

# EXPLORE!

## Sicilian Trails

8 days

Italy - Trip code SIT



## Sicilian Trails

Enjoy a week of walking in a diverse variety of scenic landscapes. Based in a simple family-run hotel in the seaside town of Giardini Naxos, we walk alongside the lava flows on iconic Mount Etna, take a ferry to the peaceful Aeolian island of Vulcano and ramble among the rock-cut tombs of the UNESCO-listed Pantalica Gorge. From Monte Venere we admire spectacular coastal views, while the lakes and uplands of Mount Nebrodi National Park are a verdant and isolated wilderness.

## Trip highlights

- ★ **Mount Etna** - Hike the other-worldly lava and pumice strewn landscapes of Europe's highest volcano
- ★ **Aeolian Islands** - Catch a ferry to the island of Vulcano and climb to the crater rim
- ★ **Taormina and Syracuse** - Time to explore the streets and ancient sites of these picturesque towns
- ★ **Pantalica Gorge** - Easy walking in a limestone gorge by an ancient UNESCO-listed necropolis
- ★ **Nebrodi Mountains National Park** - Discover one of Sicily's most untouched and wildest scenic places

### ACCOMMODATION GRADE:

#### Simple

These are often small, family run establishments or campsites which provide a no-frills experience with adequate amenities and service standards. Sleeping arrangements are simple, sometimes with en suite facilities.

#### WALKING GRADE:

##### Easy To Moderate

This grade is ideal if you want to enjoy both easy and moderate level walks on the same tour. You'll be walking mainly on good paths and at low altitude, with occasional more demanding ascents or descents.

#### GROUP SIZE:

##### 10 - 16

Maximum group size ranges from between 6 to 20 people, depending on the type of trip, the transport and accommodation used and activities included. We rarely have groups that are smaller than five or six people and the average is 12 people plus an Explore leader.

## Itinerary

Itineraries on some departure dates may differ, please select the itinerary that you wish to explore.

### DAY 1 - Join trip Catania airport; transfer to Giardini Naxos

On arrival at Catania airport we meet our bus and head north along the coast to our base for the week, the seaside town of Giardini Naxos. Once a quiet fishing village, it's now a popular resort, famous for its beaches, panoramic view of the bay and surrounding hills, and a small, but bustling fishing port. Its position is ideal for accessing the endless hiking opportunities and incredibly varied scenery of eastern Sicily. The beautiful hill top town of Taormina, famous for its remarkable ancient theatre, is situated in the hills above Giardini Naxos and can be easily accessed by bus. Hotel Costa Azzurra is our simple family-run hotel and is located just a few metres from the beach. After a day out on the trails we can look forward to some typical and tasty Sicilian cuisine prepared by our hosts.



**Accommodation: Hotel Costa Azzurra** (or similar)



Simple Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Dinner

### DAY 2 - Walking on the slopes of Mount Etna

Our walk today is on the northern slopes of Mount Etna, the highest volcano in Europe (3330m) and one of the largest in the world. Mount Etna is one of the most active volcanoes in the world and is in an almost constant state of activity. We drive up to 1900m on Etna's slopes. Hundreds of subsidiary cones and spent craters have been formed by lateral eruptions along regular lines of fracture which, together with twisted lumps of lava strewn chaotically around, provide an otherworldly setting. Setting out from a height of 1700m, we walk to the fissures of the 2002 eruptions and site of the former ski resort area of Piano Provenzana. We reach a high point on the walk of 2200m. Afterwards we follow the now solidified lava flows downhill through the pine forests to 1900m. Our waiting bus takes us back to our base at the seaside. Today's 10 kilometre walk is expected to take around four hours with a total ascent of 210 metres and a descent of 140 metres.



**Accommodation: Hotel Costa Azzurra** (or similar)



Simple Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast, Lunch & Dinner

## DAY 3 - Ferry to the Aeolian Island of Vulcano; crater climb

This morning we drive to Milazzo on Sicily's north coast from where we take a ferry to the Aeolian island of Vulcano, named after Zeus' son Vulcan, the God of fire and metalworking. Although now dormant, Vulcano has erupted spectacularly throughout the centuries - the last dramatic explosion being only 100 years ago. In 183BC a huge eruption gave birth to 'Vulcanello' (the Little Volcano) visible from the port. Today, Vulcano puffs out a steady stream of gases and vapour. Even offshore the presence of the sulphur, which was once mined here, is obvious. Our walk to the crater rim provides us with great views of the Aeolian islands scattered around us. Afterwards we can cool off with a swim in the sea. We return to Milazzo by ferry and drive back to Giardini Naxos. Today's seven kilometre walk is expected to take around three hours with a total ascent and descent of 386 metres.



