

ITALY

Sicily

A Guided Walking Adventure





Table of Contents

Daily Itinerary	4
Tour Itinerary Overview	14
Tour Facts at a Glance.....	16
Traveling To and From Your Tour	18
Information & Policies	21
Italy at a Glance	22
Packing List	27

Travel Style

This small-group Guided Walking Adventure offers an authentic travel experience, one that takes you away from the crowds and deep in to the fabric of local life. On it, you'll enjoy 24/7 expert guides, premium accommodations, delicious meals, effortless transportation, and local

wine or beer with dinner. Rest assured that every trip detail has been anticipated so you're free to enjoy an adventure that exceeds your expectations.

And, with our **optional Flight + Tour Combo** and **Taormina Pre-tour Extension** to complement this destination, we take care of all the travel to simplify the journey. Refer to the attached itinerary for more details.



Overview

Sicily embraces you warmly, like a glass of its own sweet Moscato—its radiance due to a gloriously temperate climate, striking natural beauty, and Sicilian hospitality and love of food. You revel in these qualities during your 10-day exploration, in which you walk through some of the island's extraordinary scenery and best-known historical sites. Starting on the eastern coast, with Syracuse's ancient Greek theater and Mount Etna, move to the tranquil center with its fabulous Roman ruins; on to the northern shore with medieval Cefalù and its backdrop of the Madonie Mountains; then to the wild western coast near Erice and the Mount Cofano natural reserve; and, finally, indulge at the renowned Planeta wine estate of the southern shore. Walks and enchanting accommodations are never far from the aquamarine sea or historical locales. Each walk encompasses relics from past civilizations: Magna Graecia (Greater Greece) was followed by Roman, Byzantine, Moorish, Norman, and Spanish conquests—a kaleidoscope of civilizations attesting to Sicily's colorful and, at times, violent past. You walk through prehistoric burial grounds, enter gold-tinted 7th-century palaces, and stroll under Baroque façades. The cuisine and wine of Sicily reflect its varied past and enhance your adventures with meals featuring the sea's bounty, with fresh swordfish a local specialty, as well as the ripest tomatoes and fruits, artisanal cheeses, and deliciously prepared pasta and couscous. And, of course, the delectable finishing touches of what some would say are the world's best pastries and ice cream.



Daily Itinerary

DAY 1

Oasi Naturale di Vendicari and Noto; 4-7 miles, easy to moderate and Syracuse Archaeological Park; 1-2 hours, easy

Your exploration of Sicily starts in and around the atmospheric city of Syracuse. At one time rivaling Athens as the most important and powerful city of the ancient world of Greater Greece, known as Magna Graecia, modern-day Syracuse is a UNESCO World Heritage site and the cultural and administrative capital of southeastern Sicily—an area known for its extravagant Baroque architecture, historical ruins, gastronomic delights, beautiful landscapes, and beaches. The city is divided into “mainland” Syracuse and the islet of Ortygia—its historical heart and your home for three nights—connected by the Ponte Umberto bridge.

Your day begins with a (1-hour) drive to one of the most beautiful spots in southeastern Sicily: the Oasi Naturale di Vendicari, a complex of coastal marshes and a serene sandy beach, which, depending on the season and time of day, provides a protected home for large populations of migratory birds such as ducks, white egrets, black storks, and even European flamingos. Footpaths lead through the salt fields of the Pantano Grande to an abandoned *tonnara* (tuna factory) and the ruins of a Norman tower known as the Torre di Vendicari.

From here, the view embraces the entire reserve, from the splendid isle of Vendicari to Capo Passero in the distance. Depending on the weather, you may be enticed to take a swim! Arriving on foot at a family-owned *agriturismo*, you enjoy a lunch of regional specialties, including grilled vegetables, local Sicilian *provola*, pecorino, and *tuma* cheeses, and freshly made pasta.



Following lunch, a 15-minute drive brings you to Noto, one of Sicily's most intriguing cities; Sicilian writer Leonardo Sciascia called Noto a "garden of stone, a city of gold, a theatrical city, a Baroque city." Ancient Noto was destroyed by the 1693 earthquake, and in a demonstration of civic pride, a new town was built a few miles away, in accordance with the period's most advanced ideas in city planning. Today the "new" Noto is unique for the uniformity of its architecture; most buildings were constructed at the same time, in the same style (by the master of Sicilian Baroque, Rosario Gagliardi), and of the same golden stone. Not surprisingly, the town has recently become a UNESCO World Heritage site. You stroll the narrow alleyways beneath the ornate façades and balconies, palaces, and churches before continuing on to the Parco Archeologico della Neapolis. Syracuse's Archaeological Park is a treasure trove of important Greek and Roman monuments. Your first stop is the spectacular 5th-century B.C. Greek Theater, one of the finest and largest of its kind, still hosting Greek plays in the summer months. Nearby is the 2nd-century Anfiteatro Romano, the largest Roman amphitheater in Sicily and third-largest in Italy after the Colosseum in Rome and the amphitheater in Verona. Unlike the Greek Theater, the Roman Amphitheater bore witness to more gruesome events, such as gladiator fights and slave punishments.

Early evening you return to your hotel—an elegant 14th-century aristocratic property overlooking a tiny waterfront piazza and the Ionian Sea—before gathering for a welcome *aperitivo*. Dinner tonight is a short walk away at an inviting trattoria in town.

