Sicily is the largest Mediterranean island and home to a fascinating mix of scenery, customs and local cooking, all in this same region. This walking tour takes us from the centre of the island from the town of Enna - through towns and villages in the Madonie mountain range down to the coast near Cefalù, returning through the Nebrodi mountain range, via Mount Etna and Taormina (the island’s most famous town), back to Catania airport from where you started. During your week in Sicily you will pass through 4 national parks: Madonie, Nebrodi, Alcantara and Etna giving you an example of just how different the island is from one area to another.

This tour is based and run on the responsible tourism policy of www.sicilianexperience.com (the company organizing this tour) where we try to help the local economy by staying and eating in small family run establishments and using local transport arrangements. We have included a cooking demonstration, wine tasting and cheese making, as well as a visit to the shepherd to see him making ricotta, so giving you the opportunity to see the ‘real’ Sicily from the inside.

You will only need to carry a day pack as our support vans will transport the luggage on a daily basis. An added benefit from having transport accompanying us daily is that you can opt out if you so wish at any time. The walks are classified from easy to moderate and can be done by anyone who is reasonably fit. You should, however, expect some uneven walking surfaces and some ascents and descents.

Day 1
Catania Airport to Enna
Pick up at the airport and drive directly to the town of Enna, classified as the ‘navel’ of Sicily. Transfer 1hr.15mins. Time to explore the treasures of the town and enjoy the magnificent views across the countryside from the Rock, on which once stood a temple dedicated to the Fertility Goddess, Demeter and her daughter Persephone. As we stroll down to our family run restaurant we pass the locals during their “passeggiata” (evening walkabout). A cooking demonstration will be given before our evening meal. A great introduction to Sicilian cuisine. One night stay in a three star hotel in the centre of Enna.
Day 2

Enna to Gangi

Drive to Villadoro (45mins) from where we commence walking on the old trade route (from the centre of Sicily to the coastline) towards Gangivecchio, where once the original town of Gangi stood. At the end of the walk we have wonderful views towards Gangi the town that is perched like a tortoise shell on top of Monte Marone.

We drive into Gangi where we will visit the ‘centro storico’ with its Baroque townhouses and interesting churches, typical of the Madonie ‘Baroque’ style where you will learn about the legend of the “Queen of Gangi”.

One night stay at Agriturismo Villa Raino a restored Baronial villa from the 1700s with tranquil surroundings, situated in the valley behind Gangi.

Packed lunch and dinner at the villa included.

(Walking time: 4hrs/13km - 8 miles, ascend 200 metres, descend 150 metres)

Day 3

Gangi to Madonie Mountains National Park

Before commencing our walk we take a small detour to visit the local farmer where we will watch him make the local cheese, “caciocavallo”

Afterwards we continue our walk on the old trade route, crossing a Roman bridge and up ancient mule tracks leading us through wild scenery, to the 11thC ruined Saracen castle of Geraci Siculo where we will meet a local falconer for a falconery display – a ‘must see’ as he still uses the traditions introduced by Frederick II, the Swabian Emperor, in the 14th century.

Our afternoon track takes us through the Madonie range on paths with spectacular views over the mountains, across the sea to the Aeolian islands (on a clear day).

We arrive at Porta Mandarini (1,200 m), where we are driven to Pomieri (10 mins).

Overnight stay at the comfortable mountain chalet. The restaurant is part of the Slow Food Association group which supports the traditional organic cuisine based on local produce.

Lunch in trattoria in Geraci, dinner at the hotel included.

(Walking time: 5hrs/14.5km - 9 miles, ascend 350 metres)

Day 4

Pomierì to Castelbuono (centre of Madonie Mountains National Park)

We commence walking from the hotel (altitude 1346m), through woodland with 600 to 800 year old maple and oak trees. Continuing through the Madonie mountains, enjoying the spectacular views across the mountains and towards the sea. Our walk takes us to a forest with giant 1,000 year old holly trees, situated near a traditional thatched shepherd’s hut. Our path finishes shortly after at the mountain refuge Crispi (altitude 1260m).

Transfer by van down to Il Romitaggio, San Guglielmo (a partly converted Benedictine monastery) for a light lunch and then on to Castelbuono with time for sightseeing.

Castelbuono is a traditional Sicilian town crowned by the Castle of Ventimiglia.

