

Walking in Sicily and Southern Italy

Saturday 14 - Monday 30 September 2024

16 nights

TOUR OVERVIEW

Southern Italy is a visual feast of architecture and cultural traditions as well as having stunning natural beauty. You will see astoundingly well-preserved ruins of ancient Roman and Greek civilisations, some of Italy's most popular coastal areas, and cave dwellings that have been used as homes since 7000 BCE. Walk through lush forests and parks, small villages, along coastal paths and on Europe's largest active volcano

Beginning in Sicily, your first stay is in the well preserved, seaside village of Scopello before travelling east to Palermo and on to Syracuse. Spend time in the historic hilltop town of Taormina and ascend the majestic Mt Etna. Continue to fascinating Puglia. Explore the ancient town of Matera, known for its pre-historic cave dwellings. Then to the fairy-tale town of Alberobello with its 1,400 cone-shaped roofed homes. Absorb the history and scenery on easy to moderate walks. Stay put for two - three nights at a time in accommodation chosen for its character.

One of the region's star attractions is the food and you will sample the local specialties and fine wines. Ideal for those who enjoy walking through history at a leisurely pace to discover the treasures of Southern Italy.

TOUR HIGHLIGHTS

- Explore an area which offers a rich mix of civilisations and their architectural influences through the ages.
- Take a cable car ride up Mt Etna and witness the lunar landscapes and breathtaking panoramic views.
- Visit the charming town of Taormina, the setting for the TV programme, White Lotus.
- Explore the small town of Alberobello, a UNESCO World Heritage site, known for its unique cone-shaped trulli houses,
- Stroll through the labyrinth streets of Ostuni and the ancient cave dwellings of Matera. Immerse yourself in the vibrant culture, and warm hospitality of this region.



TOUR INCLUSIONS

- The services of an experienced New Zealand based Calder & Lawson Tours tour manager
- 16 nights accommodation in Europe
- Breakfast daily and meals as specified in the itinerary
- All group transfers as specified in the itinerary
- Luggage transfer between accommodation on the walks
- Admissions as detailed in the itinerary
- All tips for local guides and other service providers
- Pre-tour material

TOUR EXCLUSIONS

- Airfares and airline taxes to Europe
- Personal expenses
- Travel insurance
- Meals not specified in the itinerary
- Beverages during included meals, unless specified
- Hotel portorage

IS THIS TOUR FOR ME?

This tour will delight lovers of history, colourful Italian culture, food and wine. There will be walks every day, some up to 4-5 hours and on other days there will be sightseeing walks which involve some climbing up and down hills and flights of stairs and along cobbled streets and uneven terrain. This means a good degree of fitness is required. One of the most tiring aspects of travelling can be the 1-2 hours of standing on visits to villages, and archeological sites so you should be prepared for this.



TOUR PRICE

Share twin per person	NZD \$12,590
Single supplement	NZD \$1,750

Please contact Calder & Lawson Tours if you are interested in a single occupancy place.

GROUP SIZE Minimum 10, maximum 18

VARIATIONS IN TRAVEL We can make arrangements for any travel you would like to do before or after this tour, or book business class flights. Please contact us to discuss your requirements.

FLIGHTS

The price of this tour does not include international flights from Auckland to Europe.

We expect that the best option will be on Emirates via Dubai. We will have a group departure travelling with your tour managers available to book once the tour is confirmed. You are very welcome to make your own arrangements and meet the group in Rome or Palermo at the start of the tour.

Options for upgrades to premium economy or business class will be available.

TOUR MANAGER: John Matheson

John Matheson will be your tour manager. John is as an active traveller who enjoys walking as a rewarding way to immerse yourself in the landscapes and discover places in depth. Every year since 2005 John, accompanied by his wife Rosanne, has taken groups of people on walking tours through the picturesque countryside in the UK and Europe, staying in small villages and sampling local food and wine. John has taken many tours to Italy. He always loves to return as it is one of his favourite destinations.



