



## SOCIAL PROGRAM

The Organizing Committee will suggest an entertaining program and the excursions to the participants and accompanying persons. The city-tour (**Guide Excursion around Catania**) is included in the package of the registration fee. Other excursions are offered to the participants optionally. We offer a wide range of excursions, on your choice.

September 6, Sunday, 3.00 p.m.	Excursion to Etna (42 Euro) – half day excursion
September 7, Monday, 7.00 p.m.	Welcome reception
September 8, Tuesday, 4.30 p.m.	Guide Excursion around Catania
September 9, Wednesday, 7.00 p.m.	Banquet (75 Euro)
September 10, Thursday, 2.00 p.m.	Excursion to Taormino (42 Euro) – half day excursion
September 11, Friday, 9.00 a.m.	Visiting Biomass Power Plant, Excursion to Enna (70 Euro) – full day excursion
September 12, Saturday, 9.00 a.m.	Excursion to Syracuse (65 Euro) – full day excursion

### WALKING TOUR AROUND CATANIA

Catania is Sicily's second largest city, with a population of around 300,000. It lies on the Ionian Sea, at the south-east of Sicily, under the shadow of Mount Etna, or "A Muntagna" as the locals refers to it. Mount Etna is Europe's highest and most active volcano. Etna is ever-present and in a large extent shapes both the history, and the actual existence of Catania. On several occasions volcanic eruptions destroyed the city, the most devastating of which happened in the 17th Century. In 1669 Catania was covered in lava and then, just 24 years later in 1693 an earthquake has shaken the town to its foundations. The reaction to this latter catastrophe was amazing: the entire old part of town was rebuilt in Baroque style, with large, wide open squares and avenues. The most remarkable aspect, however, was the building material used: lava! Catania is essentially a "grey" city and unique in the world for this.



## EXCURSION TO Etna



**Etna** is the largest and tallest active volcano in European continent, it is located on the east coast of Sicily, Italy, in the Province of Catania, between Messina and Catania. It covers an area of 1,190 km<sup>2</sup> (459 sq mi) with a basal circumference of 140 km. and a maximum elevation of about 3350 m. This makes it by far the largest of the three active volcanoes in Italy, being about two and a half times the height of the next largest, Mount Vesuvius. Etna lies above the convergent plate margin between the African Plate and the Eurasian Plate. It is the highest mountain in Italy south of the Alps. The volcano dominates the landscape of Sicily. The

first eruptions at Etna occurred 500,000 years ago.

Etna has the longest period of documented eruptions in the world. It is noted for the wide variety of eruption styles. The volcano is at its most spectacular when both summit and flank eruptions occur simultaneously. Mount Etna is one of the most active volcanoes in the world and is in an almost constant state of activity. The fertile volcanic soils support extensive agriculture, with vineyards and orchards spread across the lower slopes of the mountain and the broad Plain of Catania to the south. Due to its history of recent activity and nearby population, Mount Etna has been designated a Decade Volcano by the United Nations. In June 2013, it was added to the list of UNESCO World Heritage Sites.



Etna is one of Sicily's main tourist attractions, with thousands of visitors every year. The most common route is through the road leading to Sapienza Refuge, lying at the south of the crater at elevation of 1910 m. It hosts a large parking, several bars, a hotel, and is a starting point for the cable car. From the Refuge, a cableway runs uphill to the elevation of 2500 m; from there, visitors can take a drive with special terrain vehicles, or take a long walk to the designated crater area at 2920 m.



Ferrovia Circumetnea – Round-Etna railway – is a narrow-gauge railway constructed between 1889 and 1895. It runs around the volcano in a 110-km long semi-circle starting in Catania and ending in Riposto 28 km north of Catania.

## EXCURSION TO Taormina

You are welcome to Taormina, the pearl of the Mediterranean. Idyllically perched on a rocky promontory high above the sea, Taormina has been the most popular tourist destination in Sicily for a couple of hundreds of years, ever since it became an integral part of the Grand Tour. Beautifully restored mediaeval buildings,



breathtaking views around every corner and a giddy network of winding streets strewn with shops, bars and restaurants make for a perfect holiday spot.

