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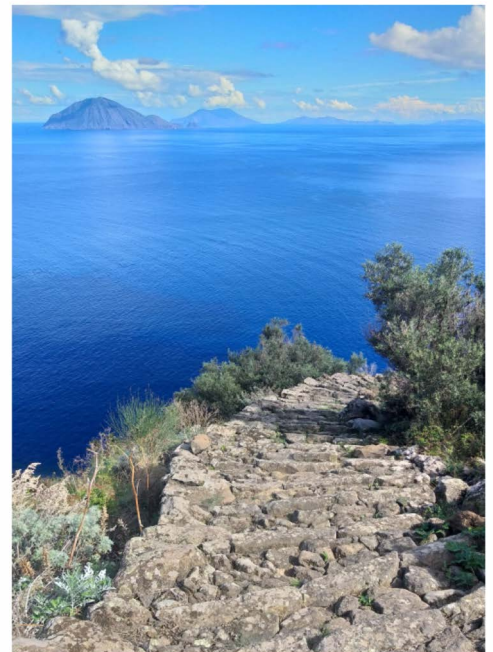
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Italy, Sicily: Alicudi Island, path to Dirittusu, panoramic view on the Aeolian Islands

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Alicudi Island (Aeolian Archipelago). Alicudi is one of the smallest of the Aeolian Islands for extension (5.1 km²) and it is also the westernmost island of the archipelago. The eruptive history of Alicudi, spanning from 106,000 to 28,000 years ago, created a stratovolcano almost 15 km wide, which develops from 1,400 m below sea level to the maximum altitude of Montagnole (676 m a.s.l.), the top of the actual island. The main characteristic of Alicudi is the steepness of its slopes: the eastern and southern slopes are the only ones that host scattered human settlements (Porto, Bazzina, Pianicello and Montagna being the most important), while the northern and western slopes, even more impervious due to erosion processes, are inaccessible. There are no roads: the localities of the island are connected by stone steps (Fig. 1) and the only means of transport is the mule. The historical human presence on Alicudi, today reduced to about 100 inhabitants, is proved by numerous agricultural terraces which nearly reach the top of the island. These terraces, now mostly abandoned, host the heather (*Erica arborea*), from which the Greek name of Alicudi derives. Alicudi also hosts several endemics, both in flora and fauna: *Erysimum brulloi* G. Ferro (Brassicaceae) and *Oxychilus (Hyalocornea) alicurensis* (Benoit, 1857) (Oxychilidae) are narrow endemics of Alicudi, while *Cytisus aeolicus* Guss. (Fabaceae), *Silene hicesiae* Brullo & Signor. (Caryophyllaceae), *Pseudomeira aeolica* Bellò, Pesarini & Pierotti, 1997 and *Otiorynchus (Arammichnus) meligunensis* Magnano, 1992 (Coleoptera Curculionidae) are endemics of the Aeolian Islands. Among the terrestrial invertebrates, other interesting species are *Ferussacia (Pegea) carnea* (Risso, 1826) which was first reported for Italy in the XIXth century by Luigi Benoit, from a single specimen found just at Alicudi by Domenico Reina and *Selenops radiatus* Latreille, 1819 the wall spider, whose finding in 2010 at Alicudi represents the first record of family Selenopidae in Italy. Some Sicilian endemics, such as *Percus corrugatus* (Carabidae), *Scydmaenus antidotus* (Staphylinidae) and *Dichillus subtilis* (Tenebrionidae), occur in the plain of Dirittusu, on the top of the island. Most of Alicudi territory is included in the Oriented Natural Reserve “Isola di Alicudi”, as well as in the following “Natura 2000” sites: Special Area of Conservation “Isola di Alicudi” (ZSC ITA030023) and Special Protection Area “Arcipelago delle Eolie area marina e terrestre” (ZPS ITA030044).



1) Stone steps to the top of Alicudi Island.

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