Gardens of Eastern Sicily



Trip style:	Destination:	Walking Grade	Carbon Footprint:
	Italy	1	1429kg CO2

HOLIDAY OVERVIEW

Step into a world of colour, scent and Mediterranean charm on a tour of Sicily's most celebrated gardens. Set against a dramatic backdrop of Mount Etna and the glittering Ionian coastline, this carefully curated itinerary showcases exotic planting methods and inspiring garden designs influenced by the island's Islamic and Norman history. Guided by an expert horticulturalist, we'll admire historic estates including Radicepura, an RHS partner garden, elegant Giardini Victoria, and art-inspired Casa Cuseni, plus many more. We'll also savour Sicilian hospitality surrounded by floral artistry with lunch at Le Stanze in Fiore and taste award-winning wines on the fertile slopes of Etna herself.

WHAT YOU'LL LOVE

- A private tour of historic Giardini Victoria
- Visiting Parco Paternò del Toscano a unique botanical landscape designed by Ettore Paternò del Toscano
- A private guided tour of Radicepura, an RHS partner garden
- A guided visit and exclusive lunch at Le Stanza in Fiore
- Wine tasting at a family run cellar on the slopes of Mount Etna
- Exploring Giardini del Biviere, one of the finest examples of a planted landscape in southern Italy

WHAT'S INCLUDED

- Fully escorted travel and excursions with a Horticultural Specialist Tour Manager
- 7 nights' dinner, bed and breakfast at the 5-star Esperia Palace Hotel, Zafferana Etnea
- 1 lunch at Giardino de Le Stanze in Fiore
- All transport to and from sites of interest
- All entrance fees, guided visits and tastings as per the itinerary including wine tasting and visit to Etna wine cellar
- Return Flights from London including baggage and transfers

ITINERARY - ITINERARY

Day 1 **Arrival in Sicily**

On arrival in Sicily, we transfer to our hotel in Zafferana Etnea. The rest of the day is free to relax and settle in before meeting up with the rest of the group and your specialist tour manager for dinner in the evening.

Day 2 **Giardini Victoria and Casa Cuseni**

After breakfast, we transfer to Taormina for an exclusive visit to Giardini Victoria, a historic private estate with ornamental gardens and beautifully terraced landscapes. On a privately guided tour, we'll admire Mediterranean planting at its finest, from fragrant flowers and citrus groves to carob, fig, and sculptural prickly pear trees.

In the afternoon, we continue to Casa Cuseni, an extraordinary house with a rich artistic legacy. Founded in 1947 as one of Europe's first hotels dedicated to artists, it has welcomed celebrated figures including Tennessee Williams, Pablo Picasso, Salvador Dalí, and Henry Faulkner. A young Ernest Hemingway is also said to have written his first novel here.

Accompanied by an expert guide, we'll stroll through the remarkable garden designed by Annie Besant, which combines art, history, and horticulture in a beautifully atmospheric setting.

Day 3 **Radicepura and Catania Botanical Garden**

Today we visit Radicepura, an RHS partner garden often described as the green heart of the Mediterranean. During our private guided visit, we explore the botanical park and acclaimed Garden Festival area, where contemporary design meets exceptional plant diversity. A gentle stroll takes us across a series of carefully designed terraces, each dedicated to different botanical families.

Look out for striking collections from the Xanthorrhoeaceae, Asparagaceae, and Liliaceae families, alongside sculptural aloes and dramatic Dasylirion. Highlights include the remarkable Xanthorrhoea johnsonii, native to Australia, and Moringa oleifera, an Asian species celebrated as a 'superfood of the future'.

In the afternoon, we tour Catania Botanical Garden, a peaceful oasis in the heart of the city. Covering approximately 16,000 square metres, it includes an impressive collection of palms, exotic specimens, and Mediterranean flora, all of scientific importance.

Day 4 Parco Paternò del Toscano and Villa Trinità

We'll travel to the foot of Mount Etna today to visit Parco Paternò del Toscano. Here, ancient lava flows have been transformed into a thriving garden, where rare subtropical plants grow alongside the wild beauty of the Mediterranean maquis.

