

## Italy Sicilia

# Unexpected Sicily: The Madonie Mountains

A fresh way of discovering Sicily, unlike anything you've seen before!

Escape to the Madonie Natural Park:

Guaranteed immersion in a mountain region of dramatic landscapes, rare plant life, and villages where time seems to have stood still. Expect encounters with warm and welcoming people, gentle walks through magical nature, and a taste of traditional cuisine deeply rooted in the land.



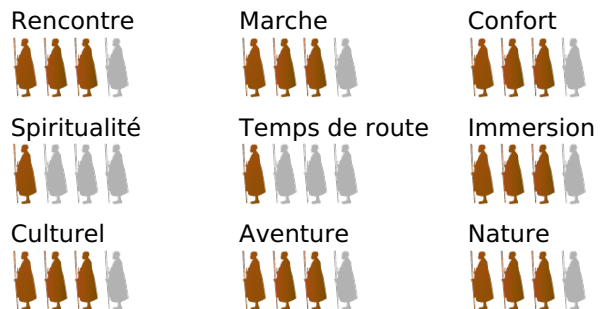
In the heart of the Madonie, the welcoming people of Castelbuono open their doors to us, eager to share the beauty of a region still little-known outside Sicily.

As we wander from encounter to encounter, we meet warm-hearted, passionate locals. We discover breathtaking natural sites and lose ourselves in the charming alleyways of timeless villages. The journey also takes us through the rich flavours of the local cuisine – a world apart from the Italian food we think we know. A unique experience that reveals one of Sicily's most authentic faces.

### You will like

- 👉 The authenticity of the villages and the heartfelt welcome of their inhabitants
- 👉 Stunning natural scenery and countryside walks
- 👉 An excursion following in the footsteps of a Sicilian farmer
- 👉 The discovery of local gastronomy – a blend of exotic influences and rural traditions
- 👉 The extraordinary botanical and geological wealth of the Madonie Park
- 👉 The Arab-Norman cathedral of Cefalù, a UNESCO World Heritage Site

### Barometer





## Practical information

- 🕒 **Age & public** : for solo travellers, small groups, or families with children from 10 years old
- 🕒 **Durée** : 8 days on site
- 🕒 **Dates & périodes** : The best travel period is from March to November, at the date of your choice.
- 🕒 **Nombre participants** : 2 to 6/8 travellers (solo or groups of 9+ travellers: on request)
- 🕒 **Formule du voyage** : People, Nature and Culture ("Discovery" package)
- 🕒 **Régions & paysages** : Madonie Regional Park: mountain landscapes, countryside, and coastal scenery
- 🕒 **Hébergements** : Cosy apartment in a local home
- 🕒 **Transport** : Private vehicle
- 🕒 **Portage** : None (luggage transported by vehicle)

## Program

**Legend: B L D** = meals included in the price of the trip (**B**reakfast, **L**unch and **D**iner)

**Note** : the outline of this program (steps, activities, etc.) is given for information purposes only.

It may undergo modifications or adjustments depending on technical criteria, safety requirements, current climatic conditions and availability. Our guides always do everything possible to make the best possible decisions and options.

### little note :

Tout voyage qui sort des sentiers battus comporte parfois des évènements imprévus (grève, route coupée, fête locale...) ; votre capacité d'adaptation aux conditions locales (transports, nourriture, hébergements, imprévus, aléas climatiques), comme à des événements inattendus sera aussi une clé à la réussite de votre voyage.

Nous comptons sur vous pour avoir un esprit délibérément « positif » et ne jamais oublier votre sens de l'humour.

Nous vous souhaitons un très beau et riche voyage .

### Day 1: Palermo (Meals: --D ; Transport: 2h15)

Arrival in Palermo and transfer to Castelbuono. Meet your guide, followed by some free time. In the evening, enjoy a home-cooked dinner with your hosts: your guides welcome you into their home for a friendly, relaxed meal – a perfect chance to meet, chat, and get to know one another. *Note: In the event of a late arrival, the first dinner will be scheduled on another evening.*

Accommodation: Castelbuono – cosy apartments in local homes.

### Day 2: In Search of the Essence of Sicily - Through the Streets (and Pastry Shops) of Castelbuono (Meals: B-D; Transport: none)

We start the day like true Sicilians, with a cappuccino or espresso in one of the cafés in Castelbuono's historic centre. Then we set out to explore the old quarters: laundry hanging from balconies, tempting aromas of local dishes, churches around every corner, men chatting in the circoli, and playful patterns of light and shadow under the Mediterranean sun... this is Sicily!

Along the way, we sample local specialities and meet passionate artisans. We also visit the Castle, built 700 years ago by the Ventimiglia family, one of the island's most powerful noble dynasties. Inside its impressive Baroque chapel are the relics of Saint Anne, the town's patron saint. Lunch is shared with a Sicilian family. The late afternoon is free, with

dinner and the evening at leisure.

### **Day 3: Discovering the Natural Riches of the Madonie Park** (Meals: B-D; Transport: 40 min )

In the morning, we set off on a hike along the Trail of Monumental Trees (approx. 3½ hours including breaks). Here we encounter the incredible natural wealth of the Madonie, one of the Mediterranean's most biodiverse areas. Rare plants, centuries-old trees, and panoramic views (on clear days, Mount Etna is visible!) punctuate the route. We pause in a forest of giant holm oaks reaching up to 20 metres high. The atmosphere here is utterly unique, mysterious, and surreal – straight out of a fairytale.

