



Magna Via Francigena Self-Guided Walking Tour from Monreale to Agrigento

The Magna Via Francigena is an ancient trade and pilgrimage route through Sicily from Palermo to Agrigento. 164 kms (plus optional 16.5kms) of wide-open scenery which gradually changes as you trek from north to south of the island. The trail has been used since Roman times up to the Norman period when both pilgrims and the Knights Templar crusaders, on their way to and from the Holy Land, trod it. The Normans called these roads *Regie Trazzere*.

Passing through mountain villages, over hills, wheat fields and crossing brooks and torrents, you will meet an inspiring and passionate network of young Sicilians who are seriously enthusiastic about establishing their welcoming committees in all the towns and villages where you will be stopping over.

The recommended period of the year to do this trek is Spring: March, April, May and then late September, October and even November. You will be averaging 20kms a day (some days longer and some shorter) over 8 days, so a good level of fitness is required with experience of hill walking. The trails are a mixture of forestry tracks, field walking and small country roads.

The attraction of this pilgrimage route is that it is a far cry from the overcrowded trails across Spain to Santiago de Compostela. Here you will be able to stop and listen to the sounds of the countryside without the hoards of happy trekkers walking St. James' Way. Local guides will introduce you to the history and traditions of the villages visited along the way, giving you a personal insight into the local culture.

Day 1:

Transfer from Palermo to Santa Cristina Gela or Optional walk from Monreale to Santa Cristina Gela

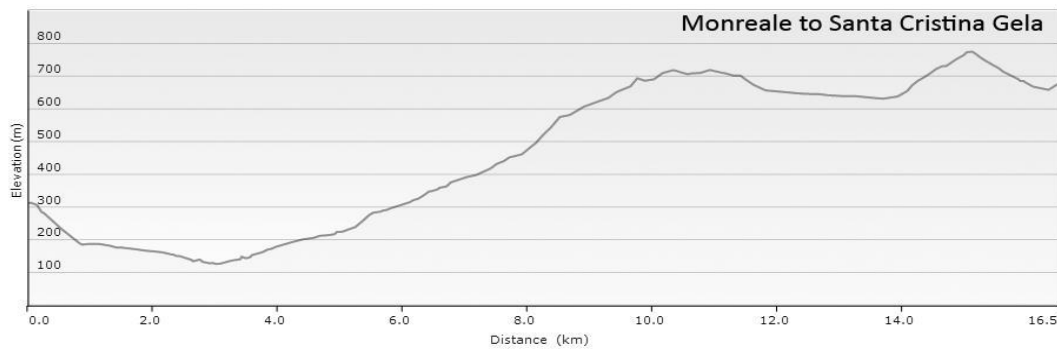
Today there's the option to be picked from the centre or airport of Palermo, with stop-over at Monreale Cathedral (depending opening times). Time to visit the Cathedral before transferring to your hotel in Santa Cristina Gela.

The other option is to walk from Monreale to Santa Cristina. This walk is on 85% asphalt road with sections of busy road with 8 kms of uphill.

Overnight stay: At Hotel Belvedere, Santa Cristina Gela www.albergobelvederesuite.eu

Dinner included.

Distance: 16.5kms; ascent: 811m; descent: 458m



Day 2:

Santa Cristina Gela to Corleone

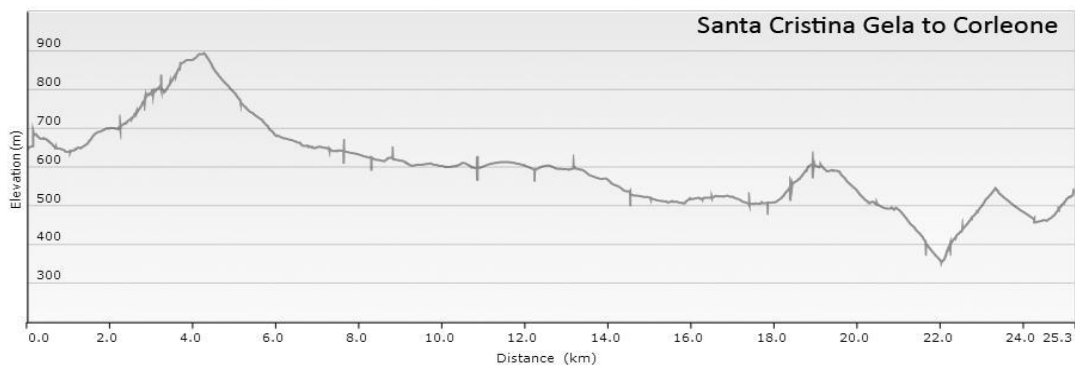
Our walk today takes in spectacular views over the lake looking back towards Piana degli Albanesi whilst climbing Monte Giuhai. You will walk through wheat fields (in Spring) dotted with cornflowers, and with open views of Monte Busambra. About half way, the Sanctuary of Tagliavia has a shop if you need to fill your water bottles or buy some food. Also, if you are carrying the Pilgrim's Credential you can get it stamped here. You will be crossing the river Belice, the level of which, depending on the time of year, could be knee deep or lower. Just at the very end of the walk there is a steep short ascent which will eventually lead you into Corleone.

The walk can be shortened by just doing the section of the walk to Sanctuary of Tagliavia after 13.5kms.

Overnight stay: At Hotel Leon D'oro, Corleone www.leondorocorleone.it

Breakfast, packed lunch and dinner included.

Distance: 25.3kms; ascent: 791m; descent: 904m (30% asphalt road / 70% dirt track)



Day 3:

Corleone to Prizzi

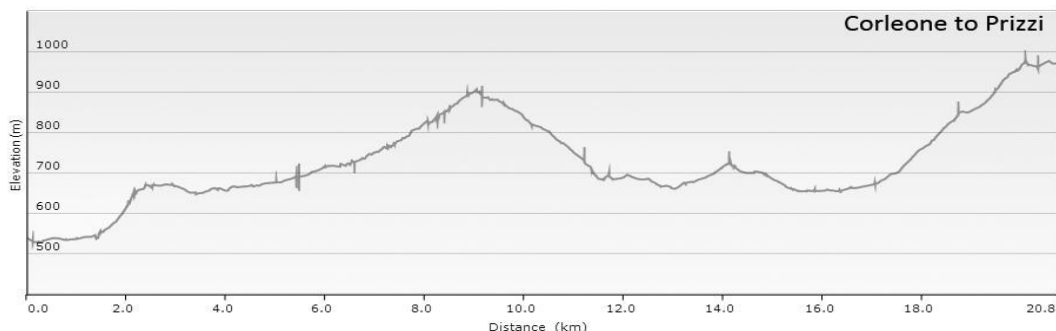
Today you will be walking on quiet country roads and tracks with wide open views of wheat fields, farms and mountains. Just before Cozzo Spolentino, an area once used by the ancient Greeks to control who passed through on the way between Corleone and Prizzi, there is a large shaded drinking water fountain on the left among the trees which is perfect for a short break before continuing on. After about 10.2 kms you will pass Masseria Imbriaca (translates: Drunken Farm!), owned by the family of the mayor of Palermo. Here there is a donkey breeding project where their milk is collected for new born babies who have allergy problems.

Eventually you will see Prizzi on top of the mountain with its artificial lake below. Depending on the time of year and how much water there is in the lake, you will either find yourself paddling across, as the original trazzera has been submerged, or if there is too much water you can skirt a wheat field making your way up to the SS118 road which will lead you to the trail again.

Overnight stay: Private home in the town of Prizzi.

Breakfast and packed lunch included.

Distance: 20.8kms; ascent: 886m; descent: 453m (60% asphalt road mostly country roads / 40% dirt track).