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DAILY ITINERARY

Friday 13 September 2024

Auckland to Italy

Meals: None

Overnight: Stopover

Depart NZ for Europe on Friday 13 September. Please note that your flight is not included in the tour price. We will offer flight suggestions for a group departure for tour participants to travel with the tour manager to Europe from Auckland. This will include an option for a stopover en-route.

Saturday 14 September

Rome - Scopello

Meals: D

Flight:

Overnight: Scopello

Arrive in Rome early morning and take a short flight to Palermo, Sicily. Transfer to the charming seaside town of Scopello for the next two nights. Your welcome dinner will be held this evening at the hotel.

Sunday 15 September

Scopello - Zingaro Nature Reserve and Erice

Meals: B/PL/D

Walk: 15 km, 4 hours. Easy.

Overnight: Scopello

Begin your walk a couple of kilometres from the sleepy fishing village of Scopello, at the entrance to Parco dell Zingaro. For centuries, this area was inhabited by small communities of farmers who grew wheat and kept livestock. It was also home to smugglers who sheltered in the coves and used the numerous grottoes as storage space for their merchandise. From afar, Zingaro looks relatively stark as trees are a rarity. On closer inspection, however, you come across a great variety of flora that is especially suited to the terrain. Dwarf palms and other shrubs line most of the paths. The walk follows the shore with views over the azure sea towards Palermo. This park and its surrounding areas are one of the most beautiful parts of western Sicily. Return to Scopello for the evening.

Monday 16 September

Scopello - Segesta - Palermo

Meals: B/PL

Walk: sightseeing walks

Overnight: Palermo

Depart Scopello this morning for Segesta, an ancient city nestled in the picturesque hills of western Sicily. Visit a remarkably preserved Doric temple and a breathtaking amphitheater, offering a glimpse into the grandeur of Greek civilization.

In the afternoon, visit the salt pans of Trapani, a mesmerizing natural wonder with shimmering salt flats and windmills. For the next two nights, you will stay in Palermo, the vibrant capital of Sicily, a blend of architectural splendor, bustling markets, and a rich cultural heritage.



DAILY ITINERARY

Tuesday 17 September Palermo and Monreale

Meals: B/L/D

Walking: sightseeing walks

Overnight: Palermo

This morning, after a visit to the Palatine Chapel, you transfer to nearby Monreale, situated in a panoramic position above Palermo with views over the city and the sea. Visit the Cathedral Santa Maria la Nuova, a dazzling mixture of Arab, Byzantine, and Norman artistic styles framed by traditional Romanesque architecture, all combined in a perfect blend of the best that both the Christian and Muslim worlds of the 12th century had to offer. It is most notable for its mosaics which climb to the Cathedral's roof, described as one of the wonders of the medieval world. Then take a stroll through the old heart of Palermo. Wander through some of the city's colourful markets, a wonderful place to taste authentic and truly delicious Sicilian food.

Wednesday 18 September Palermo-Ragusa

Meals: B/L

Travelling and sightseeing

Overnight: Ragusa

Today you will travel across the interior of the island to Ragusa, a city with two souls. It has a modern area and an ancient, Baroque -style area called Ibla. Ragusa has the refined elegance that characterizes the late-Baroque towns of the Val di Noto. It attracts visitors to its maze of narrow streets, where there are many churches and palaces. Spend the night in Ragusa.

Thursday 19 September Ragusa - Noto - Syracuse

Meals: B

Walking: Walking 9 km, 3.5 hours. Easy - moderate.

Overnight: Syracuse

In the morning, you'll leave for nearby Noto, perhaps the best known of the Baroque cities. On route, a stop in Modica to visit the Antica Dolceria Bonajuto, Sicily's oldest confectionary shop, to taste the famous chocolate of Modica. Later, travel to the nature reserve of Vendicari, one of the last remaining pristine coastlines in Sicily. Enjoy a coastal walk, with the possibility of a swim. Travel on to Syracuse. You will stay in Syracuse for the next two nights.

