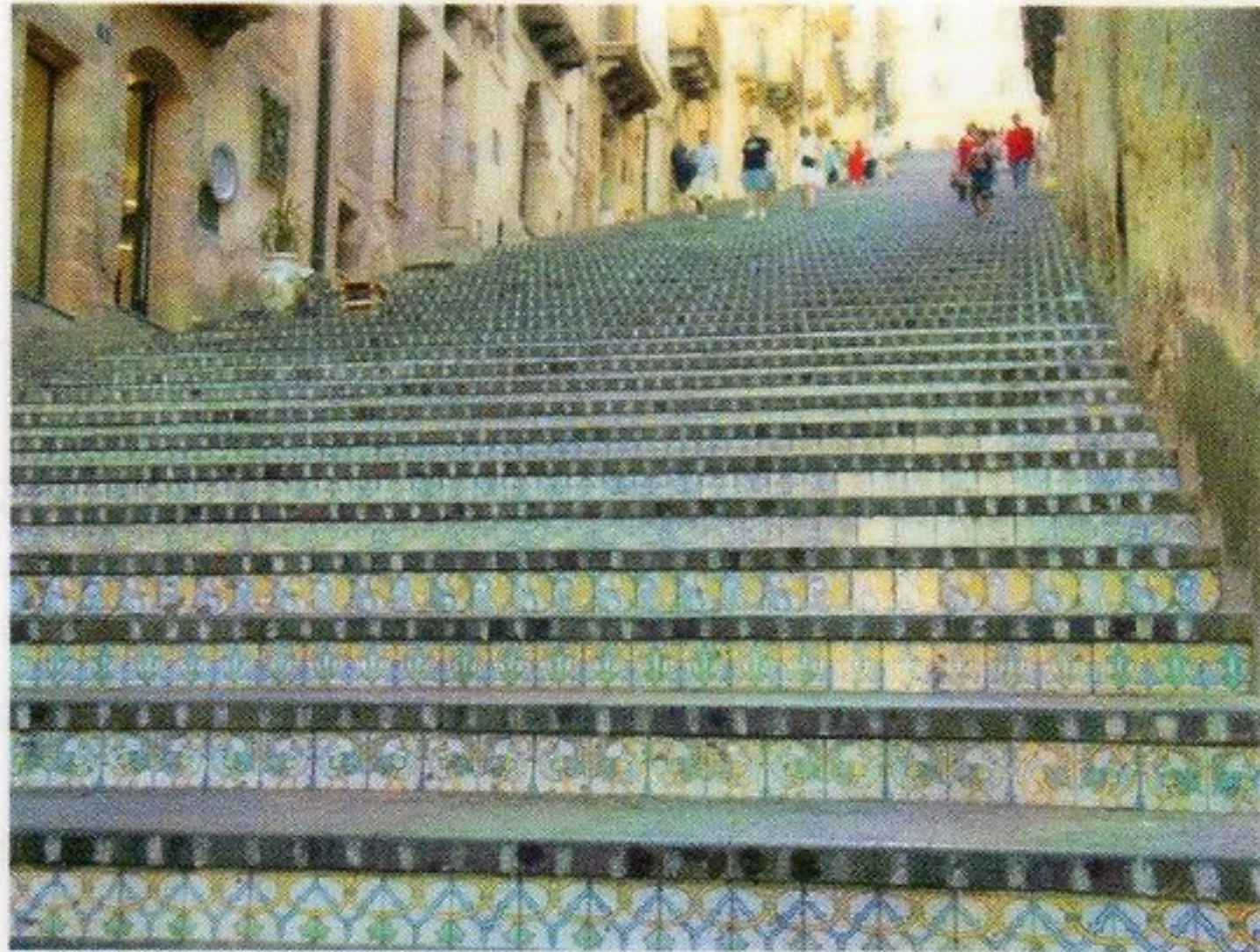


Caltagirone



Piazza Armerina



Departure from Syracuse

Arrival in **Piazza Armerina**. Is a pretty and historic town nestled into the heart of Sicily. Whilst it is most famous for the truly astonishing classical mosaics at the **Villa Romana del Casale**. This stunning Roman complex is the main reason most people to visit Piazza Armerina. Indeed it is seen as so important it is an Unesco World Heritage Site due to its containing the most complex and large collection of Roman mosaics in the world - there are 3535 square metres of them. Built in the early 4th century AD, the buildings were covered by a mudslide in the 12th century and though sporadic attempts were made over the centuries to uncover them, it wasn't really until the 1950s that a concerted excavation effort began, which even with the vast amount now on display, is still not completed. You will never see anything else like these mosaics. Very naturalistic in style they give an insight into Roman life rarely glimpsed in other places. Perhaps most notable and charming are the famous "bikini girls" mosaics, depicting everyday scenes of Roman female athletes in the gym. There are also amazing scenes of animals and strange creatures, hunting and circus scenes, conjuring up a past magical world breathtaking in its detail and complexity. Apart from the mosaics the villa also gives a wonderful insight into the layout of a grand Roman house - the different rooms and their uses - and how rich Romans actually lived.

A trip to Caltagirone in the springtime will offer an unforgettable experience

Arrival in **Caltagirone**. The town takes its name from the Arab word "Qal'at Ghīrān" or Rock of Caves. In fact most of the prehistoric dwellings were located in the numerous caves. It has been inhabited by prehistoric man, Greeks, Arabs, Romans, Spanish, French and various post Roman, city-states. It maintains an aura of mystery, as if its long history attempts to make itself known. The city is an open-air museum. Every corner, every building, statue or stone seems to reveal a secret piece to the puzzle of who we are. The city is well known for its artisans who create the luxurious ceramic works of art. The scenes of Caltagirone's rooftops in Terracotta, churches adorned in beautifully painted tiles, expose the soul of this antique settlement. Along with the Museum, other places to visit include Duomo di San Giuliano, Chiesa di Santa Maria di Gesù, Chiesa di Santa Maria del Monte (and the stairs), Chiesa di Santa Chiara, Chiesa di San Giorgio, Chiesa del Gesù, Chiesa dei Cappuccini, and Basilica di San Giacomo. The splendid **Scala di Santa Maria del Monte**, is a unique staircase worldwide, totally covered in painted ceramic tiles. This breathtaking staircase with 142 steps, that connects the high part of the city to the low part, is the center of many cultural events in Caltagirone., famous for its ceramics, second only in Italy to Faenza. Visit the Cathedral, the famous Staircase of Saint Mary of Mount coated ceramic throughout, baroque palaces and liberty, the narrow alleys (small alleys) the court capitaneale, Saint Mary of Mount, Town Hall Square, etc. ...

Return to Syracuse