Day 4:

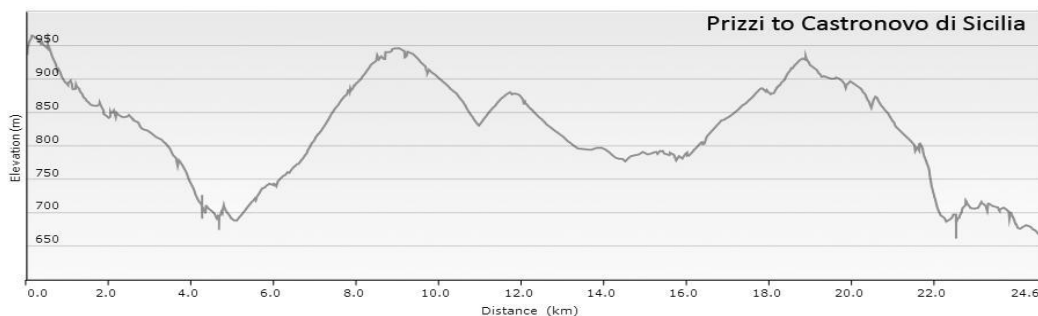
Prizzi to Castronovo di Sicilia

This long walk today takes you through the Monti Sicani Regional Park with woods and forests and welcome shade in the picnic areas to stop at. The flora and fauna in this area are also particular.

Walking through here in Spring you will come across some of the rare wild orchids. In autumn time there is the wild Strawberry Tree (Corbezzolo). Wild cats are also said to exist here and it would not be rare to see Golden Eagles soaring above your head (there are 3 couples), together with the Peregrine Falcons and Buzzards. Roman, Byzantine, Arab and Norman settlements were all present in this area living off the fertile lands. Today, you can still see some of the old beehive shepherds' huts which are still used. Your arrival in Castronovo di Sicilia marks the half way point of the Via Francigena if you started it in Palermo and is the last town in the province of Palermo on this walk. Overnight stay: Private homes in Castronovo di Sicilia, part of the Ospilità Diffusa' Diffused Hospitality project in the town.

Breakfast isn't included, coffee available at the accommodation. Local bars opened early morning for breakfast.

Distance: 24.6kms; ascent: 684m; descent: 956m (45% asphalt road, mostly country roads / 55% dirt track).



Day 5:

Castronovo di Sicilia to Casale Margherita, Cammarata

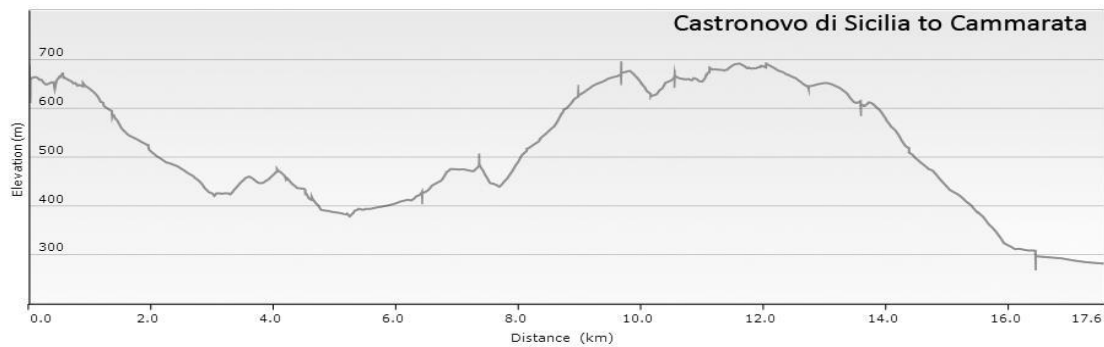
You will be walking through the Platani valley following and crossing the river Platani. Stop at the Grotta di Capelvenere (Grotto of Venus' Hair) which was a necropolis for the Sicans. Inside the caves there are some hieroglyphs and a particular type of fern which is called Capelvenere. Lots of olive, almond, pistachio and fruit orchards along the road today so if they are in season, stop to taste the wild white mulberries on the trees and also the apricots. The last ascent that leads into Cammarata takes you past some more street art murals depicting the pilgrims along the Via Francigena. As you pass through Cammarata and San Giovanni Gemini, the locals will tell you how some of their houses straddle the border of both towns complicating their lives as far as local taxes and identification documents are concerned. Past San Giovanni Gemini it is all downhill until

