

EXPLORE!

TRIP NOTES



Sicilian Trails (SIT 2017)



TRIPDURATION
8
DAYS



Tour Style: Classic

Accommodation Grade: Simple

Tour Type: Centre Based

Trek Grade: Easy to Moderate

Trip Code: SIT

Trip Highlights - Sicilian Trails

- ✓ Mount Etna - Hike the other-worldly lava and pumice strewn landscapes of Europe's highest volcano
- ✓ Aeolian Islands - Catch a ferry to the island of Vulcano and climb to the crater rim
- ✓ Taormina and Syracuse - Time to explore the streets and ancient sites of these picturesque towns
- ✓ Pantalica Gorge - Easy walking in a limestone gorge by an ancient UNESCO-listed necropolis
- ✓ Nebrodi Mountains National Park - Discover one of Sicily's most untouched and wildest scenic places

Trip Essentials

Accommodation:	7 nights Simple Hotel
Included Meals:	7 breakfasts, 4 lunches, 5 dinners
Start Point:	Join trip: Catania airport
End Point:	Trip ends: Catania airport
Maximum Altitude on Trek (m):	2250
Transport:	Bus, Boat, Ferry
Countries:	Italy

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Sicilian Trails

Enjoy a week of walking in a diverse variety of scenic landscapes. Based in a simple family-run hotel in the seaside town of Giardini Naxos, we walk alongside the lava flows on iconic Mount Etna, take a ferry to the peaceful Aeolian island of Vulcano and ramble among the rock-cut tombs of the UNESCO-listed Pantalica Gorge. From Monte Venere we admire spectacular coastal views, while the lakes and uplands of Mount Nebrodi National Park are a verdant and isolated wilderness.

Suitability

We've given each of our tours a comfort rating and a tour pace, walking or cycling grade to give you a general idea about the level of activity on each tour and the standard of accommodation you will be staying in at the end of your day's adventure.

Often you'll stay in different styles of accommodation during your tour; so we make an average rating across the entire tour. For more information on where you'll stay each night, please refer to the day by day tour itinerary.

Accommodation Grade: Simple

No-frills accommodation which includes berths on sleeper trains, rooms in village houses, boat cabins, campsites, huts and simple family-run lodges, guesthouses and hotels. Sleeping arrangements are simple and amenities are adequate, sometimes with en suite facilities and occasionally communal.

Tour Style: Classic

Packed with adventure, these tours offer inspiring destinations and authentic travel experiences at a reasonable price. Using all kinds of transport and accommodation, we'll take you off the beaten track to discover the true heart of the people and places you visit.

Trek Grade: Easy to Moderate

This grade is ideal if you want to enjoy both easy and moderate level walks on the same tour. You'll be walking mainly on good paths and at low altitude, with occasional more demanding ascents or descents.

Your trip itinerary

Tour itinerary notes

While our intention is to adhere to the day-by-day itinerary as printed below, a degree of flexibility is built in. Overnight stops may vary from those suggested.

Your Tour Leader

An Explore Leader is an integral part of any Explore trip and your trip will be led by one of our experienced Explore Leaders who have been handpicked and expertly trained. We believe that our Explore Leaders are the key to the success of our trips; they are passionate travellers who are bursting with first-hand local knowledge which they love to share. Your Explore Leader will also take care of all the planning and organisation throughout your journey. Their passionate approach will make this trip fun and inspiring, bringing the destination to life whether you're travelling alone or with others.

DAY 1 Join trip Catania airport; transfer to Giardini Naxos

On arrival at Catania airport we meet our bus and head north along the coast to our base for the week, the seaside town of Giardini Naxos. Once a quiet fishing village, it's now a popular resort, famous for its beaches, panoramic view of the bay and surrounding hills, and a small, but bustling fishing port. Its position is ideal for accessing the endless hiking opportunities and incredibly varied scenery of eastern Sicily. The beautiful hill top town of Taormina, famous for its remarkable ancient theatre, is situated in the hills above Giardini Naxos and can be easily accessed by bus. Hotel Costa Azzurra is our simple family-run hotel and is located just a few metres from the beach. After a day out on the trails we can look forward to some typical and tasty Sicilian cuisine prepared by our hosts.