Hotel Domus Mariae Benessere, Syracuse

A former 14th-century aristocratic property, the elegant Domus Mariae Benessere has been recently refurbished and is spectacularly situated on the

island of Ortygia in the historic heart of Syracuse. The hotel features a therapeutic spa and lovely panoramic rooftop terrace overlooking the sea.

DAY 2

Mt. Etna; 6-10 miles, moderate to challenging, 800-2,200-ft. elevation gain and loss



Following breakfast, the day begins with a two-hour drive to Mt. Etna, Europe's largest active volcano, over 11,000 feet high and occupying an area larger than metropolitan New York. The mountain presents a fascinating alpine environment with its combination of nature and the uncontrollable essence of fire. A range of walking routes are weather- and volcano-dependent and may include adventurous climbs to the recently formed craters or around Monte Nero and the Bottoniera, or through the Linguaglossa pine forest, crossing a corridor of hardened lava flow. A simple lunch of Sicilian specialties is provided at the Rifugio Citelli, a mountain refuge situated at 5,712 feet.

In the late afternoon you return to your home in Syracuse for an evening of independent strolling and dining. You may wish to wander through the Piazza del Duomo, acclaimed as one of Italy's most beautiful squares. At one time the acropolis of ancient Greek Syracuse, this elegant piazza is ringed by exquisite Baroque buildings, constructed after the 1693 earthquake. Its centerpiece is the Duomo (cathedral), the city's best example of the successions of evolving architectural styles that have shaped the city over the centuries. The cathedral's Baroque façade disguises the 5th-century B.C. temple of Athena; however, 26 of the temple's Doric columns remain intact and are visible both inside and outside. (You may choose to visit the cathedral during your pre-tour time in this charming town.)

Hotel Domus Mariae Benessere, Syracuse

DAY 3

Necropolis of Pantalica; 4-7 miles, moderate, 1,000-ft. elevation gain and loss. Transfer to Caltagirone

After an early breakfast buffet of fruit, yogurt, juices, cold cuts, and homemade pastries, you depart for one of Sicily's most fascinating nature reserves and



archaeological sites, the Necropolis of Pantalica. A plateau rising between the canyons of the Anapo and Calcinara Rivers, it was inhabited from prehistoric times to the Middle Ages. The burial grounds carved in its steep rock walls comprise the largest complex of its kind in Sicily, with over 5,000 tombs dating as far back as the second millennium B.C. You walk through a dramatic river-

carved landscape of limestone formations, luxuriant in colorful, fragrant Mediterranean vegetation.

Nearing lunchtime, a short transfer delivers you to another traditional Sicilian lunch at a nearby family-owned restaurant and *agriturismo*. Dishes are derived from locally sourced, seasonal ingredients and reflect the ancient local traditions of the Anapo Valley. By mid-afternoon, you continue on a 2-hour drive to the outskirts of Caltagirone, where you spend one night at a very simple yet beautifully renovated Sicilian stone farmhouse located in the open countryside amidst towering palms, olive trees, and neighboring forest. Following time to settle in to your room or relax by the outdoor pool, a feast of traditional specialties, perfectly paired with local Nero d'Avola red wine, is served in the warm wood-beamed dining room.

Agriturismo Vecchia Masseria, Caltagirone

A beautifully renovated traditional farm estate set in the midst of fields and forest with swimming pool, Jacuzzi, and pub and restaurant. Please note guest rooms are very simple in style. In addition, there are no telephones in guest rooms.

DAY 4

Mount Ganzaria; 4- or 7-mile options, easy. Visit of Villa Romana del Casale

Awakening to peaceful countryside, after breakfast you have the option of relaxing at your inn and enjoying the facilities (including the Jacuzzi), or setting off on foot to walk to neighboring Mount Ganzaria, with two options of varying distances. The mountain derives its name from the Arabic word for wild boar, *yhanzaria*, because of boars' abundance on the mountain in ancient times. This area has been settled from the prehistoric age until the present. Your route includes a Byzantine necropolis and takes you through vegetation of cork oaks,

eucalyptus, walnut groves, dwarf fan palms, and orchids, inhabited by foxes, porcupines, and weasels. Broad views on one side look over the Catanian plain and, on the other, toward southern Sicily.

Returning on foot to the *masseria* for a light lunch, you then take leave of it and drive a few miles away to the

magnificent Villa Romana del Casale, considered the most important Roman archaeological site in Sicily. This Roman villa or hunting lodge, now a UNESCO World Heritage site, was built around the 3rd and 4th centuries (A.D.) and is known for its extraordinary collection of mosaics, in various stages of restoration. Walkways take you through some of its 40 rooms that are carpeted with 4,200 square yards of magnificent mosaics depicting vivid scenes from mythology, hunting and fishing, and various aspects of everyday Roman life. Concluding your visit, you return to the estate for a relaxing evening and another delicious dinner.



Agriturismo Vecchia Masseria, Caltagirone

DAY 5

Archaeological Park of Floristella; 3-5 miles, easy. Transfer to Castelbuono

This morning you depart for the Mineral Park of Floristella and discover one of the most important industrial-archaeological sites in Italy. As you walk an easy dirt track past the 19th-century sulfur mines, your guides recount the history of the area and the miners, most of whom were boys, or *carusi* in the Sicilian dialect. After savoring a picnic lunch, an approximately two-hour drive brings you to the beautiful hillsides surrounding Castelbuono, an idyllic town around a 14th-century castle, and to your hotel for the next two nights—a former Benedictine abbey nestled amongst vineyards, olive groves, and cork trees, with wonderful views over the Madonie Mountains and down to the Tyrrhenian Sea.