you reach Casale Margherita, your overnight accommodation, where, if it is a hot day, you may be lucky enough to take a dip in their swimming pool. You are now in the province of Agrigento. If you wish to have a day off from walking, this is the perfect place to relax and enjoy extra night's stay.

Overnight stay: Casale Margherita, Cammarata www.casalemargherita.eu

Breakfast included (homemade cakes) and dinner included.

Distance: 17.6kms; ascent: 546m; descent: 932m (35% asphalt road with some country roads/ 65% dirt track).



Day 6:

Casale Margherita, Cammarata to Sutera

Today's walk is not too long but there is a fair amount of uphill. The first part brings you to the town of Acquaviva Platani by which time you will probably enjoy a break in one of the town's cafes or fill your water bottles from the town fountain. Here on St. Joseph's Day 19th March, they have a tradition whereby the streets are filled with tables laden with food which is offered to less well-off members of the community. It is also an excuse to prepare local recipes which are then shared by everyone turning it into a social event for the whole town.

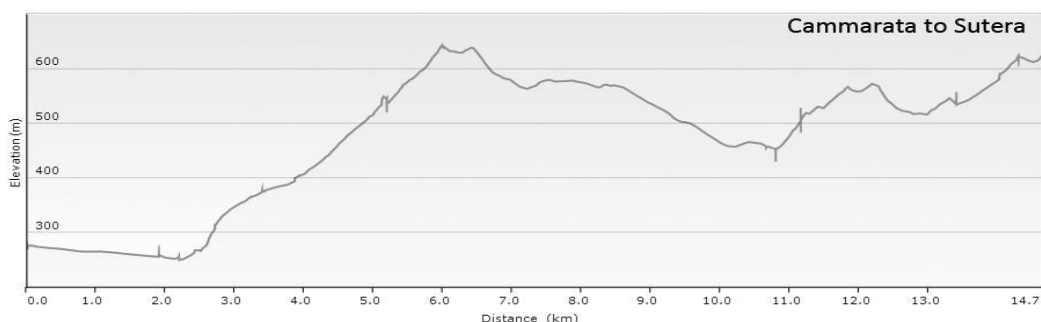
Continuing on the walk soon gives you a sighting of the imposing rock which overhangs the town of Sutera and the sanctuary of San Paolina on top which you can visit later on. The rock is chalk but looks like crystal.

Sutera has been voted one of the Borghi Più Belli d'Italia (one of the prettiest towns in Italy)

Overnight stay: Residenza Rocca Augusta, Sutera.

Breakfast and packed lunch included.

Distance: 14.7kms; ascent: 695m; descent: 352m (35% asphalt road, mostly country roads) / 65% dirt track).



Day 7:

Sutera to Racalmuto

Today is the longest day of the Via Francigena and you will be passing ruins of a Roman bridge and through various towns including Milena which is known for its *robbe*. These are small villages fairly near to each other and which were once the homes of the farm labourers who worked for the