Overnight: **Simple Hotel**
Single Room Available

 **Included Meals:** Dinner

DAY 2 Walking on the slopes of Mount Etna

Our walk today is on the northern slopes of Mount Etna, the highest volcano in Europe (3330m) and one of the largest in the world. Mount Etna is one of the most active volcanoes in the world and is in an almost constant state of activity. We drive up to 1900m on Etna's slopes. Hundreds of subsidiary cones and spent craters have been formed by lateral eruptions along regular lines of fracture which, together with twisted lumps of lava strewn chaotically around, provide an otherworldly setting. Setting out from a height of 1700m, we walk to the fissures of the 2002 eruptions and site of the former ski resort area of Piano Provenzana. We reach a high point on the walk of 2200m. Afterwards we follow the now solidified lava flows downhill through the pine forests to 1900m. Our waiting bus takes us back to our base at the seaside. Today's 10 kilometre walk is expected to take around four hours with a total ascent of 210 metres and a descent of 140 metres.

Overnight: **Simple Hotel**
Single Room Available

 **Included Meals:** Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

DAY 3 Ferry to the Aeolian Island of Vulcano; crater climb

This morning we drive to Milazzo on Sicily's north coast from where we take a ferry to the Aeolian island of Vulcano, named after Zeus' son Vulcan, the God of fire and metalworking. Although now dormant, Vulcano has erupted spectacularly throughout the centuries - the last dramatic explosion being only 100 years ago. In 183BC a huge eruption gave birth to 'Vulcanello' (the Little Volcano) visible from the port. Today, Vulcano puffs out a steady stream of gases and vapour. Even offshore the presence of the sulphur, which was once mined here, is obvious. Our walk to the crater rim provides us with great views of the Aeolian islands scattered around us. Afterwards we can cool off with a swim in the sea. We return to Milazzo by ferry and drive back to Giardini Naxos. Today's seven kilometre walk is expected to take around three hours with a total ascent and descent of 386 metres.

Overnight: **Simple Hotel**
Single Room Available

 **Included Meals:** Breakfast

DAY 4 Monte Venere walk with amazing coastal views

Our walk today is a little closer to home. We drive to Castelmola, a medieval village overlooking nearby Taormina and starting point for a 250m ascent up to the summit of Monte Venere. The views from here are simply amazing - from the Strait of Messina and all along the Ionian coastline south to Syracuse, Mount Etna and the Alcantarra Valley. Following old mule tracks through unspoilt typical Mediterranean scrub we follow in the footsteps of Freida Von Richthofen, the wife of author D.H. Lawrence. It's said her amorous adventures with a mule handler here were the inspiration behind the novel *Lady Chatterley's Lover*. In spring the mountain is abundant with wild orchids. Today's 13 kilometre walk is expected to take around three hours with a total ascent of 385 metres and a descent of 545 metres.

Overnight: **Simple Hotel**
Single Room Available

 **Included Meals:** Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

DAY 5 Free day; options to visit Taormina or 'Godfather' mountain towns

Today has been left free to relax on the beach and/or visit Taormina which is just 4 km away and easily accessible by public bus or taxi. Perched on a cliff overlooking the Ionian Sea, this pretty town is home to many historic churches and a number of lively bars and cafes as well as a Graeco-Roman theatre which is famous for one of the most iconic views in Sicily - that of snow-capped Etna acting as a backdrop to the remarkably preserved columned stage. It was a favourite place during the days of the 'Grand Tour' and was frequented by Goethe, Edward Lear, D.H. Lawrence and many others. If enough people are interested it is also possible to organize a trip to the scenic mountain towns of Savoca and Forza D'Agro, where the film *The Godfather* was shot.