Friday 20 September Syracuse

Meals: B

Walking: sightseeing walks

Overnight: Syracuse

Syracuse was of immense importance as a Greek colony and is one of the highlights of a visit to Sicily. Wander slowly among the gold-tinted palaces, bell towers and its archaeological area. You will visit the major archaeological sites, including the famous Greek Theatre, 'The Ear of Dionysius', and finally take a walking tour on Ortigia Island to admire the ancient medieval streets, Baroque structures, and classic churches and what is arguably the most beautiful piazza in Sicily.



DAILY ITINERARY

Saturday 21 September
Syracuse – Taormina –
Castelmola

Meals: B/D

Walking: sightseeing walks

Overnight: Castelmola

Drive north today to Taormina, where the Greek influence is noticeable in the architecture, especially in the world-famous Greek/Roman theatre. Take an orientation walk through the small streets of town, its gardens, Greek theatre and the cathedral. Enjoy the ambience of Taormina on your own. If you wish, you can take a walk down to the sea for a swim at the beach. Return by cable car, passing along the way a spectacular medieval staircase. Then to Castelmola where you will spend the next two nights. This small village above Taormina is one of the most beautiful Sicilian villages and is built around the ruins of a 16th century Norman castle.

Sunday 22 September
Mt Etna Summit

Meals: B/PL

Walking: 2km, 1hr. Easy.

Overnight: Castelmola

A full-day visit to the volcano today. Walking on Mount Etna provides an otherworldly experience as you traverse its lunar-like landscapes, marvel at volcanic craters, and soak in panoramic views of the surrounding Sicilian countryside. You will travel up by cable car and 4x4 vehicles, to reach almost 2700 metres in altitude. Later your walk may take you to one of the most impressive cones, the Montagnola, and along the edge of the Valle del Bove Valley. Return to Castelmola.

Monday 23 September
Castelmola – Morano Calabro

Meals: B/D

Travelling day

Overnight: Morano Calabro

Today is mainly a day of travelling, but the landscape you pass through is beautiful and often awe-inspiring. We depart Castelmola after breakfast and head towards the north-easternmost tip of Sicily and Messina. Much of Messina was sadly reduced to rubble in the great earthquake of 1908 and so the city today is a modern one but the Straits of Messina is still a spectacular setting. From the port, we make the short ferry crossing (about 30 minutes) to Calabria and the mainland. Driving north on the motorway, on our left we have views over the Tyrrhenian Sea towards Stromboli and the Aeolian islands whilst on our right are the Aspromonte mountains and the Sila massif. Our destination is the village of Morano Calabro at the foot of the Pollino mountains where you will spend the next two nights.

Tuesday 24 September
Polino National Park

Meals: B/L/D

Walking: 6km, 3hrs. Medium.

Overnight: Morano Calabro

Straddling the border of Calabria and Basilicata, Italy's largest national park deserves to be better known. At 750 square miles, it is one of the world's 50 largest national parks. It is home to Heldreich's pine estimated to be the oldest tree in Europe, and the symbol of the park is the rare Loricato pine tree. It is a haven for wildlife: golden eagles, wolves, peregrine and lanner falcons, the forest dormouse, and the Calabrian black squirrel can all be found here. We drive up to the Colle del Dragone from where we have spectacular views and walk through a haven of natural beauty and tranquility.

DAILY ITINERARY

Wednesday 25 September

The Lucanian Dolomites

Meals: B/PL

Walking: 6km, 4-5hrs. Moderate

Overnight: Matera

Transfer this morning to Pietrapertosa, in the Gallipoli Cognato and Dolomiti Lucane Park. Your excursion begins at the Saracen fortress of Pietrapertosa, almost entirely carved out of rock and offering you a panoramic view of the Basento Valley. Walking from the castle, you'll take a trail that descends to the Caperrino River, passes over an ancient bridge and ascends to Castelmezzano, all the while being towered over by the spectacular Pietrapertosa Dolomites. Visit the village and perhaps have a picnic at the castle. Travel to Matera where you will spend the next two nights.

