

8 DAY EASTERN SICILY WALKING TOUR

From \$2455 pp* - June 16th, September 20th 2011 departures

**CATANIA - LETOJANNI - TAORMINA- CASTELMOLA - CATANIA - CASTIGLIONE DI SICILIA
GOLE ALCANTARA - SIRACUSA - MT ETNA - TAORMINA - CATANIA**

A unique walking tour that allows you to explore historical town centres such as Catania, Siracusa and Taormina. Explore local markets, visit coastal villages, tour famous archeological sites, Greek theatres and amazing baroque architecture reflective of Sicily. Walk through small medieval towns such as Castiglione and

Castelmola. Walk along the Alcantara Gorge and explore one of the highest, still active, volcanoes today - Mt Etna. The last day of the tour gives you an entire day to explore the wonderful Taormina. This walking tour is recommended for fit people as it does involve some steep ascents and descents. Definitely a truly unforgettable experience.



Day 1: Arrival - Catania, Letojanni, Taormina

Your tour starts at 2pm when your guide meets you at Catania Airport before we transfer north to the small coastal village of Letojanni near Taormina (5 Km.). We stay for 7 nights in the 4-star beachfront San Vincenzo Hotel, located in the heart of the village. Taormina is Sicily's most famous resort, renowned for its splendid position high on Monte Tauro (200m), with Mt Etna as the backdrop. There is a public bus that departs hourly from Letojanni to the centre of Taormina (a 5 minute trip), so you will have plenty of time to explore Taormina and its well preserved 14th and 15th century palaces. (D)



Day 2: Taormina, Castelmola

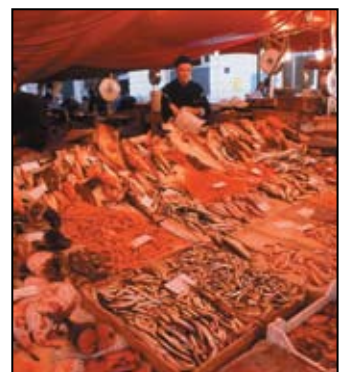
Castelmola (530m) is a small village situated above Taormina. We take the public bus to Taormina, and begin

the ascent on the ancient steps to a church built into the rocks, Madonna della Rocca (350m). We continue walking along a steep but good path to Castelmola, where you may like to sample the local almond granita. From Castelmola there is an optional walk to Monte Venere (885m) for great view of Taormina and Mt. Etna. Depending on your choice, the walks vary between 2.5 to 4 hours. (B,D)

Walks: Taormina-Castelmola: elevation: 330m steep ascent on a concrete path. Castelmola-Taormina: gradual descent on a rocky path with some rocky steps.

Day 3: Catania

Today we drive to the historical port city of Catania, to explore the main attractions on foot. We start at the colourful fish market, and walk to Piazza del Duomo in the heart of the city. Designed by celebrated architect Vaccarini, the Piazza's centrepiece is the Fontana dell'Elefante ('Fountain of the Elephant')



which is the symbol of the town. From here we continue along Catania's most charming street, Via del Crocifero, where you can see wonderful examples of 18th century Baroque buildings. We then head to Via Etna, an elegant tree-lined street which takes us through the city's best shops and boutiques. In the afternoon we will visit the famous Cyclops Coast. We stop in the fishing village of Acitrezza to admire the Rocks of the Cyclops - imposing, spiky shards of black lava that rises up from the water. It is here, as told in Homer's Odyssey, that the Cyclops Polyphemus threw these rocks at the fleeing Ulysses, who had blinded him. (B, D)

Day 4: Castiglione di Sicilia, Gole Alcantara

Today we visit the medieval village of Castiglione di Sicilia ('Castle of the Lion'). The town is situated on a rocky spur along the Alcantara valley and dates back to the 4th century BC. We explore the town before following old mule tracks to the Gole Alcantara, a gorge of basalt rock created by the eruption of the volcano Monte Moio around 2400BC. Our walk takes us along the Alcantara River, one of the four main rivers in Sicily, and ends at the gorge. Depending on the level of the Alcantara River, it may be possible to descend into the gorge and cross a small section of the river. There will be time for a drink or gelati before our coach takes us back to our hotel. (B, L, D)



Walks: 9km, gradual 400m descent on good, wide path; some rocky sections. The final 45m descent to the gorge is a steep, narrow, overgrown path.



Day 5: Siracusa

Today we drive in our coach to the town of Siracusa. Of all the Greek cities that flourished on the coast of Sicily, Siracusa was the most important, and it was a formidable competitor to Athens. With our local guide we visit the Archaeological Park which contains the town's most important attractions. The Teatro Greco is one of the great theatres of the classical period, capable of holding 15,000 people. The Greeks first inhabited the nearby island of Ortigia, the ancient city, which is connected to the mainland by two small bridges. The duomo (cathedral) and most of Siracusa's medieval and baroque monuments are situated on the island, and there will be time to explore Ortigia before returning by coach to Taormina. (B, D)



Day 6: Mt Etna

Today we explore the northern flank of Mount Etna, the highest active volcano in Europe. Historical basaltic lava flows cover much of the surface of this massive volcano. We start our day driving by 4x4 vehicles south to the small village of Milo, known for its wonderful fresh produce and wine. Our walk begins through a lush, wooded area dominated by beech and birch trees. The path gently climbs and we soon pass over some of the most recent lava. Our destination is Piano Provenzana, (1820m) once a thriving ski-resort until the last eruption in October 2002. At the end of the walk we will enjoy a typical Sicilian lunch. NB: This walk will depend on weather conditions and the eruptive state of Mount Etna, to be reviewed with our local guide. (B, L, D)
Walks: 2hrs; +/- 350m on volcanic scree and old lava.

Day 7: Free Day in Taormina

A free day for walking, relaxing, shopping, swimming or more sightseeing in and around Taormina. Your guide will provide you with lots of information and options. (B)



Day 8: Tour Ends

The tour ends after breakfast. A morning transfer will be provided to Catania Airport (B)

*Rates per person:

Double room from \$2455 Single rate on request.

The price includes

- 7 nights share accommodation in 4-star hotels in twin, double or single rooms with private facilities.
- All breakfasts and all the meals as listed in the itinerary (6 dinners and 2 lunches)
- Welcome drink and drink included in 4 meals.
- All transfers listed in itinerary.
- A private bus charter is used for some sections of the tour, and also public transport for the day walks.
- Siracusa Archeological park fees
- Professional tour leader assisted by local tour guides

Not Included:

- International airfares to/from Italy, and associated taxes;
- Heavy or excess baggage; travel insurance; passport expenses;
- Personal expenses eg tips, drinks, laundry, telephone, or optional tours/excursions.

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