Overnight: **Simple Hotel**
Single Room Available

 **Included Meals:** Breakfast

DAY 6 Walking in the Pantalica Gorge; visit to Syracuse

We head south today to the area inland from Syracuse where our walk explores the Pantalica Gorge, a deep limestone ravine that has been carved out by the Anapo and Calcinarra rivers. The gorge is also a UNESCO-listed World Heritage Site that is home to over

4000 burial chambers. Peppering the sides of the canyon, the necropolis was built between the 13th and 8th centuries BC. For several centuries before Greek colonization, Pantalica was undoubtedly one of the main sites of eastern Sicily, dominating the surrounding territory. We enjoy an easy hike into and along the bottom of the gorge which is home to a flourishing variety of flora including holm oak, wild sage and thyme, giant fennel and plane trees to enjoy a picnic lunch beside the Anapo River. After our walk we drive on to visit Syracuse on the east coast. During the Greek Classical Period, this city was the largest in the ancient world - even bigger than Athens. Now a UNESCO World Heritage Site, it is also notable as being the birthplace of antiquity's greatest mathematician, Archimedes. We plan to take a stroll on the island of Ortygia where you will have some free time to visit some of the ancient landmarks including the site of the mythological spring of Arethusa and Temple of Apollo. Today's eight kilometre walk is expected to take around three-and-a-half hours with a total ascent and descent of 450 metres.

Overnight: **Simple Hotel**
Single Room Available

 **Included Meals:** Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

DAY 7 Hiking in the Lake District of the Nebrodi Mountains

Today we head inland to the one of Sicily's most unspoilt wild areas, the Nebrodi Mountains, a gently undulating range that runs along the north east of Sicily and much of which is a National Park. Our easy walk crosses an upland plateau along trails through meadows grazed by horses and sheep to Lake Trearie (1435m) where we enjoy a picnic lunch with typical Sicilian cheese, salami and maybe even a some wine! Today's nine-and-a-half kilometre walk is expected to take around four hours with a total ascent of 550 metres and a descent of 400 metres.

Overnight: **Simple Hotel**
Single Room Available

 **Included Meals:** Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

DAY 8 Transfer to Catania airport where trip ends

This morning is free to relax in Giardini Naxos before the transfer back to Catania airport where the trip ends.

 **Included Meals:** Breakfast

Included Activities

Due to the volcanic dust and sulphur fumes on Mt Etna, we ask asthma sufferers or customers with heart conditions of any kind to take these factors into consideration when deciding if this trip is right for you.

Accommodation and Meals

Accommodation Notes

The Costa Azzura is a small and simple family-run hotel located just a few metres from the beach in the seaside resort and fishing village of Giardini Naxos. Rooms are en-suite with traditional Italian tiled floors. It's an ideal location is ideal for striking out to explore the excellent and varied walking on offer in eastern Sicily. After a day out on the trails we can expect our hosts to cook up some typical and tasty Sicilian cuisine.

Food & Drink

Included meals: 7 breakfasts, 4 lunches, 5 dinners included in the price of this trip. Please be prepared to pay for non-included meals. Please note that costs for drinks and meals can vary depending on location.

Budgeting for your Trip

You will need some extra money to cover meals and drinks not included in the trip price, any optional sightseeing, souvenirs and items of a personal nature such as laundry.

Food

The costs for meals may vary depending upon location, type of restaurant and number of courses eaten and so the prices given are an average guide. Local restaurants located off the beaten track may be less expensive, whereas an upmarket restaurant located in the centre of a major city may charge more.

Italy

Lunch £: 6.00 - 10.00

Dinner £: 10.00 - 14.00

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Drink

The prices for drinks can vary greatly depending upon location and the prices detailed below are an average guide. In general you would expect that drinks purchased in a supermarket or local bar to be less expensive, whilst drinks in an upmarket bar or restaurant may be more expensive.

