



Self-Guided Hiking Trip in Sicily's Beautiful Madonie Mountains

TRIP ITINERARY





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HIGHLIGHTS:

- The Madonie Park, an incredibly beautiful yet relatively unknown area
- Rugged cliffs and razor sharp mountain crests
- Small villages built like eagles' nests scattered on the mountain slopes
- Traditional farming villages
- The famous harbor town of Cefalú with its castle and thousand years old Normal Cathedral

LAND COST

\$1508/person double occupancy
\$1815/person single occupancy

DETAILS:

- Eight days
- Overnights in a range of special, authentically Sicilian accommodations
- Available May to June and September to October
- Trip starts Palermo and ends in Cefalú

Overview

This Sicily hiking trip starts not far from Palermo and is based in the Madonie Mountains. Almost literally 'in the shadow of' the most famous and dominant highest Sicilian peak, the Etna, lays the Parco delle Madonie, an incredibly beautiful yet unknown mountain area south east of Palermo. Rugged cliffs and razor sharp mountain crests almost reaching up to 2000 meters offer great panoramic views. Small villages built like eagles' nests lie scattered against the mountain slopes. Daily life here passes slowly, following the rhythm of the seasons and is strongly influenced by old rituals and traditions. People in the Madonies still live off what nature has to offer. They work the small fields and grow their own vegetables, maintain the olive groves and vineyards and harvest figs, almonds and hazelnuts.

Through this timeless landscape you'll experience a hiking adventure that takes you from the highest mountains to the sea at Cefalú, the famous harbor town with its castle and thousand year old Norman Cathedral.

Itinerary



Day 1 Arrival in Sicily

Our private transfer service will pick you up from the airport of Palermo and take you to your first accommodation, a lovely rebuilt estate, south of Monte Madonie. Enjoying your first dinner at this former olive mill, you'll be surprised at the different regional specialties that are being served here.

Day 2 Portella Castellaro

This is a good four hour walk on which you'll make your first acquaintance with the mountain cliffs of the Madonie. A Jeep brings you a good way up the mountain from where you'll climb up to the Portella Castellaro. Here you are rewarded with lovely views over the rolling hills of Central Sicily as well as the blue Tyrrhenian Sea. The descent back to the estate is easy and panoramic. 7.5 miles 12 km, up 530m, down 900m, 4.5 hours



Day 3 Petralia Scottana

After breakfast you're transferred to the starting point of the walk through the 'Vallone Madonna degli Angeli'. In this secluded valley you'll find at least 26 species of the *Abies Nebrodensis*, an endemic fir tree that is conserved here. Over the bold top of the Monte Cavallo the walk continues and suddenly and rapidly descends using a small footpath towards the town of Petralia Sottana. Here you'll find hospitality in the local albergo. 9.8 miles 15.5 km, up 580m, down 860m, 6 hours.

Day 4 Pomieri

Today you'll turn to the very heart of the Monte Madonie. A sturdy climb through wooded hills up to a 1500 meter high mountain pass brings you to Pomieri, an isolated mountain hotel with a splendid view of the highest peaks. In springtime the ground is covered with different orchids that grow on these limestone rocks. 10 miles 16 km, up 830m, down 490m, 6 hours

Day 5 Rocca di Gonato

You'll experience a real mountain walk today climbing from Pomieri to the plateau "Piano Battaglia" (1700 m) You make a large circular tour around the Monte Ferro (1900 m) before descending to a very special agriturismo, Rocca di Gonato, where you can recover from your efforts. 8.8 miles 14 km, up 550m, down 1050m, 5.5 hours.



Day 6 Castelbuono

Today you'll say goodbye to the Monte Madonie and descend to a beautiful agriturismo near the town of Castelbuono. Since the walk is short (only 3 hours) you'll have time in the afternoon to enjoy the flower gardens of the agriturismo or have a stroll through Castelbuono. The ancient castle of the Ventimiglia family, the medieval town center and the small streets and squares are worthwhile visiting. 4.4 miles 7 km, up 50m, down 570m, 3 hours.

Day 7 Cefalù

After breakfast you'll be transferred with your luggage to the bus stop of Castelbuono from where you'll travel with public transport to Cefalù. After checking in at your hotel you'll have the rest of the day to yourself. The Norman Cathedral, climbing the Rocca or the cool waves of the sea: the choice is yours. In the evening you'll walk with the local people of Cefalù through the old streets to one of the many restaurants. Overnight in Cefalù. 5 km 100m up , 100m down 2 hours

Day 8

After breakfast the tour ends and you can travel by train or taxi to the airport of Palermo.





