

Hidden Italy Sicily self-guided walk

7 days/6 nights: \$2050 per person with dinners included*

***5% discount when 4 people or more book and deposit together**

This seven day tour takes you walk through the spectacular natural beauty of central Sicily, following unsealed country roads through rolling wheat fields to the forests of the Madonie National Park, staying in enchanting villages along the way. Starting with a private pick up in either Palermo or Catania, we'll take you into the mountains and rolling hills of the little visited heart of the interior of Sicily, where your tour starts in the bustling town of Nicosia.

On the way, you'll explore the cultural heritage of the area, which has been inhabited since ancient Greek times. Each town and village has its own fascinating story to tell: troglodyte caves, Norman castles, Byzantine mosaics, Renaissance frescoes and Baroque stuccoes. But most importantly, along the way you'll also meet the locals and enjoy the famous Sicilian hospitality, and its delicious seasonal cuisine.

The walks:

The walks range from 3 to 4 hours, covering between 12 to 15 kilometres. They generally follow unsealed country roads passing through rolling farmlands, always with a house or village in sight. The trails are unmarked but are straight-forward to follow. There are no steep climbs or stairs.

The accommodation:

You will stay in a variety of centrally located accommodation (itself often part of the area's history) always comfortable and welcoming including: a converted 13th century monastery, a family-run 'agriturismo' in a country home, a convent and finishing in a restored noble residence in the heart of the final village.

The food:

Food is one of the highlights of a visit to this prosperous area, all based on delicious seasonal vegetables and fruits and fresh farm produce, including cheeses like fresh ricotta and cacciavallo; cured hams and salami; an amazing variety of breads; olives, eggplants and wild greens and, of course, those wonderful Sicilian pastries..... Breakfasts and dinners are included in this tour.

What's included in the tour?

- six night's accommodation
- all breakfasts and dinners
- reading lists and historical and cultural notes
- maps with gps markers and walking instructions
- pick up and drop off in either Catania or Palermo
- daily transfers of baggage between hotels
- 24 hour backup from local manager

Hidden Italy walking tours: PO Box 1091, Surry Hills NSW 2010, Australia
www.hiddenitaly.com.au

The Sicily self-guided walk itinerary

Day 1:

Private pick up in either Catania or Palermo and a 2 hour transfer to Nicosia in central Sicily. A strategic point on the mountain road that linked eastern Sicily with Palermo, Nicosia grew up around a 7th century Byzantine castle and flourished under Norman rule in the 12th century. Today is a bustling agricultural town – pure Sicily!

Day 2:

Your first walk is an easy hike across the valley to a tiny village that grew up around a rock outcrop riddled with prehistoric cave dwellings. Mt Etna, 100 kms to the east, is visible from the village's impregnable castle. The village's dialect still has traces of the French invaders who were garrisoned here in the 13th century. (12 kms, 3 hrs)

Day 3:

Today you have a long but gentle walk through rolling valleys with vast views of the mountains and farmlands around you, finishing at a family-run agriturismo in a restored medieval abbey which has been in the family since the end of the 18th century. (15 kms, 4 hrs).

Day 4:

An easy day, today you climb up to a nearby town which must be one of the most unusual towns in Sicily, a jumble of houses and lanes that tumble down the side of a spherical hill with a very good local museum. Your accommodation is in a family run '*agriturismo*' in the valley below the town. You will have the option in the afternoon of doing a loop walk up to visit the town. (14 kms, 4.5 hrs)

Day 5:

The walk today takes you through the valley and then up to a small town that was founded by the ancient Greeks and was the seat of the medieval counts who ruled central Sicily from here in the 14th and 15th centuries, the gateway to the Madonie National Park. Your accommodation tonight is in a small convent just off the central piazza. (12 kms, 4 hrs)

Day 6:

Today's walk takes you sharply up from the town to a wide path that wraps around the side of a mountain, taking you through pine forests and pastures with spectacular views back east across the valleys and mountains, with Mt Etna as a backdrop, before descending to your final destination, an extraordinary town that was founded by the Romans, one of the most interesting and beautiful towns of the region. Your accommodation is in a recently restored villa in the heart of the town. (13 kms, 4 hrs)

Day 7:

Your visit finishes this morning with a transfer to either Catania or Palermo, a two hour drive away.