Italy

Bottle of Beer £: 2.00 - 4.00

Water £: 1.00 - 2.00

Other Sightseeing & Activities

The following excursions and/or activities are usually available and may be arranged locally. Estimated costs are provided below for guidance only, are on a per person basis unless shown otherwise, and may depend on the number of participants. Prices quoted are correct as of the date these tour notes were originally issued but may change at any time due to currency fluctuations.

Please note: These activities are booked and paid for direct with the supplier and do not form part of your Explore holiday contract.

Optional Excursions

Savoca and Forza D'Agro - Visit the scenic mountain villages where the film 'The Godfather' was shot €45pp.

Tipping - Tour Leader

At your discretion you might also consider tipping your Explore Leader in appreciation of the efficiency and service you receive.

Foreign Exchange

Italy

ATM Availability: Major towns.

Credit Card Acceptance: Larger hotels and restaurants.

Travellers Cheques: Only in major towns. Please note, the exchange rate for cash and Travellers Cheques is poor.

Local Currency: Euro.

Recommended Currency for Exchange: GBP.

Where to Exchange: We recommend that you change any currency into Euros prior to arrival. Bureau de Change are generally only found in major cities and large airports.

Joining your Trip

Flight Information

You are able to book this tour on a 'land only' basis or as a 'flight inclusive' package. Your flight inclusive package will be fully protected by the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) ATOL protection scheme.

Booking a land only package with Explore

Customers who have chosen to book on the 'Land Only' arrangements of our tour, please ensure that you have checked your tour specific 'Joining Instructions' prior to booking your own travel arrangements. Your joining instructions can be found on our website at www.explore.co.uk, in the tour specific dates and prices section.

You may also be eligible for the Free Explore Transfer. For more information please refer to <https://www.explore.co.uk/transfers>.

Joining Tour Abroad

Customers booked on the 'Land Only' arrangements will now receive a Free Transfer, provided you arrive and depart on the tour only itinerary start and end dates. The transfers will be from the Explore designated airport or train station to the joining point of your tour, and then back from the ending point to the designated airport or train station. The exception to this rule is customers who are booked on a tour where the joining and ending point is at the designated airport or train station.

Free transfers are not available for Self-Guided, Tailormade or Tours for Churches customers.

If you are not eligible for the Free Transfer then you will need to make your own way through to the joining and ending point. On a majority of our tours Explore will be able to provide a private transfer at an additional cost. Please ask for a quote at the time of booking.

For more information regarding the Explore Free Transfer please refer to <https://www.explore.co.uk/transfers>.

Booking a flight inclusive package with Explore

We have a good selection of flights not only from London but from many regional airports around the UK allowing us to compare fares between scheduled carriers as well as low cost and charter airlines. Our dedicated flights team will match the best flight options to your arrival and departure airport.

On our website we display a UK flight inclusive package guide price which is generally based on a London departure. To avoid paying supplements or to secure your preferred flight option, we recommend booking as early as possible, especially for peak travel dates.

Important Information

Travel Insurance

It is a condition of booking with Explore that you have adequate valid travel insurance. It is your responsibility to arrange appropriate travel insurance and ensure you have read and understood the full terms and conditions of your travel insurance policy to ensure that you are covered for all activities you intend to undertake whilst on the tour, including all optional activities. Your Insurance Policy must fully cover you for medical expenses and emergency repatriation to your home country. Please ensure your policy includes medical emergency helicopter evacuation in the event of illness or injury and covers the entire duration of your holiday. If you are trekking at altitude please ensure that there is no upper altitude limit which may limit or exclude cover for your trip. Medical and repatriation insurance cover is not mandatory for UK residents who are travelling on trips within the United Kingdom.

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DIRECT TRAVEL INSURANCE



Travel Insurance is essential. If you have not already arranged cover, please contact our recommended Travel Insurance providers www.campbellirvinedirect.com/Explore who offer Travel Insurance specifically designed to cover travel with Explore or call **Campbell Irvine Direct** on Tel: 020 7938 1734

Explore Worldwide is an Introducer Appointed Representative of Campbell Irvine Ltd who are authorised and regulated by the Financial Conduct Authority.