Accommodations and Meals

The accommodations we've chosen for this tour are all different and special, ranging from a simple but friendly albergo and an old monastery to a luxurious estate or agriturismo. The accommodations are double bedrooms with bathroom. In the evening you'll experience the richness of the local kitchen and the hospitality of the local people. They'll transfer your luggage and prepare your dinner and you can also order your a lunch at the accommodations. In Cefalú you stay in a hotel just outside the city centre where you are free to choose one of the many restaurants for dinner.

Trip Rating

This trip is rated level 2 – 3. The daily distances fluctuate between 5-10 miles (8 and 16 km). You'll climb and descend between 400 and 1000 m. Although the majority of the walks are not difficult and fairly well marked you should however have experience in mountain hiking and orientation.

Level 1

Trips with short walks of generally three to four hours (excluding breaks) and/or optional excursions, flat or slightly hilly terrain using well kept paths. Your luggage is always transported.

Level 2

Trips with easy day walks are interspersed with more strenuous sections. Four to five hours walking per day (excluding breaks) in hilly to mountainous areas using well kept but sometimes stony paths. Your luggage is always transported

Level 3

Trips with strenuous day walks or trekking in mountainous regions. Five to seven hours walking per day, sometimes carrying backpack with stuff for 1 night. Height differences between 500 - 1000 meters per day.

Level 4

Trips with heavy excursions in mountainous regions sometimes carrying backpacks with stuff for a few nights. six to eight hours walking per day with height differences of up to 1200 meters per day. This grade is only suitable for guests with excellent condition and no fear of heights.



Land Cost

\$1508/person double occupancy
\$1815/person single occupancy

Included in Price

- 1 night bed and breakfast and 6 nights Bed breakfast and dinner
- Friendly Albergo, old monastery, luxury estate and agiturismo
- Comprehensive and up to date information Pack
- 4 picnic lunches
- Luggage transfer (see schedule)
- Map and hiking cues
- Transfer to the start of the walks on days 2 and 3
- Private transfer from Palermo on day 1

Not Included in Price

- Transport before and after tour
- Meals not specified in the itinerary
- Flights
- Entrance to attractions
- Public transport. In 2009 this totaled approximately 10 Euros.
- Transfer to Palermo on day 8
- Travel Insurance
- Anything not listed in the above “included in price” section

A Note Regarding the Price the Exchange Rate

Our trips can be seen as a hedge against exchange rate fluctuations. In extraordinary circumstances, due to the volatility of currency markets, we may be forced to raise (or lower) our trip price. If so, your final invoice, sent out approximately 100 days before departure, may reflect that fluctuation. Please note: we have *never* done this in the past, would not do it without prior discussion, and expect not to have to do this in the future. However, we do reserve the right.

Cancellation Policy

If it becomes necessary to cancel your trip, the following schedule applies and is determined by the day that we receive written notification:



- >120 days prior to the trip: you will be charged \$100/person
- 120-90 days prior to the trip start: you will be charged 25% of the trip price
- 90-60 days prior to the trip start: you will be charged 50% of the trip price
- < 60 days prior to the trip start: you will be charged 100% of the trip price

We strongly recommend that you purchase Trip Cancellation and Interruption Insurance. Please contact Deborah Lewis (866-533-4361 (toll free in the U.S.), 203-840-0295; dlewis@bredeson.com) if you would like information on trip cancellation, interruption and health care insurance.

Reading Guide

Web Sites

<http://www.bestofsicily.com/>
<http://www.frommers.com/destinations/sicily/>
<http://www.fodors.com/world/europe/italy/sicily/index.html>
<http://www.italyheaven.co.uk/sicily>
<http://www.sicilyguide.com>

Books and Maps

A few guidebooks and maps on Sicily:

Eyewitness Guide Sicily, 2007, Eyewitness Guides
Color photography, dozens of excellent local maps and a synopsis of the island's attractions.

On Persephone's Island, Mary Taylor Simeti, 1986, Knopf Publishing Group
A portrait of Sicily by an American writer who settled on the island with her Sicilian husband in 1962 and stayed for 20 years.

Sicily Map, World Mapping Project

Blue Guide Sicily, Ellen Grady, 2006, Blue Guides
A comprehensive guide to the ancient history and culture of Sicily featuring good maps and site plans of archaeological sites throughout the island.

That Summer in Sicily: A Love Story, Marlena De Blasi, 2008, Random House Publishing Group
Marlena and her husband settle on the rustic island of Sicily to research a new book of regional recipes. De Blasi's accounts of her excursions to neighboring villas demonstrate that



her inquisitive appetite is not reserved for food alone. Described by Barnes and Noble as “a joyous beach or backyard read that could transport you to distant climes.”

A more comprehensive selection can be found at www.longitudebooks.com and www.amazon.com.

Questions and How to Sign Up

Contact Deborah Lewis at (866-533-4361 (toll free in the U.S.), 203-840-0295 or dlewis@bredeson.com for a sign-up form or if you have questions. You can also visit us on the web at www.bredeson.com.

