Regione Siciliana

ASSESSORATO DEL TURISMO, DELLO SPORT E DELLO SPETTACOLO
DIPARTIMENTO DEL TURISMO, DELLO SPORT E DELLO SPETTACOLO

World Travel Market 2026

Innovation and sustainability in Sicily: a new model of tourism development

The Sicilian Regional Government is focusing on data, innovation and the widespread promotion of the region to support the growth of tourism, from artificial intelligence and visitor flow analysis to the network of walking routes and the sustainability of major events.

Palermo, 2 October 2026 - The **Sicilian Regional Department for Tourism, Sport and Entertainment** is developing a strategy to gain a deeper understanding of visitors to Sicily. This will involve analysing their motivations, interests and travel patterns in order to inform policies for the promotion and management of the destination. The strategy also seeks to encourage a more balanced distribution of visitors across the region by highlighting inland areas and small towns, as well as promoting more sustainable organisational models for events and festivals.

Using artificial intelligence to understand tourism and guide strategies

Since 2025, the department has used **artificial intelligence as a tool to support the analysis of the regional tourism market**. This complements the traditional quantitative data collected through ISTAT surveys by providing socio-demographic information and insights into travellers' preferences, motivations and interests.

This approach is made possible by **IODAH (Intelligence On Destination And Hospitality)**, an AI-based *Destination Business Intelligence* platform that integrates and harmonises data from various sources, presenting it via web-based dashboards.

The aim is to transform vast amounts of information into useful tools that can be used to quickly understand trends in the sector and support data-driven tourism decisions and policies. The system enables the monitoring of supply and demand, the analysis of trends and an in-depth examination of aspects that are not easily measurable using traditional statistics.

These include visitor sentiment and satisfaction levels. IODAH has also developed the **Destination Reputation Index (DRI)**, which summarises tourists' overall assessment of their experience at the destination in a single qualitative and quantitative value. **For Sicily, the DRI is 84.5 out of 100, which is one of the highest scores nationally**.

Understanding visitor flows enables us to distribute them more effectively across the region

Data analysis is also important in addressing a key challenge for contemporary destinations: **balancing growth in tourism with maintaining the quality of the visitor experience and protecting natural, cultural and landscape heritage**.

Monitoring visitor flows enables us to understand their scale, geographical distribution and temporal distribution. This creates the conditions to direct interest towards new areas and different times of the year.

The strategy launched by the Department aims to achieve this by **diversifying traditional tourist flows and combatting overcrowding**, broadening the scope of travel in Sicily and offering new opportunities to discover inland areas and small towns.

There are over 5,000 kilometres to discover Sicily at a leisurely pace

One of the tools for achieving this objective is the **Network of Trails and Paths of Sicily**. The Department encouraged its establishment, and it brings together the expertise of associations, nature and hiking guides, and volunteers committed to maintaining **over 5,000 kilometres of historical, nature-based and spiritual routes**.

Spanning the peaks of Mount Etna, the Madonie and the Sicani, as well as the Nebrodi and extending to coastal and urban routes, the network promotes exploring the region through soft mobility, whether on foot or by bicycle.

Trail tourism thus becomes another tool for promoting the region. The routes pass through villages and communities in the hinterland, taking visitors off the beaten track and creating new economic and social opportunities in these areas. This model can help counter depopulation in rural areas while preserving their traditions, landscapes and environmental resources.

Music festivals: a network for increasingly sustainable events

Sustainable destination management also encompasses events. In collaboration with the **Sicily Music Conference**, the Regional Department of Tourism has launched the **Regional Network to promote Sicilian music festivals and environmental sustainability**. The aim is to strengthen the dialogue between festivals, cultural operators and local stakeholders.

The project involves activities such as mapping, training, raising awareness, networking, communicating and monitoring. Particular focus is given to the gradual implementation of the **Minimum Environmental Criteria for live entertainment events** and disseminating replicable best practices.

The network promotes the heritage of Sicilian music festivals while fostering greater awareness of environmental, social and economic sustainability issues by encouraging dialogue amongst operators, raising public awareness and collecting useful data for measuring impacts and progressively improving event organisation.

Artificial intelligence, data analysis, sustainable transport and event sustainability thus become components of a single strategy, providing a better understanding of tourism, expanding the areas involved and transforming tourist flows into an opportunity for widespread, sustainable development that protects Sicily's heritage.

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