**Accommodation: Hotel Costa Azzurra** (or similar)



Simple Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

## DAY 4 - Monte Venere walk with amazing coastal views

Our walk today is a little closer to home. We drive to Castelmola, a medieval village overlooking nearby Taormina and starting point for a 250m ascent up to the summit of Monte Venere. The views from here are simply amazing - from the Strait of Messina and all along the Ionian coastline south to Syracuse, Mount Etna and the Alcantarra Valley. Following old mule tracks through unspoilt typical Mediterranean scrub we follow in the footsteps of Freida Von Richthofen, the wife of author D.H. Lawrence. It's said her amorous adventures with a mule handler here were the inspiration behind the novel *Lady Chatterley's Lover*. In spring the mountain is abundant with wild orchids. Today's 13 kilometre walk is expected to take around three hours with a total ascent of 385 metres and a descent of 545 metres.



**Accommodation: Hotel Costa Azzurra** (or similar)



Simple Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast, Lunch & Dinner

## DAY 5 - Free day; options to visit Taormina or 'Godfather' mountain towns


Today has been left free to relax on the beach and/or visit Taormina which is just 4 km away and easily accessible by public bus or taxi. Perched on a cliff overlooking the Ionian Sea, this pretty town is home to many historic churches and a number of lively bars and cafes as well as a Graeco-Roman theatre which is famous for one of the most iconic views in Sicily - that of snow-capped Etna acting as a backdrop to the remarkably preserved columned stage. It was a favourite place during the days of the 'Grand Tour' and was frequented by Goethe, Edward Lear, D.H. Lawrence and many others. If enough people are interested it is also possible to organize a trip to the scenic mountain towns of Savoca and Forza D'Agro, where the film *The Godfather* was shot.



**Accommodation: Hotel Costa Azzurra** (or similar)

 Simple Hotel

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 Single room available

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 Meals Provided: Breakfast

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## DAY 6 - Walking in the Pantalica Gorge; visit to Syracuse

We head south today to the area inland from Syracuse where our walk explores the Pantalica Gorge, a deep limestone ravine that has been carved out by the Anapo and Calcinarra rivers. The gorge is also a UNESCO-listed World Heritage Site that is home to over 4000 burial chambers. Peppering the sides of the canyon, the necropolis was built between the 13th and 8th centuries BC. For several centuries before Greek colonization, Pantalica was undoubtedly one of the main sites of eastern Sicily, dominating the surrounding territory. We enjoy an easy hike into and along the bottom of the gorge which is home to a flourishing variety of flora including holm oak, wild sage and thyme, giant fennel and plane trees to enjoy a picnic lunch beside the Anapo River. After our walk we drive on to visit Syracuse on the east coast. During the Greek Classical Period, this city was the largest in the ancient world - even bigger than Athens. Now a UNESCO World Heritage Site, it is also notable as being the birthplace of antiquity's greatest mathematician, Archimedes. We plan to take a stroll on the island of Ortygia where you will have some free time to visit some of the ancient landmarks including the site of the mythological spring of Arethusa and Temple of Apollo. Today's eight kilometre walk is expected to take around three-and-a-half hours with a total ascent and descent of 450 metres.




**Accommodation: Hotel Costa Azzurra** (or similar)


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 Simple Hotel

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 Single room available

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 Meals Provided: Breakfast, Lunch & Dinner

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## DAY 7 - Hiking in the Lake District of the Nebrodi Mountains

Today we head inland to the one of Sicily's most unspoilt wild areas, the Nebrodi Mountains, a gently undulating range that runs along the north east of Sicily and much of which is a National Park. Our easy walk crosses an upland plateau along trails through meadows grazed by horses and sheep to Lake Trearie (1435m) where we enjoy a picnic lunch with typical Sicilian cheese, salami and maybe even a some wine! Today's nine-and-a-half kilometre walk is expected to take around four hours with a total ascent of 550 metres and a descent of 400 metres.




