

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 arrive 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

Overnight 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 Al Convento. Al Convento is a former monastery dating from the 16th century and transformed into a quality hotel.



Overnight Al Convento.

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.



One of the bedrooms at Casalvecchio

Day 4

We will set off at about 9 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 have a picnic lunch in the woods, before continuing to climb into the high Madonie Mountains, reaching Portela Mandarinini, 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 begin by climbing towards Pizzo Carbonara, Sicily's second highest peak after Mount Etna (at 1979 metres), where we can often spot wild deer and goats grazing, and when the weather is clear, we can admire breathtaking views of some of Sicily's highest summits, including Etna to the east, Rocca Busambra to the west, Monte Cammarata to the south, and the Aeolian Islands to the north.



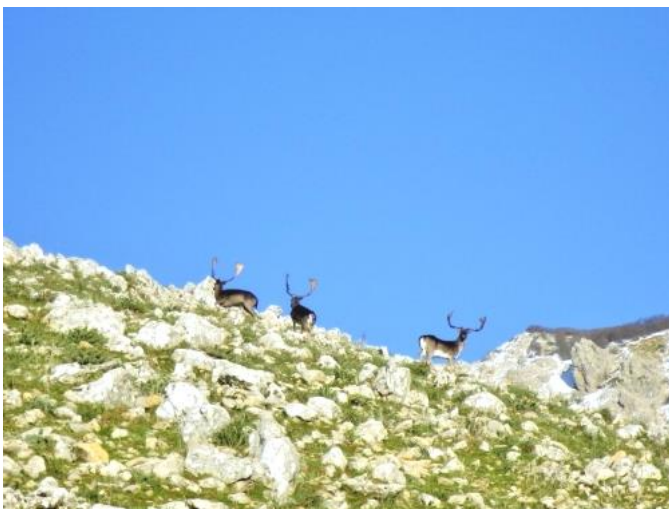
We will stop for a picnic lunch beneath the imposing Serra della Quacella, an area home to a number of endemic species, before continuing the ride in the heart of the Madonie Park, through the valley of Madonna degli Angeli, where you can admire some of the most beautiful examples the Nebrodi fir (*Abies nebrodensis*), the symbol of the park, which was long thought to be extinct before being rediscovered by some botanists in this precise area several decades ago.

We will return for a second night to Hotel Rifugio Marini.

Overnight Rifugio Marini.

Day 6

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



We will then ride across the second highest peak of the Madonie Mountains, Monte Cervi (1794 metres), rich in biodiversity, before beginning our descent towards the typical medieval Madonie village of Collesano. Dinner and overnight at Casale Drinzi.

Overnight Casale Drinzi. A small hotel located in the medieval Madonie village of Collesano.

Day 7

We will have breakfast and leave Casale Drinzi at around 9.00 in the morning. We will spend the morning riding on the northern slopes of Pizzo Dipilo, with breathtaking views of the Tyrrhenian Coast towards Palermo. We will ride through the San Giorgio woods, consisting mainly of cork and green oak trees, and pass the San Giorgio Abbey, founded by monks in the 12th century (when Sicily was under Norman rule).



We will then ride on to the picturesque medieval village of Gratteri, nestled between rocky peaks, before reaching the Sanctuary of Gibilmanna, dedicated to the Madonna (the protector of the diocese of Cefalù), where we will stop for our final picnic lunch. In the afternoon we will return to Casa "Il Bosco" following a very panoramic and beautiful pathway. We will enjoy a delicious dinner and spend the night here.

Overnight Casa Il Bosco.