After a picnic lunch, we visit Castelbuono's Natural History Museum, housed in a former convent. Its surprising collections showcase the rich variety of local flora, fauna, and geology. The late afternoon is free, with dinner and evening at leisure.

### **Day 4: Cefalù** (Meals: BLD ; Transport: 1h)

We set off for Cefalù, the region's main seaside town, renowned for its Arab-Norman cathedral, a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

Our day begins with a climb up the Rocca, a massive rock overlooking the town, offering spectacular panoramic views. We then descend into the old quarters to visit the porticciolo (small harbour), the medieval washhouse, and, of course, the impressive cathedral. This fascinating mix of Nordic architecture, Arab influences, and Byzantine mosaics reflects the multicultural society that thrived in Sicily during the Middle Ages.

At lunchtime, we enjoy arancini (stuffed and fried rice balls) and panelle (chickpea flour fritters), iconic Sicilian street food, at a café in the historic centre. The afternoon is free – perfect for a swim or simply relaxing. Dinner and the evening are at leisure.

### **Day 5: Immersion in the Sicilian Countryside** (Meals B-L ; Transport: 30 min)

Mario welcomes you onto his land at the foot of the Madonie mountains, immersing you in a world where traditions are not just history, but very much a way of life.

The morning begins with a guided walk to explore traditional crops, edible wild plants, and local medicinal herbs. Mario will reveal the secrets of manna, produced from the ash tree – Castelbuono's famous speciality... but we won't spoil the surprise just yet! Depending on the season, you may take part in various activities such as harvesting, sowing, preparing traditional balms, or tree grafting, before enjoying a tasting of local specialities. Dinner and the evening are at leisure.

### **Day 6: Exploring the Caves** (Meals: BL- ; Transport: 20 min)

Today's excursion takes us to an area of great geological interest, where the limestone rock shelters natural caves as well as fossils of corals and other forms of life that once inhabited the region's seas millions of years ago. We explore two small, easily accessible caves and pause at the edge of a chasm (safely enclosed by a railing). Along the trail, we enjoy spectacular panoramic views of the lower Madonie, Castelbuono, and the Tyrrhenian coast. A picnic lunch is taken at a small mountain refuge. Dinner and the evening are at leisure.

### **Day 7: The Madonie Tour** (Meals BL- ; Transport: 3h)

Today we drive across the Carbonara Massif, the highest mountains in Sicily after Mount Etna. We set off early for Isnello, a small village nestled at the foot of the Monte Grotta Grande cliffs. We wander through the maze of medieval streets and climb up to the ruins of the old castle.

From there, we continue into the high mountains. The route includes stops at the region's most stunning natural sites. We pass remarkable geological formations that tell the story of the Madonie and support an exceptional range of biodiversity. Along the way, we pause at locations steeped in fascinating tales of shepherds and bandits, encounter one of the oldest trees in the Madonie, and come face-to-face with a cliff where the golden eagle nests.

### **Day 8: Palermo** (Meals B-- ; Transport: 2h15)

Departure for Palermo. Depending on flight times, there may be an opportunity to visit the archaeological site of Himera, once a thriving Greek city, or to enjoy a final stroll through Palermo.

## Prices and conditions

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**Price per person** (varies depending on the number of travellers, including adults and children)

- 6 to 8 travellers: **€995**
- 4 to 5 travellers: €1,095
- 3 travellers: €1,295
- 2 travellers: €1,695
- Solo traveller: [on request](#)

### Supplements

- Single room: from + €200
- It is possible to arrange the trip with a vehicle rental.

### Options

- For groups of 9+ travellers: [on request](#)
- Trip extension: [on request](#)
- You have the opportunity to enjoy additional hikes [on request](#)

### Flights

- Price depending on the date of booking, the airline, and the travel dates.

### Alternatives to flying

- Travel options include train, bus, and ferry all the way to Sicily

### Included in the price

- Trip organisation – travel booklet and itinerary booklet
- Return airport-accommodation transfer
- Public bus on Day 4
- Private transport provided on Day 7 for the Madonie Tour
- English-speaking guide and/or local nature guide throughout the trip
- Accommodation in self-contained apartments (with kitchenette) in local homes, subject to availability
- Half board + 1 additional dinner (see trip itinerary)
- Breakfasts provided in the form of a generous hamper
- Complete “Emotion Planet” activity programme
- Invitation to take part in relationship-based activities, a journey to the heart of oneself
- Pharmacy (*first aid*)
- Hotel and tourist taxes

### Not Included

- Anything not listed in the “Included” section, and any changes to the itinerary during our stay
- Car hire with insurance available upon request
- Transport to destination: domestic and/or international flight, round-trip train...
- Carbon offsetting of your flight and travel (*on a voluntary basis*)
- Travel insurance (*highly recommended*)
- 6 meals (approx. €15 per person per meal; in some cases, you may have the option to cook at your accommodation) and drinks included
- Tourist tax (estimated at €1 per person, per night, payable directly on-site to your Sicilian hosts)
- Tips and personal expenses

### Options

- Suitable for children

## Contact

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Discover these colorful countries, the heart & values that drive us and comments from former travelers.

Contact person for your trip :



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« **Emotion Planet**, the world is never far away when its men are not strangers to us. »