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# Normans' Palace in Palermo



Fortunata Norma

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# ABSTRACT



## Informations

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## The story

The Normans' Palace, also known as the Royal Palace, is located in Palermo and is currently the seat of the Sicilian Regional Assembly. The Palace is the oldest royal residence in Europe, home of the sovereigns of the Kingdom of Sicily, imperial seat with Frederick II and Corrado IV and the historic Sicilian Parliament, whose Constitutional Charter is the oldest Charter in Europe, even before the English Magna Charta.

On the first floor of the Palace stands the Palatine Chapel. It is one of the most visited monuments on the island. Additional tourist services are provided by the Federico II Foundation; the main entrance is on the Parliament Square, the tourist entrance is on the Independence Square. Since July 3, 2015, it is part of the Heritage of Humanity (Unesco) in the framework of the "Arab-Norman Palermo and the cathedrals of Cefalù and Monreale" site.



*Normans' Palace in 1847*



*The "Hall of the Winds" in front of Roger's Room in the Gioaria Tower.*



*Normans' Palace –  
Hall of Assurances.*



*The arcade on the first floor of the Maqueda courtyard, through which one reaches the Palatine Chapel, with the Egyptian granite columns, primitive exterior structure of the Palatine Chapel.*



*The Palatine Chapel*



*In the Palatine Chapel :*

*The resplendent scene of golden mosaic represents the Flight into Egypt. Mary the Immaculate, seated on the white little donkey and holding the bridles, is preceded by Joseph carrying the Child Jesus on his shoulders, holding him by one leg, who in turn clings to his father's hair, to maintain a precarious balance.*

## *Historical chronology of the Normans' Palace:*

- VII century BC - geographical location of a Punic castle (according to literary sources and the vestiges of older masonry).
- 254 BC – The fortress is conquered by the Romans.
- 535 – Belisarius seizes the city which remains for about three centuries under Byzantine rule.
- 831 – The Arabs conquer Palermo and establish themselves in the Palace which becomes the residence of the Emirs.
- 1072 – Norman Conquest. The fortress becomes the Normans' Palace which is transformed and embellished.
- 1130 – Roger II has the Palatine Chapel erected.
- 1195 – Henry IV of Swabia begins the Swabian dynasty of Sicily.
- 1220-30 – Frederick II founded in the Palace the "Sicilian poetic school".
- 1282– Pierre of Aragon settles in the Palace after the expulsion of the Angevins. After this date the Normans' Palace is inhabited only occasionally by the Viceroys.
- After 1500 the palace underwent major restoration work until the expulsion of the Bourbons in 1799.

It is one of the greatest monuments of Palermo because of its historical and artistic importance. The Arabs structured and fortified the "Qasr" in a castle in the 9th century on a previous Punic-Roman castle. Then the Normans in the person of Roger II, after 1130 (year of his coronation to King of Sicily), enlarged and consolidated the original structure by towers and bastions, so that it became the main fortress of the city and a sumptuous royal palace, where until the death of the Swabian Frederick II, the political and economic life of the state was administered. With Frederick, the Palace became also a center of civilization and culture of European greatness. King Roger II was the founder and author of this precious religious jewel called the Palatine Chapel, which he wanted to insert in the body of the Royal Palace. Begun in 1130, the chapel was consecrated in 1143 and dedicated to Saint Peter. At the end of the 13th century, with the decline of the political and economic life of Sicily, the palace of the Swabian Norman dynasty died out. The palace lost all importance as the political seat of the exercise of power, until the sixteenth century, when it was left in complete abandonment and in a state of grave degradation, except the Palatine Chapel by the engagement of the monks who had its custody. With the Spanish viceroys, during the second half of the sixteenth century, the building became a royal residence, undergoing remarkable transformations. The Norman towers were demolished and the massive and imposing mass of the current façade was structured by the construction of vast interior courtyards: the Maqueda courtyard of 1600, in the center of a triple gallery with calcareous arches, and the courtyard called "fountain". The most obvious traces of the Norman period are: the Pisane tower, the Roger II hall in the Gioaria and the Palatine Chapel. Since the post-war period, the Normans' Palace has been the seat of the Sicilian Regional Assembly.



## King Rogers's Room, from the Norman era

Roger's Room: Roger's Room is inserted in the Gioiaria, part of the Palace where the Norman and Swabian kings used to spend long hours of pleasure and rest, surrounded by the Royal Court, men of science, poets and illustrious men of arms and government. Here used Frederick II, a poet himself, to be surrounded by the noblest souls of the time, giving impetus to this Sicilian poetic school quoted by Dante, where the first songs in Italian language flew away. In this room the decoration with strong golden chromatic accents, releases figures of birds, swans, peacocks, deer, lions, leopards and centaurs. The wonderful series of mosaics begins under Roger but ends during William the Good's reign.

***"Roger's Room" where the oriental figurative character of the Arab masters conveying evocative artistic and environmental interpretations, is revealed in the decoration.***



## Sitemap Normans' Palace