On a guided tour, we'll explore this remarkable estate, where time, care, and cultivation have created a unique natural environment. Several of its trees are officially recognised as monumental specimens, reflecting both the garden's heritage and its careful preservation. The estate is also protected by the Environmental Heritage Authority of the Sicilian Region, recognising its botanical and cultural significance.

Later, we continue to Villa Trinità, an elegant estate set within a fragrant citrus grove, that has been lovingly preserved by the Bonajuto family over several generations.

Covering approximately 7.4 acres, the garden reflects the passion and vision of its current owner, Salvatore Bonajuto – an agronomist, landscape architect, and painter. As we wander through this peaceful setting, we'll see how history, artistry, and horticulture have been brought together with great care.

Day 5 Giardini del Biviere and Giardino di San Giuliano

This morning we journey to the Syracuse region to visit the remarkable Giardini del Biviere. What was once a harsh landscape of stone and dust, is now a lush botanical oasis created by Princess Maria Carla Borghese and her late husband, Prince Scipione Borghese.

Thanks to their dedication, the richness of the soil, and the Sicilian sunshine, the garden quickly came to life. In 1988, this remarkable achievement was recognised with a visit from Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth and the Queen Mother, who had specifically requested to see it.

Later, we'll enjoy a guided tour of Giardino di San Giuliano. Spanning more than four hectares, the garden began its transformation in the 1970s under the vision of Marquis Giuseppe di San Giuliano, who turned a traditional farmhouse estate into a wonderfully varied landscape, where structure and spontaneity sit in perfect balance. It's a memorable highlight of our Sicilian garden journey.

Day 6 Mount Etna and Wine Tasting

After breakfast, we meet our local guide and set off for Mount Etna, Europe's highest and most active volcano. Ascending this dramatic landscape, we pass ancient lava flows and ever-changing terrain shaped by centuries of volcanic activity. A gentle walk rewards us with sweeping views across the rugged slopes, where black lava contrasts with pockets of resilient vegetation.

In the afternoon, we descend to the fertile lower slopes of the volcano to visit one of the region's renowned family-run wine estates. Here, volcanic soil and climate combine to produce distinctive, characterful wines.

During our tasting, we'll learn about the estate's sustainable practices, from hand-harvesting grapes to natural pest control, all designed to protect the land. Warm hospitality and expert insight bring the story of Etna's wines to life, offering a fitting finale to a day shaped by this remarkable landscape.

Day 7 Le Stanze in Fiore

For the final full day of our tour, we visit Le Stanze in Fiore, a seven-hectare garden surrounding an elegant 19th-century neoclassical country villa. On a guided tour, we'll admire beautifully designed gardens inspired by cultures from around the world. Highlights include the simplicity of a minimalist Zen garden, a Chinese garden with eight interconnected ponds set among ancient lava rocks, and a Burmese-inspired garden with its own distinctive character.

Recognised for its significance, Le Stanze in Fiore was designated a historic garden by the Sicilian Region in 2026 and received third prize in the Grandi Giardini Italiani Awards for excellence in maintenance.

After our visit, we'll relax over lunch in these inspiring surroundings. The menu reflects a thoughtful fusion of local and regional Sicilian cuisine, shaped by the owner's own travel experiences. Later, we return to our hotel, where the rest of the day is free. You may like to unwind in the spa or take a gentle stroll through the charming streets of Zafferana Etnea for a relaxed finale to our Sicilian garden tour.

Day 8 Departure

After breakfast, we transfer to the airport for our return flight to London.

DAILY WALK OPTIONS



Gentle walking grade 1

Short, easy walks on level paths with no stiles. Ideal for relaxed walking and active sightseeing. Typically, 2-3 miles (3-5km) or less, with little if any ascent.