This evening, there is time to settle in and enjoy the expansive property before dinner in the hotel's elegant dining room.



Relais Santa Anastasia, Castelbuono

This former Benedictine abbey overlooking the Madonie Mountains is surrounded by vineyards, olive groves, and cork trees, which can be explored by a trail from the hotel; it features spacious rooms, swimming pool and Jacuzzi, gardens, and fine dining featuring its own farm produce.

DAY 6

Parco Naturale Regionale delle Madonie; 4-8 miles, moderate to challenging

This morning you have the possibility to opt out of the day's walk and choose instead to relax at the hotel in one of the many beautiful common areas or poolside, or to enjoy a self-guided walk through the vineyards and hills surrounding the Relais (maps provided). Alternatively, join your guides in discovering the lush natural reserve of the Parco Naturale Regionale delle Madonie, the Madonie Mountains regional park, approximately one hour from the hotel. This sanctuary, just inland from the seaside town of Cefalù, encompasses the Madonie mountain range and Sicily's second-highest peak after Mt. Etna, Pizzo Carbonara at 6,492 feet. A botanical treasure trove, the park contains more than half of the 2,600 known plant species in Sicily. The tranquil habitat also includes charming villages, farms, and vineyards, and in the winter, it is a ski resort, therefore, the area has somewhat of an Alpine appearance, with distinctive chalet architecture. A range of walking options is available in the park depending on the weather and the group's interest. For lunch, you dine on simple authentic Sicilian fare at a traditional stone mountain refuge.

En route back to the hotel, you stop in the town of Castelbuono for a stroll and possible visit to its 14th-century Matrice Vecchia (Old Cathedral Church), which is built over the ruins of a pagan temple, with its crypt beautifully decorated in frescoes illustrating the Passion, Death, and Resurrection of Christ.

Dinner this evening is the fruit of your labor in an optional hands-on cooking class! You join Chef Antonio Bonadonna in the kitchen and help him prepare regional dishes, homemade pasta, and an accompanying sauce, while learning some of the many culinary traditions of the region, which are essentially based on simple fresh ingredients. Simplicity...the Sicilian way.

Relais Santa Anastasia, Castelbuono

DAY 7

Walking tour of Cefalù; 1 hour, easy.
Transfer to Erice. Walking tour of Erice; 1 hour, easy

Today is a transfer day with a final destination of Erice. The day begins with a visit of medieval Cefalù—a beachside

resort on the Tyrrhenian coast. You ease into your day's adventure by strolling the town's well-preserved streets and visiting its historical sites. Following a guided visit to the town's magnificent Norman-era cathedral, there is time for a little independent exploration: shop for local ceramics, stroll the beach, or visit the town's tiny museum, whose most famous work is the "Portrait of an Unknown Man" by Antonello da Messina, one of the most famous European painters of the 15th century.

Following a seaside lunch, you depart Cefalù, driving just over two hours to one of Italy's most spectacular hill towns: Erice, set atop the legendary Mt. Eryx at 2,460 feet. On a clear day, there are panoramic views across the plains of Trapani, down the west coast of Sicily, and even to Cape Bon in Tunisia. Originally settled by the ancient Elymians, the town boasts a fascinating history and is an important historical site associated with fertility goddesses—the Carthaginians' Astarte, Greeks' Aphrodite, and Romans' Venus. Arriving through a maze of medieval streets, tiny piazzas, churches, and Baroque flowering balconies to Erice's enchanting historical core, you set off on an afternoon walking tour of the medieval town and some of its important sites: the hilltop Norman Castello di Venere (Castle of Venus), which offers spectacular views, and the 14th-century main town church of Chiesa Madre and bell tower, constructed from stones from the ancient Temple of Venus on the same site. The majestic Norman castle was a massive fortification and the power seat of these 11th-century conquerors in western Sicily.

After you settle into your hotel for the night—a former private palazzo with frescoed ceilings—your guides provide restaurant suggestions for dinner on your own nearby.



Hotel Elimo, Erice

In the historic center of Erice, a renovated family-owned palazzo offers very simple guest rooms and eclectic common areas with frescoed ceilings and antique furnishings, a wine bar, and interior garden.

DAY 8

Riserva Naturale di Monte Cofano; 4-8 miles, moderate. Segesta; 1 mile, easy. Transfer to Menfi

Departing Erice, a 45-minute transfer delivers you to today's walk in the Riserva Naturale di Monte Cofano, a towering limestone promontory jutting out between the turquoise Gulfs of Bonagia and Cofano. The reserve features well-maintained paths, panoramic sea views, secluded bays and steep cliffs, and diverse flora and fauna. The landmark headland is also home to historic watchtowers, immense caves, and archaeological sites of prehistoric settlement.

Finishing up the walk, a 10-minute drive brings you to lunch featuring western Sicilian cuisine in the neighboring town of Custonaci. Afterward, you transfer an hour to Segesta and its marvelous Doric temple. Dating to 430 B.C. and situated alone in a field, this is one of Italy's best-preserved ancient temples. Founded by the Elymians, a mysterious ancient people, the city of Segesta was fought over for centuries before eventually being conquered by the Romans.

