

## Sicily's Slow Travel Ambassador and Village Keeper

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Native Sicilian Carmelina Ricciardello knitted together an amazing life bringing cultures together around the world and teaching the value of local wisdom, slow and simple traditions and rituals while crossing deserts and going into the wild. Her native Sicily inspired her to come home and carefully restore what was fading and share what is rich. Here's her first person tale on how she finally made it back home to Sicily and the birth of her very slow very regional [Sicilian experience](#).



*'Carmelina offers a glimpse of a way of life that is fast disappearing' The Observer, 2009*



*'Carmelina is serious about showing visitors the local customs, and on our first morning in town, she insisted we watch a goatherd named Giulio make fresh goat milk ricotta under a tree.'* *New York Times 2010*

My name is Carmelina Ricciardello. I was born in Sicily and emigrated to Australia when I was 7 years old. In 1992, twenty eight years later, I returned to my homeland for a short visit and have been here ever since.

It was in Sicily that I felt the sense of belonging I had never experienced in Australia where I grew up. Sicily was in me and now I am in Sicily enjoying its beauty, joys and difficulties. Sicily has little of the glamour of [Tuscany](#), and Umbria but it has its own unique character born out of the hardship and brutality that characterised much of its history. I had an obsession to tell the world about its unpretentious beauty and relatively untainted village life. Not to turn it into yet another popular tourist destination but to provide an opportunity for keen travellers to taste the simple life of a Sicilian villager.



*Carmelina Becoming A Local Legend*

I decided the only way to do that was to leave Sicily and get the experience and knowledge I needed to promote it without compromising its essential character and simplicity.

At first it was my experience in running my own business in Australia that allowed me to get work running prestigious 5 star hotels in Tuscany and the [Italian Alps](#). In 2004 I worked in [Gabon \(Central Africa\)](#) as a consultant for the European Community on Ecotourism. In this impoverished country I trained local

<http://www.onslowlife.com/2013/06/my-name-is-carmelina-ricciardello-i-was-born-in-sicily-and-emigrated-to-australia-when-i-was-7-years-old-in-1992-twenty-ei.html>

villagers in how to promote the unique character of their land and culture to encourage the tourism income so essential for local economies. My job was also to consult and advise local tourist lodges on their running operations based on eco- and sustainable tourism.

In 2008 I volunteered to help lead a group in Turkey and Syria for the [Abraham Path](#) Initiative.

**The Abraham Path** is a route of cultural tourism that retraces the journey made by Abraham (Ibrahim) through the heart of the Middle East some four thousand years ago. It is a non-profit, non-political, and non-sectarian organization honouring all cultures and faiths, which is supported by the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations.



*The Abraham Path*

— Route of 2006 Harvard Study Tour and 2008 Kellogg Fellows Tour  
..... Abraham's Possible Routes

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In March 2009, I participated in Nawamis Working Project for Makhad Trust, helping to build a school for the Bedouin children in the Sinai Desert, Egypt. [www.makhad.org](http://www.makhad.org). The mission of the Makhad Trust is to provide a meeting place, in nomadic regions of the world, where there is a powerful relationship between the environment and the human spirit. The Sinai Desert is one of those places. Makhad works to sustain the environment and the natural heritage of the people who live in those regions and, while doing so, to appreciate and to learn from their traditional wisdom.

My interest in nature, history and architecture led to work as a walking guide throughout the Italian mainland and in Sicily. My passion for food and wine (I am a qualified sommelier) led to appearances on the Australian travel show Getaway, the BBC Travel Show and the Italian travel programme Mediterranea presenting walking and gastronomic tours of both Tuscany and Sicily. My work in Sicily has been highlighted most recently in an article written by Gail Simmons in the travel section of The Observer newspaper in the UK:

[www.guardian.co.uk/travel/2009/oct/18/gail-simmons-sicily-tradition-tourism](http://www.guardian.co.uk/travel/2009/oct/18/gail-simmons-sicily-tradition-tourism)

I am a member of the association called Driadi which is an non-profitable association (O.N.L.U.S), established the 6th October 2009, and aims to preserve eco-systems. Driadi intends beginning operations by carrying out the work that is most urgent such as fire-prevention in one of the last sections of the Sicilian coastline not yet spoilt by human activities, located East of Cefalù. [www.driadi.com](http://www.driadi.com)

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'In this rural region, where the towns sit fortress-like atop craggy mountains, rituals persist more than in almost any other part of Italy.' New York Times, 2010'

"Foreign guests are invited to visit and observe the daily preparation of bread and rolls at the local bakery, to meet with the town's shepherd, to witness the pressing of olives into olive oil... and in general - to integrate themselves into the life of the community.' Arthur Frommer, 2011

An ability to see the world through the eyes of a local is what travel is all about—otherwise you might just as well sit by the pool in your local hotel and read travel brochures.

I've decided the best way to help the Sicily I love is to promote it to people who want to live life as a Sicilian local—to see the world through Sicilian eyes. This is the best way I know to contribute to the place I love, the home of my birth, the Sicily in me.