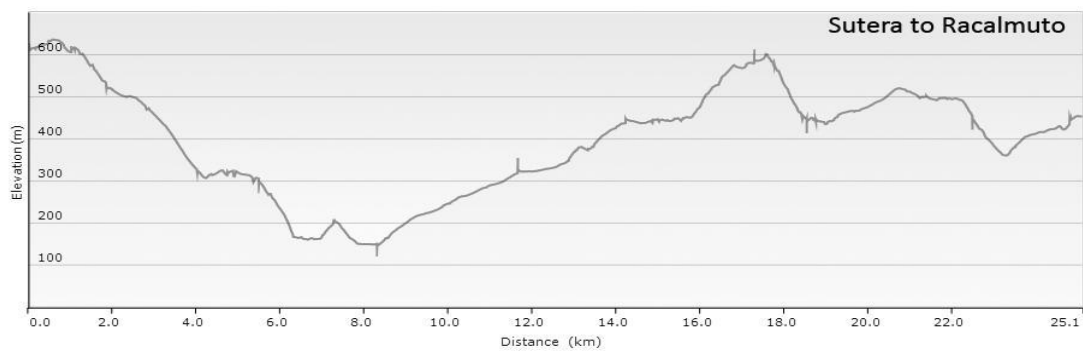
various feudal lords of the day. The *robbe* were usually given the nickname of the largest family living there. Your walk ends in Racalmuto.

The walk can be shortened, by starting from Milena to Racalmuto 10.2kms. The walk from Sutera to Milena is mainly on road.

Overnight stay: Hotel Regalpetra, Racalmuto www.regalpetrahotel.it

Breakfast included.

Distance: 25.1kms; ascent: 822m; descent: 996m (65% asphalt road, with some country roads) / 35% dirt track).



Day 8:

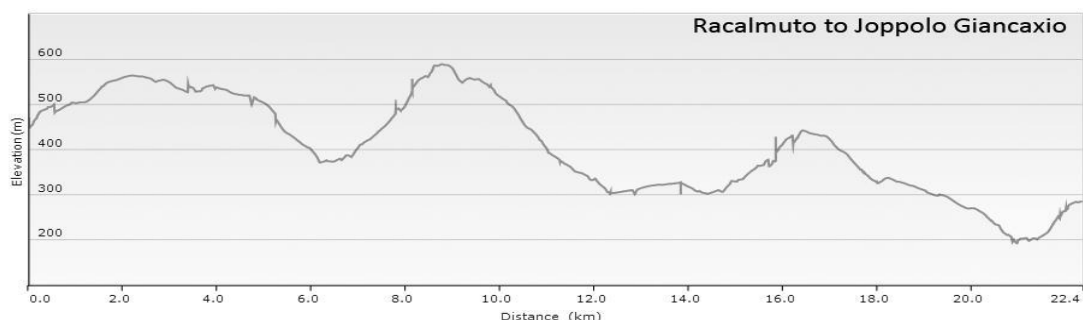
Racalmuto to Joppolo Giancaxio

Takes you through various towns: Grotte, Comitini and Aragona. You are following the Platani valley which is the area for salt and sulphur mining. Today there is still a salt mine but they stopped mining sulphur here back in the 1950s. Passing the archaeological site of the Stone of Calathansuderj. This dates back to Byzantine-Arab-Norman times and was used as a military control post for the comings and goings of traders and merchants crossing the island from Agrigento to Palermo. Inside is a labyrinth of corridors and rooms. After reaching the top of the hill and the wind turbines, the view opens up across and towards the way you have been walking for the past few days with the rock of Sutera still visible. Below is Comitini and further over Aragona. Eventually you will descend into Joppolo Giancaxio through the fields.

Overnight stay: Le Case Del Duca, Joppolo Giancaxio www.lecasedelduca.com

Breakfast included.

Distance: 22.4kms; ascent: 717m; descent: 901m (45% asphalt road, with some country roads / 55% dirt track).