Another hour's transfer brings you south to the countryside of Menfi and your home for the next two nights at a vineyard-side resort. The individually decorated guest rooms open onto private terraces with views over herb and flower gardens and vineyards. Following a welcome *aperitivo*, you proceed to a dinner of superlative cuisine served at a large communal table in the hotel's dining room, accompanied, of course, by the estate's renowned vintages.

Planeta Estate - La Foresteria, Menfi

Set amidst the vineyards of the renowned Planeta winery, a secluded four-star resort features spacious guest rooms with individual terraces, swimming pool and steam bath, walking paths, and exclusive fine dining.

DAY 9

Selinunte archaeological site; 3-5 miles, easy. Visit to "La Dispensa" winery and vineyards

After breakfast in your tranquil resort, you drive about 30 minutes to Selinunte, an ancient city that is now one of Sicily's most dramatically sited Greek ruin

complexes. This city, whose name is derived from the Greek word for celery, *selinus*, was one of ancient Greece's most prosperous colonies as early as the 7th century B.C., and hence the object of centuries of battles.

Following lunch, a leisurely afternoon at the hotel offers time to pack, relax, and perhaps swim in the hotel's panoramic outdoor swimming pool. This evening a short drive brings you to La Dispensa winery and vineyards, also owned by the Planeta Estate. Planted in nearly 300 acres of vines, the winery produces quality white and red wines including the super cru Cometa and Segreta lines. Following a guided tour of the historic winery, you gather in the library, home to hundreds of books dedicated to the grapevine, for a tasting of Planeta wines paired with breadsticks, crostini, and olives. A farewell dinner follows on the outdoor terrace (weather permitting), a perfect venue for toasting your discoveries of enchanting Sicily. (Please note that on the April tour, La Dispensa is closed due to a national holiday, therefore the group will dine at a fantastic seafood restaurant in Porto Palo di Menfi, just a few minutes from the hotel.)

Planeta Estate - La Foresteria, Menfi

DAY 10

Departure from Palermo

After a final relaxed breakfast, you transfer 90 minutes either to the Palermo airport or to the city's centrally located bus station to make your onward travel connections.

ITINERARY CHANGES

Please bear in mind that this is a typical itinerary, and the actual activities, sites, and accommodations may vary due to season, special events, weather, or transportation schedules. We reserve the right to alter the itinerary, since tour arrangements are made up to a year in advance and unforeseen circumstances may arise that mandate change. Itinerary changes are made to improve the tour and your experience.

RESPONSIBLE TRAVEL

Country Walkers is a leader in active travel with responsible tourism an integral part of our core values. Our tours reflect our dedication to best travel practices—and to the preservation of indigenous cultures and the environment. Country Walkers has made a donation on behalf of every traveler to the CW Travelers Fund, which supports designated projects in the communities and habitats in which we travel. We invite you to learn more about our efforts and initiatives for giving back.

Here's just one example that highlights our sustainable practices:

Goodbye, Bribes! Along with exceptional cuisine and ancient ruins, Sicily has a centuries-old reputation for corruption. But now, a grassroots coalition of over 850 shopkeepers in Palermo are standing up to institutional graft with the nonprofit “Addiopizzo” movement. This Fair Trade style certification—the name, roughly translated, means “Goodbye, Bribes!”—recognizes businesses that operate honestly, vetting them through a rigorous process that examines their tax records and reputation with local law enforcement. The organization has enjoyed a chorus of growing support throughout the region, including the United States ambassador, who recently visited the organization’s offices. Country Walkers is proud to support Addiopizzo’s efforts to squash corruption in Sicily and educate locals about ethical business practices. Your guide(s) will provide you with a map of participating shops and restaurants at the end of your tour.

Tour Itinerary Overview

TOUR MEETING POINT AND TIME

Hotel Domus Mariae Benessere (lobby), Syracuse, Sicily, Italy, 9:00 a.m.

NIGHTS 1 & 2

Hotel Domus Mariae Benessere

Via Vittorio Veneto, 89
96100 Siracusa, Italy
Tel 011 39 0931 64475
Fax 011 39 0931 463853
Email info@domusmariaebenessere.com
domusmariaebenessere.com
Wireless Internet, hair dryers, and laundry service available.

NIGHT 3 & 4

Agriturismo Vecchia Masseria

Caltagirone, Italy
Tel 011 39 0935 684003
Cell 011 39 333 8735573 (no fax)
Email info@vecchiamasseria.com
vecchiamasseria.com
Hair dryers and laundry service available. Wireless Internet unavailable.

NIGHTS 5 & 6

Relais Santa Anastasia

Castelbuono, Italy
Tel 011 39 0921 672233
Fax 011 39 0921 672288
Email info@santa-anastasia-relais.it
santa-anastasia-relais.it
Wireless Internet, hair dryers, and laundry service available.

NIGHT 7

Hotel Elimo

Erice, Italy
Tel 011 39 0923 869377
Fax 011 39 0923 869252
Email info@hotelelino.it
hotelelino.it
Wireless Internet, hair dryers, and laundry service available.

