

# ITALY - SICILIAN TRAILS - MADONIE TRAIL

## ITINERARY

### Day 1

Transfers are included to and from Palermo airport on arrival day and departure day.

On arrival day, your flight should be between 11.00 and 17.00 so that you don't miss the first dinner. On departure day your flight should depart between 11.00 and 17.00.

If you are on a connecting flight, please ensure you have at least 1.5 hours in transit (unless you are travelling with hand luggage only).

Overnight Casa Il Bosco. Arrive at Casa Il Bosco in time for dinner.

This charming, restored nineteenth century country house is surrounded by the wilderness of Madonie Park.



Casa Il Bosco



A twin room at Casa Il Bosco

## Day 2

The following is the planned itinerary. Please note that the itinerary is subject to change due to local conditions such as weather. The overnight stops may change but these changes are always with your best interests in mind.

After breakfast, you will be assigned your horse for the trail and we will leave Casa "Il Bosco" at around 8.30 in the morning. We will begin the day riding through dense mediterranean vegetation with beautiful views of the Tyrrhenian Sea.



We will reach Castelbuono, the largest town in the Madonie, with around ten thousand inhabitants, and the former seat of the Ventimiglia Barons, who ruled for centuries over the entirety of the territory crossed during this trail.

We have a picnic lunch in the shadow of the town's famous castle, before enjoying a short visit of the historic centre. In the afternoon we will ride on through olive groves and woodland to reach the wild valley of the River Pollina.

Overnight Gole di Tiberio. This hotel is perched above the UNESCO Tiberio Gorges and with beautiful views along the valley.



Bungalow at Gole di Tiberio



A typical bedroom at Gole di Tiberio

### **Day 3**

We will have breakfast and set off at around 8.30 in the morning. We will begin the day descending into the River Pollina, with beautiful views towards the high Madonie Mountains.



On this day of the trail we will follow the River Pollina valley, one of the most fascinating, wild, panoramic and least known areas of Sicily, between the territories of Castelbuono, San Mauro Castelverde and Geraci Siculo. We will stop for a picnic lunch and continue along enchanting and forgotten pathways to reach our accommodation.

Overnight Casalvecchio Geraci. This farmhouse on the edge of Madonie Park dates from the 1800s and has been restored as an agriturismo.





## Day 4

We will set off at about 8.30 in the morning, riding along an ancient 'trazzera' which follows the valley of the rivers Rainò and Calabrò, tributaries of the River Pollina, on the eastern boundary of the Madonie Park.



We will then ride along shepherd's tracks through a wild and unspoilt area to reach the territory of Petralia Soprana, a town of medieval origin and the highest in the province of Palermo, from where we can admire beautiful views across most of Sicily.

We will have a picnic lunch in the woods, before continuing to climb into the high Madonie Mountains, reaching Portela Mandarini, an important crossroad between ancient transhumance routes through the mountains. We will ride along paths and lanes through the park to arrive in the afternoon at Piano Battaglia.

Overnight Rifugio Marini. This 18 room refugio offers simple accommodation, with mainly bunk rooms and some twin rooms.



One of the bunk rooms at Rifugio Marini

## Day 5

After breakfast, we will set off from Rifugio Marini at around 8.30 in the morning. We will visit the Battaglietta, a depression in the landscape where all of the meltwater gathers and then travels along underground tunnels to Cefalù.

We will then ride through the Vallone Madonna degli Angeli to admire the last remaining examples of the Nebrodi fir (*abies nebrodensis*), the symbol of the park. We will continue to the sanctuary of Madonna dell'Alto (at 1819 metres) - when visibility is good, you can enjoy views of most of the island from here. We will then descend towards the territory of Polizzi Generosa, an important historical town, before continuing on to tonight's accommodation.



Overnight Giardino Donna Lavia. This hotel dates back to the fourteenth century and historically served as a watch tower, a monastery and a noble residence. Here we will enjoy a sumptuous dinner and spend the night.



Giardino Donna Lavia



One of the bedrooms at Giardino Donna Lavia

## Day 6

After breakfast, we will begin the day climbing up through forests of oak into the high Madonie Mountains to reach Portella Colla and Piano Cervi, an area of outstanding beauty where we will often spot wild deer.



We will stop for a packed lunch amidst the forests of Monte Cervi before descending through wild and rocky terrain into the territory of Collesano, an ancient village of Arab origin (Qal'at as-sirat).

Overnight Casena Mongerrati. This hotel is converted from a 19th century farmhouse and has a swimming pool.



One of the bedrooms at Casena Mongerrati



Casena Mongerrati

## Day 7

This morning we will start by crossing the Mugerrati forest, which is dense with cork, holm oak and durmast trees. We will ride on towards the territory of Isnello and stop for a picnic lunch, before climbing through the woods to reach the famous Sanctuary of Gibilmanna, a church and Franciscan monastery dedicated to the Virgin, the patron and protector of the diocese of Cefalù.





We will visit the sanctuary, which contains one of the most beautiful works by Gagini, a famous Renaissance Sicilian sculptor. We will continue through dense mediterranean vegetation, with beautiful views of the Tyrrhenian Sea and the Aeolian Islands to return to our base.

Overnight Casa Il Bosco.