ACCOMMODATION

The Esperia Palace Hotel

The Esperia Palace Hotel is a family-run modern and comfortable hotel located at the entrance of Zafferana Etnea. It has 42 well-appointed rooms featuring satellite TV, air conditioning and complimentary Wi-fi. The elegant restaurant serves dishes utilising locally sourced produce. There is also a Wellness Centre with SPA "Il Giardino delle Esperidi" which features indoor and outdoor pools, saunas, sensory paths, and offers personalised massages*.

*This service is payable locally.

ESSENTIAL INFORMATION

Packing list

It's best to be prepared for all weather conditions. To make it easier, here is a list of items you should consider packing.

Essentials

- Walking boots
- Waterproof jacket
- Waterproof trousers
- Insulated jacket/top
- Walking clothing
- Walking socks (plus spares)
- Sunhat
- Gloves/mitts and warm hat
- Water bottle (minimum 2 litre capacity)
- Headtorch
- High-factor sunscreen (minimum SPF 30)
- Swimcap (compulsory in Itialian resorts)
- Sunglasses with a dark lens
- Rucksack (15-30 litres)
- Mobile phone
- Personal first aid kit (containing your medication, blister plasters, etc.)
- Passport
- Visa (if applicable)
- Copy of your travel insurance policy
- UK Global Health Insurance Card (**formerly known as EHIC**)

Recommended

- Collapsible walking poles
- Swimwear and travel towel
- Snacks
- Dry bags

- Rubbish bags
- Insect repellent

Optional extras

- Camera
- Sit mat
- Flask for hot drinks
- Durable lunch box
- Gaiters
- GPS device (excluding Bhutan, Georgia and India)

JOINING INSTRUCTIONS (WITH FLIGHTS)

With flights

Book your holiday 'with flights' and you can choose to depart from selected UK airports* to your destination. For latest flight times and prices please call us on 0203-974-8865 or email reservations@hfholidays.co.uk

If you choose to book your flights with us, we automatically include return transfers between the destination airport and hotel.

JOINING INSTRUCTIONS (WITHOUT FLIGHTS)

Without flights

If you are booking on a land-only basis, you can join the group transfer at an additional cost. To do so, your arrival and departure times must be in line with the scheduled group flight timings. Guests travelling at different times will need to arrange their own transfers. Please contact us before booking to discuss the available options and costs.

USEFUL INFORMATION

Travel Insurance

Travel insurance is a condition of booking. Therefore, if you have not already arranged insurance, it is imperative that you do so before you travel.

For more information about healthcare and its costs, please visit: https://www.nhs.uk/using-the-nhs/healthcare-abroad/

Drinking Water

Drinking Water

Standards for drinking water vary widely around the world. In many destinations, tap water may not be safe to drink, brush your teeth with, or use for making ice. Where advised, you should drink only bottled or treated water and ensure that bottle seals are intact before use. If bottled water is unavailable, water should be boiled or filtered.

Staying well hydrated is particularly important in hot climates and during active holidays. Carry water with you and drink regularly.

If you are unsure about local water safety, check official country-specific health advice before travel, or ask your accommodation or local guides for guidance once you arrive.

Trip information

Please note that the order of the included visits may vary depending on the participating gardens availability.

TRIPNOTE VALIDITY

TRIP NOTE VALIDITY These Trip Notes are valid based on the date printed at the bottom of the page. They will occasionally be updated post booking and pre-departure. We will send you the latest trip notes prior to departure through a link in your pre departure documents or we can send you a copy in the post if preferred. In booking this trip you should be confident in your ability to participate in all activities described in these Trip Notes. If you have any doubt about your suitability you should call HF Holidays and ask to speak to one of the team about this itinerary. The information in these Trip Notes is given in good faith. Where differences exist between the Trip Notes and our current brochure, the Trip Notes supersede the brochure. All holidays can be subject to unexpected changes; so please be prepared to be flexible where necessary. At times, it may not be possible to follow the itinerary as planned due to weather conditions, political, physical or other factors. In these circumstances we will make the best possible alternative arrangements to maintain the integrity of the original itinerary.

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