

Wild Sicily – Madonie to Etna

Weight limit: 90kg / 14 stone
Nearest airport: Palermo / Catania
8 days / 7 nights / 6 days riding



Experience this epic trail which crosses the greenest and wildest parts of Sicily, setting off from the eastern Madonie Mountains and crossing the wooded Nebrodi Mountains to arrive at Mount Etna, one of the world's most active volcanoes.

The Riding

This trail is suitable for intermediate and experienced riders. All participants should be confident and comfortable at all three paces riding over varied and rough terrain and they should have experience in hacking out in the open. Good level of fitness is required as there may be long trots and gallops along the way, riding between 6 and 8 hours each day.

Guides & Group sizes

You will be guided by Alex who is a true expert of Sicilian culture, history, biodiversity and natural wonders. He has guided trails through the island for more than ten years and will guide you safely through the most remote parts of Sicily.

Maximum number of riders in a group is 10.



Horses & Tack

The horses are Sicilian native breeds crossed with Arabs. All bred in Sicily. They live out all year round in a herd environment and are hardy and sure footed on the rough terrain. All horses are trained to be obedient, well-behaved, energetic and forward going.

The saddles used are light weight and English style with a sheepskin cover to add some extra comfort. Bridles are special trail riding bridles. Small saddlebags are provided for items such as water bottles, sun cream and extra layers.

Guests are not required to groom and tack up the horses.

Accommodation & Dining

Accommodation during the trail will be in Agriturismo, B&B or good quality hotels. Luggage will be transferred by car between the overnight stops.

Evening meals consist of authentic Sicilian cuisine prepared with local produce. A typical evening meal will include a variety of starters, a pasta course, a meat/main course, dessert, wine, water and a digestif. Picnic lunches are provided by support vehicle and include fresh bread, salads, cheeses, olives, charcuterie, Sicilian specialities, wine or other drinks on request, coffee or tea. Special diets and allergies can be catered for with advance notice.



Itinerary

Day 1

Arrive at Palermo airport and get transferred to Casa "Il Bosco", a charming restored nineteenth century country house, immersed in the wild countryside of the Madonie Park, with breathtaking views of the island's north coast and the Aeolian Islands. You will enjoy a dinner prepared with local produce and spend the night here.

Day 2

After breakfast you will be assigned your horse and set off from Casa "Il Bosco" at around 8.30. You will begin the day riding through dense mediterranean vegetation with beautiful views of the Tyrrhenian Sea. You will pass close to the town of Castelbuono and stop for a picnic lunch, before riding up the valley of the River Pollina, one of the most fascinating, wild, panoramic and least known areas of Sicily, between the territories of Castelbuono, San Mauro Castelverde and Geraci Siculo. You will ride along enchanting and forgotten pathways to reach Agriturismo Casalvecchio. You will spend the night here and enjoy a delicious dinner prepared with produce straight from the farm.

Day 3

After breakfast you will set off at around 9.00 in the morning. You will ride along a very panoramic ancient pathway (a "trazzera") which passes the boundary between the three provinces of Palermo, Enna and Messina, reaching an altitude of about 1200m, before passing below the great turbines of a wind farm. You will then descend into the forests of the Sambughetti-Campanito reserve, where you will stop for a picnic lunch. In the afternoon, you will continue on to the territory of Nicosia, followed by Cerami, before arriving at the agriturismo Monte Soprano, a working farm with a swimming pool set on the slopes of the Nebrodi Mountains, where you will have dinner and spend the night.

Day 4

On this day of the trail you will ride through the heart of the Nebrodi Natural Park, along the famous "Dorsale" (the Nebrodi Ridge), a long dirt track (about 100 kilometres long) which passes through forests and high mountain pastures. This is a place full of charm, with extraordinary views: the Tyrrhenian Sea and the Aeolian Islands to the north, and the island's

hinterland to the south – Enna, Caltanissetta, Agrigento, Siracusa, Catania, and Etna towering above everything else. You will enter the Nebrodi Natural Park through beech woods in the territory of San Fratello, famous for its sanfratellani horses, a native breed which is very strong and hardy, with a very large head, and which you may catch a glimpse of grazing in the wild. You will stop for a picnic lunch in a shaded spot beneath centuries-old trees. In the afternoon, you will arrive at the Relais Villa Miraglia, where you will have a delicious dinner made with local Nebrodi products and spend the night.

Day 5

On this day of the trail you will ride for more than 40 kilometres along the "Dorsale" through mountains, woods and lakes, in the midst of a strikingly beautiful landscape. First you will come to the Maulazzo Lake, dominated by Monte Soro, the highest peak in the Nebrodi mountain range (at 1847 metres) and covered in magnificent beech woods. You will then reach the famous lake Biviere di Cesarò, which is a resting place for migrating birds. You will continue along the "Dorsale", with lush forests giving way to clearings with panoramic views, with the Aeolian Islands to the north and the majestic peak of Mount Etna to the south. In the evening you will arrive tired but satisfied at Monte Colla, the most isolated hotel on the island, housed in an eighteenth century aristocratic home at around 1400 metres above sea level in the territory of Randazzo. Here you will enjoy a delicious dinner prepared with local produce and spend the night.

Day 6

After breakfast, you will set off at about 8.00 in the morning. After leaving the hotel and its cherry orchards, you will enter the surrounding woods once again and descend the valley where the source of the Alcantara River is found. You will then climb up towards the town of Floresta (the highest commune on the island at 1273m), before following the crest of the nearby mountains to reach the megalithic site of Argimusco (recently added to the list of UNESCO World Heritage sites), where you will stop for a picnic lunch. In the afternoon, you will ride down through the centuries old wood of Malabotta to reach the typical village of Malvagna, which looks out towards Etna. You will have dinner and spend the night at the B&B Arco dei Sogni.