NIGHTS 8 & 9

Planeta Estate - La Foresteria

Menfi, Italy

Tel 011 39 0925 1955460

Fax 011 39 0925 1956460

Email planetaestate@planeta.it

planetaestate.it

Wireless internet, hair dryers, and laundry service available.

TOUR DEPARTURE POINTS AND TIMES

- **Palermo Falcone Borsellino Airport (PMO), Palermo, Sicily, Italy, 12:00 pm**
- **Palermo Central Train Station, Palermo, Sicily, Italy, 12:45 pm**

EMERGENCY CONTACT

One Call International

Email mail@oncallinternational.com

If communicating from within the US

Text 603.945.0103

Tel 800.555.9095

If calling from outside the US

Tel 603.894.4710

When calling from outside the USA, you will need to dial the access code for the country you are calling from (a complete list of access codes, provided by AT&T, can be found on the Country Walkers website under Travel Tips and Travel Resources: International Access Codes).

In the unlikely event you are unable to connect by phone with One Call, or the region you are calling from does not have an access code, you should speak with a live international operator and ask them to place a collect call to 800.555.9095 or 603.894.4710.

TRAVEL INSURANCE

We offer guests the opportunity to purchase a Travel Protection Plan. Please contact us for details.

Tour Facts at a Glance

TOUR LENGTH (WITHOUT FLIGHT PACKAGE)

10 days, 9 nights

DEPARTURE DATES AND PRICE

Please refer to our website for the most current list of departure dates, scheduled group tour and private tour prices.

TOUR MEETING POINT AND TIME

Hotel Domus Mariae Benessere (lobby), Syracuse, Sicily, Italy, 9:00 a.m.

TOUR DEPARTURE POINTS AND TIMES

- Palermo Falcone Borsellino Airport (PMO), Palermo, Sicily, Italy, 12:00 p.m.
- Palermo Central Train Station, Palermo, Sicily, Italy, 12:45 p.m.

ACTIVITY LEVEL

This tour is one of our Guided Walking Adventures, rated moderate with some easy days, with an average of 4 to 8 miles per day, and an option up to 10 miles on Mt. Etna. Elevation gains and losses range from 800 up to 2,200 feet. There are daily ascents and descents that can be steep in sections and challenging due to uneven footing. The terrain is varied—along cobbled streets, dirt roads, well-maintained trails, sandy or rocky coastal paths, and lava flows. The pace on this tour is leisurely, allowing for stops en route to explore villages, natural areas, and cultural and historical sites.

INCLUSIONS

- » Two expert, local guides (for groups of 8 or more), with you 24/7
- » All meals except for two dinners; local wine included
- » All accommodations while on tour
- » Transportation from the meeting point to the departure point
- » Entrance fees and special events as noted in the itinerary

- » Destination information (weather, visa requirements, etc.) and other travel assistance available 24/7 provided by One Call International
- » The unbeatable and cumulative experience of the Country Walkers staff

LET THE JOURNEY BEGIN

Prior to your adventure you will be asked to sign a Passenger Participation Agreement and you will receive:

- » Luggage tags
- » List of travel companions and guide biographies

GRATUITIES

Gratuities for all hotels, meals, and services that are included in your tour price will be paid by Country Walkers. Should you wish to tip your Country Walkers guide(s), the standard in the industry ranges from \$10 to \$15 per person, per guide, per day (or \$20 to \$30 per couple, per guide, per day), and can be paid in USD or local currency. Gratuities for your bus driver are included in the tour price, but additional tips are always welcome.

Traveling To and From Your Tour

If you are interested in reserving the **optional Flight + Tour Combo** and **pre- or post-tour extensions**, please refer to the attached itinerary for more details.

TOUR MEETING POINT AND TIME

Hotel Domus Mariae Benessere (lobby), Syracuse, Sicily, Italy, 9:00 a.m.

Your guide(s) will be wearing a Country Walkers shirt. Please be dressed for walking.

MOST CONVENIENT AIRPORT

Catania Fontanarossa (CTA), Catania, Sicily, Italy
aeroporto.catania.it

Please note: Because the Catania Fontanarossa is not an international airport, your luggage may arrive on an alternate carousel—different from where most of your flightmates' luggage appears. There is a main carousel where domestic luggage arrives and an international carousel where international luggage arrives and is put through X-rays for entry. The international carousel is past the domestic carousel through a set of glass doors at the end of the arrivals hall.

GETTING TO THE MEETING POINT

By Air:

There are frequent daily flights from Rome and Milan to the Catania Fontanarossa Airport, 4.4 miles southwest of the city center. There is generally one flight daily to/from other European cities such as London, Zurich, Paris, and Frankfurt. If you plan on arriving in Catania on the first day of the tour, please reserve an early-morning flight to ensure that you arrive in Syracuse in time to join the first walk. Please refer to the Italian Government Tourist Office website, enit.it, for additional information about Italian airports. You may also wish to visit the Italian Tourism official website at italia.it.

From the Catania Fontanarossa Airport:

By taxi: A taxi from the Catania Fontanarossa Airport to the Hotel Domus Mariae Benessere in Syracuse takes one hour and costs approximately 90 euros. While there are taxis readily available at the airport, you may call Radio Taxi at

0953 30966 (from within Italy) or visit their website at radiotaxicatania.org to arrange a transfer in advance.

By private transfer: A private transfer from the Catánia Fontanarossa Airport to the Hotel Domus Mariae Benessere in Syracuse may be arranged through the Hotel Domus Mariae Benessere for approximately 80 euros per car. Please email the hotel directly.