**Accommodation: Hotel Costa Azzurra** (or similar)

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 Simple Hotel

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 Single room available

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 Meals Provided: Breakfast, Lunch & Dinner

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## DAY 8 - Transfer to Catania airport where trip ends

This morning is free to relax in Giardini Naxos before the transfer back to Catania airport where the trip ends.

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 Meals Provided: Breakfast

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# Walking and Trekking information

## Walking grade

Easy to moderate

## Trek details

We walk on 5 days for an average of 4 hours each day. Terrain is varied and the walking is graded easy to moderate.

## Max walking altitude (m)

2250



# What's included?



## Included meals

Breakfast: 7  
Lunch: 4  
Dinner: 5



## Transport

Bus  
Boat  
Ferry



## Trip staff

Explore Tour Leader / Trek  
Guide  
Boat Crew  
Driver(s)



## Accommodation

7 nights simple hotel

# Trip information

## Country information

### Italy Holidays & Tours

#### Climate

April/May and October/November are pleasantly warm. June/September are the hottest months. Showers are common in Autumn.

#### Time difference to GMT

+1

#### Plugs

2 Pin Round

#### Religion

Roman Catholic

#### Language

Italian

## Budgeting and packing

### Optional activities

Savoca and Forza D'Agro - Visit the scenic mountain villages where the film 'The Godfather' was shot €45pp.

### Clothing

You will need light layers of clothing for walking during the day and a fleece and waterproof jacket as temperatures can drop on Etna and in the Nebrodi mountains. A sunhat is essential and bring a swimming costume if you wish to bathe in the sea.

### Footwear

We recommend you bring walking boots - leather or fabric are both fine. Some of the paths are a bit rocky underfoot and so you could twist an ankle if not wearing boots. Trainers are not recommended. Make sure that your boots are worn-in and comfortable

before the start of the trip. We recommend that you wear/carry your walking boots as hand luggage on the international flight: should your luggage be delayed, your well broken-in boots will be irreplaceable. Bring trainers and sandals for relaxing and other sightseeing

## Luggage

20kg

## Luggage: On tour

Bring one main piece of luggage and a daypack Unfortunately it does occasionally happen that luggage does not always reach its destination on the same flight as its owner, or possibly it may be damaged in transit. If you are unlucky enough for this to occur, it is important that you file a PIR (Property Irregularity Report) with the airline before leaving the airport. This is essential when you come to make a claim either against the airline or from your travel insurance company

## Equipment

You should bring a 2 litre water bottle, sunhat, sunglasses and sunscreen. Trekking poles are recommended.

## Tipping

### Explore leader

At your discretion you might also consider tipping your Explore Leader in appreciation of the efficiency and service you receive.

## Country Information

### Italy Holidays & Tours

#### Food and drink

The costs for meals may vary depending upon location, type of restaurant and number of courses eaten and so the prices given are an average guide. Local restaurants located off the beaten track may be less expensive, whereas an upmarket restaurant located in the centre of a major city may charge more.

**Dinner price**  
£10.00 - 14.00

**Beer price**  
£2.00 - 4.00

**Water price**  
£1.00 - 2.00

#### Foreign Exchange

**Local currency**  
Euro.

**Recommended Currency For Exchange**  
GBP.

**Where To Exchange**  
We recommend that you change any currency into Euros prior to arrival. Bureau de Change are generally only found in major cities and large airports.

**ATM Availability**  
Major towns.

**Credit Card Acceptance**  
Larger hotels and restaurants.

**Travellers Cheques**  
Only in major towns. Please note, the exchange rate for cash and Travellers Cheques is poor.

## Transport Information

Bus, Boat, Ferry

## Accommodation notes

### Booking a Single Room

All of our group tours are planned and operated on a twin-share basis, meaning that the standard cost is based either on individual travellers sharing accommodation with another group member of the same sex, or people who book together sharing accommodation. Please refer to the tour notes where the single room option availability is detailed on a night by night basis for this tour, and the price for the available nights is detailed on the dates & prices tab by departure date. For Self-Guided trips the Single Room supplement offers the option of a single room each and is charged per person. The Single Room supplement also applies to the third person in a party of three that will be accommodated in a single room.

The Costa Azzura is a small and simple family-run hotel located just a few metres from the beach in the seaside resort and fishing village of Giardini Naxos. Rooms are en-suite with traditional Italian tiled floors. It's an ideal location is ideal for striking out to explore the excellent and varied walking on offer in eastern Sicily. After a day out on the trails we can expect our hosts to cook up some typical and tasty Sicilian cuisine.