Day 7

This morning you will set off at 8.00 and ride through the village of Malvagna before descending into the valley of the Alcantara River, which you cross near the little gorges of Malvagna, before beginning the climb up the northern slopes of Mount Etna. You will stop for a picnic lunch on Mount Etna and continue to climb up through woods and lava flows until you reach the Rifugio Timpa Rossa (at 1844m). Depending on the season and the conditions, you will continue to climb up to the craters from the last major eruption of 2002. You will have dinner and spend the night at Rifugio Ragabo, immersed in a majestic forest of larix pines.

Day 8

After breakfast you will be transferred to Catania airport.



The price includes

- 6 full days of riding
- Shared accommodation
- Breakfasts
- Picnic lunches provided by the support vehicle
- Evening meals
- Drinks during meals
- Airport transfers to/from the nearest airport
- All arrangements for duration of holiday
- Services of guide

Not Included

- Flights
- Tips

Flights & Airport transfers

Do not book flights until you have received the Booking confirmation email from saddletravel.com.

Please plan your flights as follows:

Arrival – Palermo – Day 1 between 12pm (midday) and 5pm.

Departure – Catania – on Day 8 between 11am and 4pm.

Airport transfers to/from Palermo and Catania airports are included in the holiday. Pick-up time from Palermo on the first day of your holiday will be confirmed after the booking has been confirmed.

What to bring

We recommend wearing your riding boots when travelling and carrying one set of riding clothing and your riding hat in your hand luggage, so should your luggage not make it to the destination you'll still be able to ride.

Please use this packing list as a guideline, bearing in mind the time of year you are riding.

- Your own well-fitted hard hat of the current standard
- Comfortable riding trousers – jeans are not recommended
- Riding or hiking boots with a definite heel and good grip. Ensure that your shoes are comfortable and safe for walking on difficult terrain. Waterproof footwear is recommended.
- Chaps
- Riding gloves
- Bumbag
- Long sleeved T-shirts – to protect you from the sun
- Warm jumper / fleece – essential for riding at altitude and on colder days. It can be surprisingly cold at higher altitude so we recommend bringing several warm items which can be stored in your saddlebags.
- Waterproofs – in the mountains the weather can be unpredictable. Bring a good waterproof coat and lightweight waterproof trousers.
- Buff / bandana
- Comfortable clothing for evenings
- Light weight shoes to wear after riding
- Sun cream & lip balm
- Sunglasses – to protect your eyes against the sun and dust
- Swimming costume & light weight towel
- Reusable water bottle
- Plug adapter
- Insect repellent & bite cream
- Personal medication

Climate

Sicily has a mixture of Mediterranean climate close to the coast and more continental climate in the inland areas. Summers are generally very warm with temperatures between 25-30°C during the day, and precipitation is quite low. Spring and autumn are fairly warm with daytime temperatures at low 20s and slightly higher chance of rain.

During the trail you will be riding over higher altitudes and mountain ranges where the weather can be surprisingly cold and unpredictable all year round. Rain can occur at any time of the year. Please be prepared for any type of weather during your holiday.



Health

For health and vaccine recommendations, please consult your healthcare provider at least 8 weeks before your trip.

Country specific information can also be found at National Travel Health Network and Centre website: <https://travelhealthpro.org.uk/countries>

Travel documents

For entry requirements to Italy for UK citizens, please visit the Foreign Travel Advice website: <https://www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice/italy/entry-requirements>

For any other nationalities, please contact your local embassy to check entry requirements.

Having the correct travel documents is entirely your responsibility.

Currency & tipping

The local currency in Sicily is Euro. Your holiday is fully inclusive and we recommend not to bring too much cash with you, just enough if you wish to buy drinks outside of mealtimes or souvenirs etc.

Tipping your guide is at your discretion.

Riding declaration

"I am an experienced rider and able to mount & dismount unaided. I have a firm seat and I'm confident and in control at all paces over rough terrain (including rising trot, light seat

canters and gallops) and have a good level of current riding fitness. I do not suffer from any illness or disability that could prejudice my safety or that of others.”



Booking conditions

You are booking with the riding holiday operator, these are their booking conditions:

1. By booking a trail, each participant confirms that he/she is an experienced rider, comfortable riding at walk, trot and canter in open spaces. The trail organiser may, at its discretion, refuse to allow a participant to ride should it consider a participant to be below the required standard of riding ability.
2. All participants undertake to ride in a manner that is safe and respectful towards the horses and other participants on the trail. The trail organiser may, at its discretion, refuse to allow a participant to ride should it consider a participant to be riding in a manner that is unsafe.
3. Riding helmets are not mandatory but are recommended. Any participant that decides to ride without a helmet does so fully at his/her own risk.
4. All participants must comply with a strict weight limit of 90kg. The trail organiser may, at its discretion, refuse to allow a participant to ride should he/she surpass this weight limit.
5. All participants must have in place a valid insurance policy (travel or otherwise) that covers them for horse riding abroad.

Cancellation policy

Payment & Cancellation Terms

saddletravel.com

Holidays are confirmed with 20% non-refundable deposit.

The full balance is due 56 days before start date.

If you cancel your booking less than 56 days before the start date of your trail we are

entitled to receive full payment, less refunds as follows:

42 days or more before booking date - 50%

28 days or more - 30%

less than 28 days - nil

Travel insurance

All saddletravel.com customers are required to take out appropriate travel insurance that covers horse riding and holiday cancellation. Proof of insurance details will be required during booking process.



Contact details

+44 1497 888 228 WhatsApp
trails@saddletravel.com

saddletravel.com
The Coach House
Clyro Court
Clyro
Hereford
HR3 5LE
Wales

CN: 05411320

<https://saddletravel.com>



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