By bus: Interbus provides bus service from directly outside the airport to Syracuse (*Siracusa* in Italian) every 1-2 hours. Travel time is around 1 hour and 15 minutes and the cost is approximately 6 euros per person. For more information, please visit their website: interbus.it. The Hotel Domus Mariae Benessere is located on the islet of Ortygia in Syracuse. You will want to take the bus to its final stop on the route. Then take the free shuttle to Ortygia (which runs every 20 minutes and stops in front of Hotel Domus Mariae Benessere) or a taxi, which costs approximately 10-15 euros.

By bus and train: AMT Alibus Service departs every 20 minutes from 5:00 a.m. to midnight, from the airport to Catánia's city center and train station. Trains arrive in Syracuse at the station on Via Francesco Crispi, centrally located between the Archaeological Park and Ortygia. The taxi fare from Syracuse's train station to the Domus Mariae Benessere in Ortygia is about 10 euros.

RAIL INFORMATION

Approximate travel times for train travel to Syracuse from various Sicilian cities are as follows: from Palermo: 6-7 hours; from Catánia: 1-1½ hours.

Please note, the above travel times are dependent upon train type and speed. Additionally, some of these journeys require station changes. For further rail information including reservations, schedules, and up-to-date fares, please contact either Rail Europe at 800.622.8600 or raileurope.com, or Trenitalia at trenitalia.com (Trenitalia operates most train services in Italy).

PRE-TOUR ACCOMMODATIONS

If you are not reserving our optional Flight + Tour Combo, you may wish to stay at the Hotel Domus Mariae Benessere in Syracuse, the first hotel on tour and our meeting point. If so, please contact the hotel directly and identify yourself as a Country Walkers guest. We suggest making a hotel reservation as soon as possible.

Hotel Domus Mariae Benessere

Via Vittorio Veneto, 89
96100 Siracusa, Italy
Tel 011 39 0931 64475
Fax 011 39 0931 463853
info@domusmariaebenessere.com
domusmariaebenessere.com

A former 14th-century aristocratic property, the elegant Domus Mariae Benessere has been recently refurbished and is spectacularly situated on the island of Ortygia in the historical heart of Syracuse. The hotel features a therapeutic spa and lovely panoramic terrace overlooking the sea.

DELAYS AND LATE ARRIVALS

If you are delayed or miss the scheduled group meeting point for any reason, we kindly request that you contact our emergency assistance provider, One Call International. This service is available 24 hours/day, 7 days/week to assist you with any type of travel delay. Please refer to the Emergency Contact details on your Tour Itinerary Overview page for One Call International contact details.

TOUR DEPARTURE POINTS AND TIMES

- **Palermo Falcone Borsellino Airport (PMO), Palermo, Sicily, Italy, 12:00 p.m.**
- **Palermo Central Train Station, Palermo, Sicily, Italy, 12:45 p.m.**

Please note: Our final night is in Menfi, located 65 miles from the Falcone Borsellino Airport (approximately 1½ hours). We cannot guarantee arrival at the airport prior to 12:00 p.m. Please do not schedule your flight prior to 2:00 p.m. on the last day of the tour. Should your travel plans necessitate an earlier departure, you may choose to arrange a private transfer through your final hotel in Menfi. A private transfer from Menfi to Palermo takes 1½ hours and costs approximately 120 euros.

Information & Policies

GUARANTEED DEPARTURES

Country Walkers guarantees the departure of every tour*—no exceptions and no disappointments! From the moment you make your deposit, you can start preparing for your adventure. We take care of all the details to ensure a seamless, small-group experience (with an average of 6 or 7 guests per guide). For best availability, reserve your trip today!

**except in cases of force majeure*

RESERVATIONS

Reservations for this tour may be made by calling Country Walkers at 800.464.9255. We can confirm your reservation with a deposit of \$350 per person. Final tour cost is due 90 days prior to tour departure date. As arrangements are confirmed at least a year in advance, the tour price is subject to change.

GUEST RESPONSIBILITIES

Each guest has the responsibility to select a trip appropriate to his/her abilities and interests and to prepare for the trip by carefully reading the confirmation materials. To join this trip, you must be in good health and capable of completing activities as described in the day-to-day itinerary. Our in-house experts welcome the opportunity to discuss the tour in more detail. In order to meet your needs, we ask that you please share any relevant physical limitations or health conditions when you make your reservation.

CANCELLATION POLICY

Cancellations received 91 days or more prior to the tour start date will incur a loss of \$150; cancellations received between 90 and 61 days prior to the tour start date incur a loss of 25 percent of the tour price; there are no refunds within 60 days of the tour start date. Up to 91 days prior to departure, you may transfer your reservation, depending on availability, from one departure to another in the same calendar year at no cost*. Please notify us in writing.

**One transfer per year; afterwards a modest per person transfer fee will apply. Please note that tours with seasonal prices may involve a higher price.*

Italy at a Glance

ENTRY REQUIREMENTS

U.S. citizens: Passports are required and must be valid for at least three months beyond the dates of travel. Visas are not required for stays of up to 90 days. For more information, see travel.state.gov.



Travel Tip

Have a variety of options to start your trip: ATM card(s), credit card(s), some dollars to exchange, and some euros in small denominations.