Travel Aware

We strongly recommend that you check your government's travel advisory for up-to-date information and advice about your destination: safety and security, entry requirements, health, local laws and customs. For UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office Advice follow the link at www.explore.co.uk/travel-safety

We strongly advise that you register with the FCO to receive updates to the travel advice for your chosen destination. A hard copy of the current FCO Travel Advice for your chosen destination is available by contacting cr@explore.co.uk or 01252 379438.

Under 18 immigration guidance

Please note that some countries require proof of parental consent when travelling overseas with under 18s. Please check requirements with the relevant embassy or consular office well in advance of travel if this applies to your party.

Visa Information

Italy: Visas are not required by U.K., CAN, US, AUS and NZ citizens. Other nationalities should consult the relevant consulate.

If you do require assistance in obtaining a visa then you may consider applying through Explore's recommended visa service in the UK, Travcour. See www.travcour.com to download the relevant visa application for your trip, if applicable (UK citizens only), along with details of how to apply for your visa through Travcour. The Team at Travcour will be happy to answer specific questions relating to visa applications, please call them directly on 0208 5431846.

Vaccinations & Protection

Italy

Nothing required. Tetanus recommended. The above is not an exhaustive list. Further information regarding vaccinations and travel health advice can be found by following the NHS and NaTHNaC links at <http://www.explore.co.uk/Travelhealth/> and from your local healthcare provider.

Preparing for your Trip

DAILY DISTANCES

Day 2	6km	3.5hrs
Day 3	4km	2hrs
Day 4	6km	3.5hrs
Day 5		
Day 6	6km	4.5hrs
Day 7	6km	4hrs

Maximum Altitude on Trek (m)

2250

Trekking Details

We walk on 5 days for an average of 4 hours each day. Terrain is varied and the walking is graded easy to moderate.

Climate

Italy

April/May and October/November are pleasantly warm. June/September are the hottest months. Showers are common in Autumn.

Clothing

You will need light layers of clothing for walking during the day and a fleece and waterproof jacket as temperatures can drop on Etna and in the Nebrodi mountains. A sunhat is essential and bring a swimming costume if you wish to bathe in the sea.

Equipment

You should bring a 2 litre water bottle, sunhat, sunglasses and sunscreen. Trekking poles are recommended.

Footwear

We recommend you bring walking boots - leather or fabric are both fine. Some of the paths are a bit rocky underfoot and so you could twist an ankle if not wearing boots. Trainers are not recommended. Make sure that your boots are worn-in and comfortable before the start of the trip. We recommend that you wear/carry your walking boots as hand luggage on the international flight: should your luggage be delayed, your well broken-in boots will be irreplaceable.

Bring trainers and sandals for relaxing and other sightseeing

Luggage: On Tour

Bring one main piece of luggage and a daypack

Unfortunately it does occasionally happen that luggage does not always reach its destination on the same flight as its owner, or possibly it may be damaged in transit. If you are unlucky enough for this to occur, it is important that you file a PIR (Property Irregularity Report) with the airline before leaving the airport. This is essential when you come to make a claim either against the airline or from your travel insurance company

Luggage allowance on trip: 20kg

General Information

Country details

Italy

Population: 60,681,514

Size of Country: 301,338 Sq KM

Major Language: Italian

Religion: Roman Catholic

Time Difference to GMT: +1

Electric Supply & Plugs

Italy

2 Pin Round

Why Choose Explore

We've been creating award-winning pioneering adventure holidays for over 30 years, earning the trust of thousands of delighted customers, who feel safe in our hands. Our tour leaders have expert local knowledge and our tours are designed to take you off the beaten track to see the most exotic, inspiring and dramatic places in the world.

- With over 30 years' experience, we are passionate about what we do.
- Pioneering small group adventures, self-guided, private journeys & tailor-made holidays.
- Award-winning tour leaders who you can trust.
- Responsible travel is and always has been one of the driving principles of Explore.