After our stroll round we have time to visit an olive press where oil is made for local consumption and also for exporting throughout Italy.

Lunch included at San Guglielmo

Free evening.

Overnight stay in Castelbuono.

(Walking time: 4hrs/13km - 8 miles, 150 ascend, 230 descend)
**Day 5**  
*Castelbuono-Isnello-S.Ambrogio*  
Leaving Castelbuono we drive to the nearby village of Isnello. Time to stroll around the quaint medieval village before driving to the starting point of the walk in Gibilmanna (altitude 860m). We visit the sanctuary dedicated to the Madonna there which is perched high on Pizzo Sant’Angelo, 800m above sea level, said to be the first on the island to be dedicated to the Madonna. From here the walk descends on a wide path, with magnificent sea views across the coastline and the Aeolian Islands. Continuing walking along country lanes passing small plots of cultivated olive and citrus groves down to the to our accommodation to the village of Sant’Ambrogio.  
Early evening visit to Mimmo’s cellar we will taste his superb homemade wine. Mimmo is very passionate about his wine making, with great enthusiasm he will explain how he makes his wine.  
Two nights stay just outside the village of Sant’Ambrogio.  
Packed lunch included.  
Dinner included with the wine tasting.  
(Walking time: 4 hrs/13km - 8 miles, descend 620 metres)

**Day 6**  
*Free Day: Cefalù/Palermo or optional morning walk*  
Our optional early morning walk takes us past the local shepherd where we will watch him prepare fresh *ricotta* cheese and have an opportunity to taste it.  
Today you can either visit Cefalù, the famous Arab/Norman town with its majestic cathedral, important museum, shops and beautiful sandy beach or, alternatively, take the train to visit Palermo, the capital city of Sicily.  
Dinner included.

**Day 7**  
*Mt Etna – Giardini Naxos – Taormina*  
After an early breakfast we drive east along the northern coastline turning off into the Nebrodi Mountains where we will notice the difference in scenery to the Madonie Mountains. Our drive (2 ½ hours) takes us through the town of Randazzo with its medieval churches built of lava stone from Mt Etna.  
Our walk starts on the northern slopes of Mt Etna, above Randazzo, walking through beach woods and over a lava flow from the 1981 eruption with wonderful views down the valley and up to the peak of Mt Etna.  
After the walk we will visit an aristocratic country house owned by a Sicilian family. We visit the vineyard afterwards we will be able to taste local home-made specialties (organic wines, liqueurs, jams etc.) produced and served by the owners  
Drive to our hotel in Taormina (40 mins).  
Late afternoon guided visit of Taormina. Said to be Sicily’s most beautiful resort, it is perched above the Ionian sea with Mt Etna in the distance. Time to explore the picturesque streets where you can shop or just sit in a street café and watch the world go by, whilst having a *Prosecco* aperitif (bubbly white wine).  
One night stay in Taormina  
Packed lunch included.  
Dinner at a local restaurant  
(Walking time: 3 hrs /10km - 6 miles, easy level walk)
Day 8
Catania Airport
Transfer to airport (1 hour )

Dates: 5th to 12th September 2015
(8 days / 7 nights)

Group size: 7 to 16 people

Cost: Euro 2,000 per person
(two people sharing a double room)
(single supplement for a double room for single use Euro 400 )
(approximately £1,750 / US 2,750 subject to daily exchange rates)

The tour includes:

- Guided tour and entrance to the Roman Mosaics
- Cooking demonstration
- Visit to frantoio (oil press), cheese factory and shepherd
- Falconery demonstration
- Accommodation in double room with breakfast
- Evening meals (where stated) are included together with ¼ litre of house wine per person and water
- Wine tasting and dinner at Mimmo's cellar
- Visit to a vineyard
- Lunches except Day 1 and 7
- All transfers
- Services of a full-time professional tour guide

The itinerary does not include:

- Lunch Day 1 and 7
- Dinner on Day 4
- Air travel to Sicily
- Travel insurance which is a requirement of the trip

Accommodation:

The accommodation chosen in the Madonie Mountains is what is on route and is comfortable, clean and varied (family run agriturismo, chalet style and 3-4 star hotel ) where enjoy a warm hospitality.
In Enna and nearby Sant'Ambrogio we will stay in family run hotel/agriturismo.

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