CURRENCY

Italy uses the euro (EUR). For current exchange rates, visit oanda.com.

Many businesses in Europe will no longer accept credit cards without PIN numbers (chip and pin cards).

Always contact your bank or your credit-card company

for details on fees and card use when traveling.

TIME ZONE

Italy is in the Central European Time Zone, Eastern Standard Time plus 6 hours. For more information on worldwide time zones, see:

worldtimezone.com.

PHONE & INTERNET

Italy country code: +39

Cell phone coverage throughout Italy is extensive, but cannot be guaranteed to be accessible on all American mobile carriers or to function at all times while on the trail or in remote areas. For more information regarding international phone use, please refer to countrywalkers.com/phones.



Internet access is generally very good in towns and villages; however, it is not guaranteed at all of the hotels used on the tour. For more details regarding Wi-Fi availability, please refer to the Tour Itinerary Overview.

LANGUAGE

Italian is Italy's official language.

While knowledge of the local language is not necessary, you may want to learn some fun and useful phrases; see bbc.co.uk/languages/italian or the enclosed Reading Guide for a suggested phrase book.

ELECTRICITY

Alternating current of 220V and 50Hz is used in Italy. Plugs have two round prongs. For a full listing of electrical outlets worldwide, see electricaloutlet.org

WEATHER

Italy has a range of climates, depending on the region. In general, spring and fall are ideal for an active vacation, with daytime temperatures in the 60s to low 70s, evenings in the 50s, and occasional short rain showers.

In the northern Alpine areas, summer through early fall is an optimal time to travel. Springtime brings wildflowers, long days, and, on the table, early tender vegetables such as asparagus and artichokes. By late summer and fall, the warm days continue with highs in the low 80s, landscapes take on a golden hue as the grape harvest gets underway, and autumn specialties appear, such as mushrooms and truffles.

For up-to-date forecasts, see qwikcast.com. For historical average temperatures and rainfall, see weatherbase.com.

ITALIAN CUISINE & WINE



Considered one of the world's finest cuisines, Italian food is undoubtedly one of the best things about traveling in Italy. Based on fresh local ingredients, Italian cooking is consequently very regional.

Northern Italy is the home of risotto, polenta, and slow-cooked meat dishes such as *osso bucco*. The cuisine of Tuscany and Umbria in central Italy also features meat and game dishes, such as *bistecca alla fiorentina* (Florentine steak), sausages, and roast pork, as well as vegetable- and bread-based dishes such as savory bruschetta, *ribollita* (vegetable soup), and *panzanella* (bread salad).

Travel Tip

- Bringing your own hair dryer or other electrical device? You'll need a travel converter, available at most hardware, travel, or consumer electronic stores.
- For laptops or an electronic device with a dual voltage switch, you'll need the adapter plug but not a converter.

Travel Tip

Coffee is served throughout the day in its many different ways. Italians tend to drink *caffè latte* or cappuccino until about 11:00 a.m. (a *latte* is a cup of hot milk). After 11:00 a.m., they usually drink *un caffè* (espresso). If you'd like it with a little milk you should order a *macchiato*. You'll need to specify if you want it *con latte caldo* (with hot milk), or *con latte freddo* (with cold milk), or *con schiuma* (with foam). Lastly, there's no charge to stand at the bar with a drink, but a small fee is added to the bill when you sit at a café table.

Southern Italy and Sicily are justly known for fresh seafood—spaghetti with tiny clams, or a main course of swordfish braised in a light tomato sauce—and fresh vegetables are also prominent— spaghetti with zucchini, or the well-known *insalata caprese* of tomatoes, basil, and fresh mozzarella cheese.

Meals in Italy typically have several courses, starting with an *antipasto* (an appetizer); then a *primo* (first course), which is usually pasta or risotto; a *secondo* (main course), which is a meat or fish dish; and *dolce* (dessert).

Wine has been produced in Italy for millennia, and the country's climate and geography of coastline, foothills, and mountains allow grape growing in 20 regions from the Alps in the north to southernmost Sicily. Restaurants feature their regions' local wine.

Please see the detailed itinerary for region-specific sample menus, local delicacies, and wines.

LIFE IN ITALY

Shopping hours

Shops and stores are generally open Monday to Saturday between 9:30 a.m. and 12:30 p.m., and from 3:30 to 7:30 p.m.; department stores and supermarkets are open all day from 9:30 a.m. to 7:30 p.m. Open-air markets generally open from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m., although in larger cities such as Florence, open-air markets are typically open all day, even on Sundays.



Meal times

Breakfast is served at hotels from 7:00 a.m. to 10:00 or 10:30 a.m. Lunch is served in restaurants from 12:30 to 2:30 p.m. and dinner is usually served from 7:30 to 11:00 p.m. (Restaurant meal times may vary by region, trending from earlier to later as you travel from north to south.)

Tipping

Tipping in restaurants is not compulsory in Italy. In restaurants the menu or bill indicates *servizio incluso*, meaning “service is included.” However, locals tend to leave a small amount in coins after a meal or a coffee—roughly one to two percent of the total, or one to two euros for a meal of up to 50 euros. For a coffee or a drink in a bar or café, 20 to 50 euro cents is appropriate.

Taxi drivers aren’t generally tipped, but you could round up the total, letting the driver keep the change. For luggage assistance, a small tip of one to three euros is appropriate.