## Essential information

### FCO Advice

We strongly recommend that you check your government's travel advisory for up-to-date information and advice about your destination: safety and security, entry requirements, health, local laws and customs. For UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office advice click [here](#).

For more information from Explore about travel advice, click [here](#)

### Under 18 immigration guidance

Please note that some countries require proof of parental consent when travelling overseas with under 18s. Please check requirements with the relevant embassy or consular office well in advance of travel if this applies to your party.

### Essential Information

Once your booking has been confirmed we guarantee the price will not increase, whatever the circumstances. Before booking please ensure you have read our important tour pricing information. [Booking Conditions](#)

### Visa Information

Italy: Visas are not required by U.K., CAN, US, AUS and NZ citizens. Other nationalities should consult the relevant consulate.

If you do require assistance in obtaining a visa then you may consider applying through Explore's recommended visa service in the UK, Travcour. See [www.travcour.com](http://www.travcour.com) to download the relevant visa application for your trip, if applicable (UK citizens only), along with details of how to apply for your visa through Travcour. The Team at Travcour will be happy to answer specific questions relating to visa applications, please call them directly on 0208 5431846.

### Booking conditions

Before booking your Explore trip, please ensure that you read both our [Essential Information](#) and [Booking Conditions](#).

### Transfers

[Find out more about Trip Transfer Terms and Conditions before you book.](#)

### Booking a land only package with Explore

Customers who have chosen to book on the 'Land Only' arrangements of our tour, please ensure that you have checked your tour specific 'Joining Instructions' prior to booking your own travel arrangements. Your joining instructions can be found below in the dates and prices information.

You may also be eligible for the Free Explore Transfer.

### Joining Tour Abroad

Customers booked on the 'Land Only' arrangements will now receive a Free Transfer, provided you arrive and depart on the tour only itinerary start and end dates. The transfers will be from the Explore designated airport or train station to the joining point of your tour, and then back from the ending point to the designated airport or train station. The exception to this rule is customers



who are booked on a tour where the joining and ending point is at the designated airport or train station.

Free transfers are not available for Self-Guided, Tailormade or Tours for Churches customers.

If you are not eligible for the Free Transfer then you will need to make your own way through to the joining and ending point. On a majority of our tours Explore will be able to provide a private transfer at an additional cost. Please ask for a quote at the time of booking.

For more information regarding the Explore Free Transfer click [here](#)

## Insurance

It is a condition of booking with Explore that you have adequate valid travel insurance. It is your responsibility to arrange appropriate travel insurance and ensure you have read and understood the full terms and conditions of your travel insurance policy to ensure that you are covered for all activities you intend to undertake whilst on the tour, including all optional activities. Your Insurance Policy must fully cover you for medical expenses and emergency repatriation to your home country. Please ensure your policy includes medical emergency helicopter evacuation in the event of illness or injury and covers the entire duration of your holiday. If you are trekking at altitude please ensure that there is no upper altitude limit which may limit or exclude cover for your trip. Medical and repatriation insurance cover is not mandatory for UK residents who are travelling on trips within the United Kingdom.

Read more information about what travel insurance is required.

## Flight information

Explore offers a wide range of flexible flying options to make joining and leaving our trips easy. Read more about them [here](#).

### Flight Information

You are able to book this tour on a 'land only' basis or as a 'flight inclusive' package. Your flight inclusive package will be fully protected by the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) ATOL protection scheme.

### Booking a flight inclusive package with Explore

We have a good selection of flights not only from London but from many regional airports around the UK allowing us to compare fares between scheduled carriers as well as low cost and charter airlines. Our dedicated flights team will match the best flight options to your arrival and departure airport.

On our website we display a UK flight inclusive package guide price which is generally based on a London departure. To avoid paying supplements or to secure your preferred flight option, we recommend booking as early as possible, especially for peak travel dates.

## Maximum altitude (m)

2250

## Included activities

Due to the volcanic dust and sulphur fumes on Mt Etna, we ask asthma sufferers or customers with heart conditions of any kind to take these factors into consideration when deciding if this trip is right for you.

## Italy Holidays & Tours

### Vaccinations

Nothing required. Tetanus recommended. The above is not an exhaustive list. Further information regarding vaccinations and travel health advice can be found by following the NHS and NaTHNaC links at <http://www.explore.co.uk/Travelhealth/> and from your local healthcare provider.