Thursday 26 September

The Sassi of Matera

Meals: B

Walking: sightseeing walks

Overnight: Matera

Matera is a UNESCO World Heritage Site and was chosen by Mel Gibson as the setting for his film 'The Passion of the Christ', and it has been the setting for many films since. The village itself is perched on a rock, embedded in a stark lunar landscape and it has a sense of stepping back in time. The most famous parts of Matera are the Sassi districts. Here you'll be able to see hundreds of troglodyte dwellings and pale limestone churches, monasteries and palaces built on natural caves that have been excavated and extended over millennia. Exploring the complex network of streets, stairways, archways and terraces on foot is the best way to experience this city. The cave dwellings were lived in until the 1950's and are the most extensive example of their kind in the Mediterranean.

Friday 27 September

The Valle dell'Itria

Meals: B/L/D

Walking: 8 km, 3 hours. Easy

Overnight: Alberobello

After breakfast, depart for the Valle dell'Itria in central Puglia, passing vineyards and olive groves along the way. The valley is dotted with hundreds of unique trulli: curious white houses with conical roofs made of stone, used by Apulian farmers of centuries past. From the 6th century church of San Pietro in Barsento you start your walk through green pastures, woodland, and along country lanes flanked by stone walls and seemingly endless olive groves and trulli. The village of Alberobello is a UNESCO World Heritage Site founded in the 15th century. You'll stay here for the next three nights, with dinner at your hotel this evening.



DAILY ITINERARY

Saturday 28 September Locorotondo, and Martina Franca

Meals: B

Walking: 8 km, 3 hours.

Moderate.

Elevation 430m

Overnight: Alberobello

Depart this morning in the direction of the Itria Valley, a karstic depression filled with thousands of olive trees. You will visit Locorotondo, a town famous for its D.O.C white wine (trebbiano, verdeca, moscato bianco and red wine – ‘primitivo’) and the historical ‘Wine Cellar of Locorotondo’. Further on, a climb over the hill dominating the Itria Valley will take you to Martina Franca, a real Baroque gem.

Sunday 29 September Ostuni: The White City

Meals: B/D

Walking: 7 km, 4 hours.

Moderate.

Overnight: Alberobello

This morning you can discover the nearby seaside village of Ostuni, with its Arabic origins. Known as the ‘white city’ for its whitewashed walls, Ostuni overlooks the Adriatic and boasts a medieval centre with a 15th century cathedral. Crossing the city, you enter the lush countryside, home to an abundance of oak, cork, and carob trees. This ancient farmer’s path, bordered along the way by sturdy stone walls, winds through a sea of olive trees. You’ll arrive back in Alberobello in the afternoon. Attend a demonstration on the traditional method of making buffalo mozzarella, the cheese that Apulia is known for and taste local olive oil. Enjoy a farewell dinner with the group this evening.

Monday 30 September Bari to Rome

Meals: B

Transfer this morning to Bari Airport for your flight to Rome and homebound flight to New Zealand or for further travel in Europe. If you need post-tour accommodation to match your flights, the Calder & Lawson Tours team will be able to assist.



HOW TO SECURE YOUR PLACE ON THIS TOUR

A deposit of \$1,000 is required to secure your place on the tour. When minimum numbers are reached the tour will become a 'confirmed departure' and your deposit will be non-refundable.

Click below to complete the online registration form, pay the \$1,000 deposit and your place in this tour is secured. Or you can complete a paper registration form. You can download one from our website www.calderandlawsonstours.co.nz/forms/ or call us and we will email or post one to you.

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TERMS & CONDITIONS

Can be found on our website www.calderandlawsonstours.co.nz/forms/, on the back of the paper registration form or on the summary page when you complete an online registration.

There is a 1.5% surcharge if you pay by credit card.