



MODICA

Doing our best to avoid erratic weaving at great speed, we journey west for half an hour to our second baroque. A strong coffee in Modica (“the town of one hundred churches”) takes the edge off the shakes. It’s difficult not to liken angles of this town to those of Jerusalem – not perhaps the wide, orderly Corso Umberto dominated by the magnificent Church of Saint Peter and its pastel-fancy innards, but rather Modica’s hazy, hilly sprawl that surges in the distance.

Having occupied Sicily for just over three centuries, [Spain](#) left a legacy that can be seen in both Modica's flamboyant architecture and, famously, its chocolate, the former having imported Aztec chocolate-making prowess from its South American conquests to Sicilian soil. Modican chocolate is defined as 'cold' for its crumbly texture, and local chocolatiers still use the process passed indirectly to them from the Aztecs. We scrutinise the movement of knowledge and skill, the controversial issue of provenance and ownership as we queue for the mandatory bar in Antica Dolceria Bonajuto, Sicily's oldest chocolate factory.

Its sugar-coated almonds are the popcorn for our theatrical half-hour drive north into the Hyblaean Mountains to reach Ragusa Ibla. This fairy-tale town, with its limestone labyrinth of bijoux houses, baroque palazzos and churches, engulfs us for two gelato-heavy days.