TRAVEL RESOURCES

National Italian tourist board official sites

italia.it and enit.it

Italian public holidays

To assist in travel planning, it may be helpful to be aware of Italian public holidays, festivals, or calendars of events. Visit the Italian tourist board’s website noted above, then click on Useful Information, More Information, and National Public Holidays. For local events, visit the regional tourism websites (links can be found on the region’s page on italia.it, in the Discover Italy section).

TRAVEL IN ITALY

Trains

Trenitalia: trenitalia.it (Italy’s national train company)

Raileurope: raileurope.com or 800.622.8600, a U.S.-based company that provides schedules, reservations, and ticketing for all European train networks (their multi-day/-week/-month passes in one country or combinations of countries may be an economical and convenient choice for European train travel.)

Travel Tip

Most restaurants have a “cover charge” or *il coperto*, a per-person fee of one to three euros that is added to your final bill. It is a legitimate practice and it is considered the “fee” for the place setting, the bread, tap water (which is fine to drink), and breadsticks.

Travel Tip

Be aware that you may need to validate your train ticket by “punching” it before boarding, using a small machine located on the train platform, which stamps the time and date on it.



Other local transportation

In addition to its excellent rail network, Italy also has several regional airlines, many regional bus lines, and, in coastal and lake regions, local ferries. Taxis are available at all major airports, train stations, and in smaller towns, and can be reserved in advance (your hotel can usually provide assistance).

Most major car rental agencies are available at Italian airports and train stations. For more information contact Country Walkers, or go to italia.it, and click on “Useful Information.” For driving, you can further navigate to “Rules to drive in Italy.”

Museum information and online reservations

tickitaly.com

Packing List

PACKING TIPS

Pack light! Keep in mind there will be times you may have to carry your own luggage short distances, especially before and after your Country Walkers tour. Due to space constraints, we require you to limit your luggage to one medium piece (approximately 18x15x29 inches or 8,000 cu. in.) and one small carry-on, per person. We recommend packing any personal necessities, medications, your hotel itinerary/emergency contact information, your hiking boots (or shoes), and extra clothes in your carry-on luggage in the event that your baggage is delayed. We suggest leaving valuable jewelry at home. A copy of your passport or other important documents should be kept in a separate area of your luggage. Always be alert when carrying a purse, camera, money belt, or backpack in busy cities, airports, and train stations.

FOOTWEAR

- » Hiking boots. There are many brands to choose from. Proper fit is crucial, so try on new boots while wearing socks you plan to use on tour. Be sure to break in new footwear well before your tour begins. By the time you're ready to join your walking tour, you should be able to complete 4-8 miles of walking without discomfort. We require lightweight boots with proper ankle support and good tread to ensure stability on all types of terrain. Waterproof footwear keeps feet dry in heavy rain and water resistant footwear keeps feet dry in heavy dew. Country Walkers reserves the right to deny participation to any guest not wearing appropriate footwear.
- » Comfortable shoes for evening strolls on uneven, cobblestone streets
- » Synthetic, moisture-wicking socks (cotton socks are not recommended for walking as they will quickly cause blisters)
- » Blister remedy

CLOTHING

- » Lightweight, wash-and-wear long pants
- » Long-sleeved, wash-and-wear shirt
- » T-shirts and shorts
- » Polar fleece or light wool pullover (it will keep you warm even when wet)

- » Dinner attire: dress is smart casual
- » Light jacket or sweater for evening strolls and alfresco dining
- » Church attire: exposed shoulders and knees are not permitted when visiting most churches in Italy. Men may wear long Bermuda-style shorts (to the knee) and women may wear longer skirts (to the knee). Convertible zip-off pants are a good option for both men and women on days that combine hiking and church visits. Women may carry a light scarf, shawl, or jacket to cover bare shoulders and upper arms when needed.

OUTERWEAR

- » Waterproof rain gear: jacket, pants, hat, or hood
- » Windbreaker with hood (your rain gear may be suitable)
- » Hat with a broad brim or visor

EQUIPMENT

- » Pack (minimum size of 25L): large enough to carry water, extra clothing, rain gear, and personal items (camera, etc.)
- » Waterproof cover for pack
- » Water bottle, canteen, or CamelBak-type water reservoir or hydration pack to carry your own water while walking (equivalent of one to two liters)
- » Sunblock and lip balm
- » Insect repellent
- » Sunglasses
- » Toilet kit for when facilities are not available on the walks. Include zip-lock baggies, tissues, and moist towelettes, which can be disposed of upon return to the hotel.
- » Personal first-aid kit including any medications you ordinarily take (in their original container)

OPTIONAL

- » Telescopic walking sticks. (Please note that while telescopic walking sticks are highly recommended for this tour, they are not provided by Country Walkers. Therefore please plan on bringing your own should you wish to use them.)
- » Binoculars

- » Bathing suit for optional swimming in the sea and hotel swimming pools
- » Flip flops or water sandals
- » Camera and charger and/or extra batteries
- » Zip-lock bags (to keep camera and valuables dry)
- » Small notebook and pen
- » Field guides (see enclosed reading list)
- » Folding umbrella
- » Bandana
- » Washcloth (many European hotels do not provide them)
- » Hand sanitizer and/or moist towelettes
- » Alarm clock (not all hotels have alarm clocks or provide wake-up calls)