Our adventure holidays are full of exciting things to see and do, exploring in small groups travelling by bus, boat, plane, rickshaw, camel, or any number of unusual forms of transport. Often you will stay in family-run hotels and village houses and enjoy authentic local cuisine. In this way, it's easy to discover the true heart of the people and the place you travel to – and make some new friends along the way. Each tour is uniquely different, so please feel free to browse through our tours to see what may whet your appetite.

Cool Earth

Explore are proud to support Cool Earth in their effort to reduce global carbon dioxide levels through the prevention of deforestation in the South America rainforest. Cool Earth focus on areas in immediate danger of deforestation, supporting local communities to be forest guardians. To date 350,000 acres of rainforest has been protected. Saving rainforest also protects rare animals and plants, allows local forest communities to maintain their way of life, and protects a major source of oxygen and fresh water. When you travel on an Explore holiday we make a donation to Cool Earth that exceeds the impact of our customers flights each year.

Earth Matters

We are passionate about sustainable travel and work hard to create tours where your holiday delivers real benefits to the local communities. We minimise our impact by travelling in small groups, respecting local cultures, reducing waste and offsetting 100% of the CO2 from our flights.

When you travel with Explore, you are directly contributing to local economies and helping empower the people you meet. We currently support a range of charities and good causes, including: Toilet Twinning (helping to flush away poverty), Lone Buffalo Foundation (a community project based in Laos providing creative skills for young people) and have recently supported women's cooperatives in Borneo and Morocco. We are a member of Tourism Concern's Ethical Tour Operator Group (www.tourismconcern.org.uk) and support their campaign for fair and ethical tourism. We also care passionately about the world's wildlife and actively support and promote the Born Free Organisation and Mahouts Elephant Foundation.

Booking Your Holiday

Peace of mind - book with confidence

You can book your Explore holiday with confidence, as all monies paid to us for your trip are fully protected. Explore is a fully bonded tour operator licensed by the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) and by ABTOT.

The air holiday packages (Tours including flights) that we advertise are ATOL protected, since we hold an Air Travel Organiser's Licence granted by the Civil Aviation Authority. Our ATOL number is ATOL 2595. In addition, As a member of the Association of Bonded Travel Organisers Trust Limited (ABTOT), Explore has provided a bond to meet the requirements of the Package Travel, Package Holidays and Package Tours Regulations 1992. Please note that packages booked outside the UK are only protected when purchased directly with Explore.

Reserving your place

To reserve your place on this tour you will need to check availability on the Explore website or through our dedicated call centre based in the UK where you can. Our tours can fill up quickly so you are advised to book as early as possible. If your chosen date is 'Available' or 'Guaranteed' we will be able to provisionally hold you a space for up to 48 hours.

For Self-Guided holidays and Private Journeys simply choose your date of travel and let us know so we can confirm all ground services.

The easiest way to confirm your booking is through our website. When you are ready to book, we normally require a 10% non-refundable deposit, but for some holidays this may be more to cover such items as permit fees, internal flights or other non-refundable services. If your travel starts within 60 days of booking, full payment will be required at the time of booking

100% No Surcharge Guarantee

The price paid for our holidays is no longer subject to change. Once booked and confirmed we will guarantee the price you pay will not increase, whatever the circumstances. You will not be approached to pay fuel surcharges unlike the vast majority of other adventure tour operators. The price guarantee applies to all new bookings departing between 1st January 2016 and 31st December 2017.

Trip Itinerary Versions

Itinerary details may vary depending on departure date and alternative itineraries for this tour may exist. Please refer to the dates and prices page on our website to check which itinerary operates on each departure date.

Please ensure that you have an up-to-date copy of these tour notes immediately before you travel, as from time to time our itineraries may be amended, either for operational reasons or in response to feedback from customers. You will be informed of any major changes to your tour but small changes may just be added to these tour notes.

Please note: 2017 itinerary versions are applicable to tours departing in 2017. 2018/19 itinerary versions are applicable to tours departing from 1st January to 31st December 2018.

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