Day 9:

Joppolo Giancaxio to Agrigento

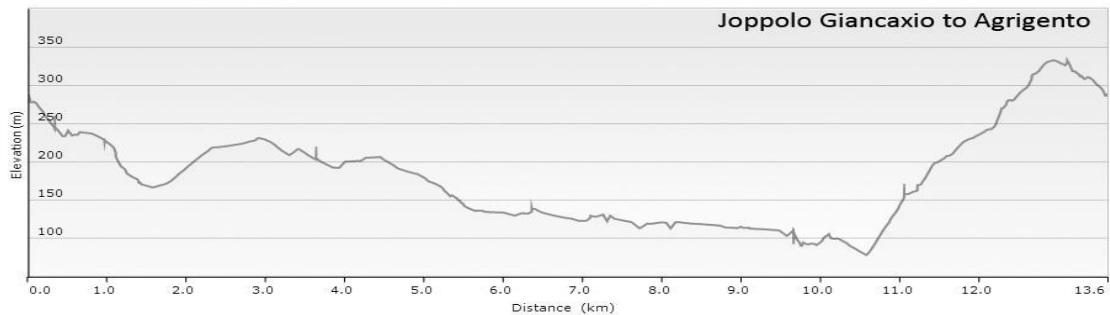
Today is your last day on the Magna Via Francigena and the final destination of Agrigento. You will be cutting through fields following the course of the river Akragas, with the Cathedral of Agrigento in full view the whole way on top of the hill. Your last ascent takes you through a eucalyptus wood into town.

Francesco and his beautiful cats will give you a warm welcome at your accommodation.

Overnight stay: B & B Le Terrazze di Montelusa, Agrigento www.terrazzedimontelusa.it

Breakfast isn't included, coffee available at the accommodation. Local bars opened early morning for breakfast.

Distance: 13.6kms; ascent: 401m; descent: 401m (55% asphalt road, with some country roads / 45% dirt track).



Day 10:

Agrigento

Free day to explore the Valley of the Temples where some of the best-preserved Greek temples outside Greece are still standing today. Walking distance there's also the archaeological museum which is worth a visit.

Overnight stay: B & B Le Terrazze di Montelusa, Agrigento www.terrazzedimontelusa.it

Breakfast included.

Day 11:

Onwards journey.

Breakfast included.

The walks:

The pilgrimage walk is well marked throughout and on varied terrain, tracks/paths, country roads and small sections crossing main roads. With the longer walks we have included alternative options. There are several uphill sections which vary from short steep or gentle climbs. The walk requires a good level of fitness.

Local people from the various towns will deliver the luggage to the next accommodation.

The accommodation:

Your accommodation will be a mixture of homely family run apartments or hotels, some with swimming pools.

The food:

You will also have the opportunity to taste authentic Sicilian cooking in the small trattorias, tried and recommended, on this route.

Cost: Euro 825 per person
(two people sharing a double room)
Single room supplement Euro 225

Tour Dates: on request

The tour includes:

- Transfer from the centre or airport of Palermo via Monreale to Santa Cristina da Gela
- Accommodation as specified
- Meals as specified (excluding drinks).
- Transfer of luggage between accommodation.
- Maps, photos, gps coordinates and walking notes.
- Historical and cultural information.
- Pilgrim's credentials.
- The services of Sicilian Experience for any assistance required throughout the tour.

The tour does not include:

- Air travel to Sicily.
- Personal items or services not specified in the itinerary.
- Travel insurance which is a requirement of the trip.
- Transfer from Agrigento at the end of the walk, which can be arranged.
- Extra night's accommodation during the tour.
- Single room supplement

This itinerary is to be considered **LAND ONLY**. Your air fare is not included in the above price.
Deposit of 30% due upon confirmation of booking and balance 70 days before departure.

Cancellation charges:

Up to 71 days before departure: 25% of deposit

70 – 31 days before departure: 50% of the tour price

30 or fewer days before departure: 100% of the tour price

We accept payment via bank transfer or via PayPal with extra charge of 2.5%.

Itinerary Notes: Sicilian Experience will make every effort to operate your tour as planned. However, itinerary times for activities are indicative and may undergo modification due to events beyond our control – 'force majeure' such as (but not limited to) local strikes, traffic, road closures, adverse weather conditions or availability of local services whether threatened or actual.