

Walking in Ticino on the  
'Venice and the Lakes tour'.



# THAT'S AMORE!

Carmelina Ricciardello loves showing off her Sicilian heritage as a guide with Hidden Italy walking tours.



WORDS\_ **CARMELINA  
RICCIARDELLO**

I was born in Sicily and moved to Perth with my family when I was seven. I came from a culture where walking was for the poor and I never knew that you could go walking for pleasure. No-one in my family or friends went walking. They are still a bit bemused by my career choice – my younger cousin keeps telling me it's about time to stop!

I started walking for pleasure when I lived in England almost thirty years ago. I loved it and haven't stopped. I went to Annapurna in Nepal after that on the way home to Perth. I've been to Kilimanjaro and Mt Blanc. Last year I went hiking in Ethiopia. Of course, I have explored a lot of Italy.

When I was in England, I was setting up a restaurant in Oxford and living above the offices of ATG-Oxford, who were one of the first tour companies to start up walking holidays in England (prior to that 'leisure' holidays were the go). Someone hurt themselves and, knowing my background,

they asked me if I could take a couple of days off work and fly to Sicily to manage the tour. I couldn't believe you could get paid for walking.

I have lead tours for Hidden Italy for six years. I started taking tours in Sicily where I've been living for the last 15 years, but now I also take guided tours to Sardinia in the spring and in autumn I take tours to Verona, the Dolomites, Venice and the Italian Lakes. I also have my own company Sicilian Experience, which specialises in personalised tours in Sicily ([sicilianexperience.com](http://sicilianexperience.com)).

The highlight of any guided tour is meeting the local people. My philosophy is that tourism is a form of exchange between the locals and the visitors (not 'clients!'). People on my tours come to visit, to understand and to be part of the place. I see myself as the connection between the two.

I love Sicily for its beauty, history and people, but I think my favourite place next to Sicily is Intragna, a little village in which we stay for four nights on the 'Venice and the Italian Lakes tour'. It's in Ticino, the Italian speaking

canton of Switzerland, in the mountains above Lake Maggiore and is a very diverse beautiful area, with great walking and very little tourism. I've even thought of moving there!

The advantage of booking a guided tour compared to organising a walk yourself is local guides know the people in the area, they can work as the go-between, introducing locals and visitors and this can be hard to do on your own.

And what's on my hiking bucket list? In 2008, I volunteered to help lead a group in Turkey and Syria doing the 'Abraham walk' that retraces the journey made by Abraham (Ibrahim) through the heart of the Middle East

**“TOURISM IS A FORM OF EXCHANGE BETWEEN THE LOCALS AND THE VISITORS (NOT 'CLIENTS'!)”**

some four thousand years ago. It was organised by a non-profit, non-political, and non-sectarian organisation honouring all cultures and faiths, which is supported by the United Nations Alliance of Civilisations ([abrahampath.org](http://abrahampath.org)). I would love to be able to do this walk again, one day.

Bushwalking equipment I'd never leave home without? A good pair of boots is essential. ⚙️

**Need to know:** [hiddenitaly.com.au](http://hiddenitaly.com.au)