Tauromenium, built on Monte Tauro, was founded by Andromachus at the behest of Dionysius the Tyrant of Syracuse in 392 BC. The first

Punic War saw Taormina falling to the Romans in 212 BC and the town became a favorite holiday spot for Patricians and Senators, thus starting Taormina's long history as a tourist resort. Visitors flock from all over the world to see its Greek-Roman theatre, to amble along its perfectly preserved Mediaeval streets, to admire its dramatic views of Mount Etna and to immerse themselves in the archetypal Mediterranean atmosphere.

The main attraction is, without doubt, the theatre. The **Teatro Greco**, as its name suggests, started its life in the 3rd Century BC hosting performances of works by Aeschylus, Sophocles, Euripides and Aristophanes. Originally quite small, it was enlarged by the Romans to accommodate their own particular brand of theatrical extravaganza. The views from the theatre are spectacular, taking in a (usually) smoking Mount Etna and the Bay of Naxos down below.



Another testimony of Taormina's ancient origins is the **Odeon**. Right in the middle of the old Roman town, this small theatre was built by the Romans when the town became a military colony in 21BC. It was used both for theatrical and musical performances organized for the cream of local society.

Taormina is centered on its main thoroughfare, **Corso Umberto I**. At the beginning of this charming street is perhaps the greatest symbol of Taormina's long varied history: **Palazzo Corvaja**. Its architecture is a sublime



mix of Arab, Norman and Gothic with charming shady courtyards. At the other end of Corso Umberto I is **Piazza del Duomo**, complete with 13th Century Cathedral and **Baroque fountain**.

Taormina is served by its very own **cable car** which ferries tourists to and from the seaside resorts down along the coast. Extensive beaches, rocky coves, tiny islands (such as the famous Isola Bella) and sea stacks abound, making this enchanting coastline a firm favorite with Sicilians and visitors alike.

## EXCURSION TO Syracuse



**Syracuse** is a historic city in Sicily, the capital of the province of Syracuse. The city is notable for its rich Greek history, culture, amphitheatres, architecture, and as the birthplace of the preeminent mathematician and

engineer Archimedes. This 2,700-year-old city played a key role in ancient times, when it was one of the major powers of the Mediterranean world. Syracuse is located in the southeast corner of the island of Sicily, right by the Gulf of Syracuse next to the Ionian Sea.

The city was founded by Ancient Greek Corinthians and Teneans and became a very powerful city-state. Syracuse was allied with Sparta and Corinth and exerted influence over the entirety of Magna Graecia, of which it was the most important city. Described by Cicero as "the greatest Greek city and the most beautiful of them all", it equaled Athens in size during the fifth century BC. It later became part of the Roman Republic and Byzantine Empire. Later Palermo has overlooked it in importance, as the capital of the Kingdom of Sicily. Eventually the Kingdom would be united with the Kingdom of Naples to form the Two Sicilies until the Italian unification of 1860.



In the modern day, the city is listed by UNESCO as a World Heritage Site along with the Necropolis of Pantalica. In the central area, the city itself has a population of around 125,000 people. The inhabitants are known as *Siracusans*. Syracuse is mentioned in the Bible in the Acts of the Apostles book. The patron saint of the city is Saint Lucy; she was born in Syracuse and her feast day, Saint Lucy's Day, is celebrated on 13 December.



The city was struck by two ruinous earthquakes in 1542 and 1693, and a plague in 1729. After the Unification of Italy of 1865, Syracuse regained its status of provincial capital. In 1870 the walls were demolished and a bridge connecting the mainland to Ortygia Island was built. In the following year a railway link was constructed.

Syracuse today has about 125,000 inhabitants and numerous attractions for the visitor interested in historical sites (such as the Ear of Dionysius). A process of recovering and restoring the historical center has been ongoing since

the 1990s. Since 2005, the entire city of Syracuse, along with the Necropolis of Pantalica which falls within the province of Syracuse, were listed as a World Heritage Site by UNESCO. This program aims to catalogue, name and conserve sites of outstanding cultural or natural importance to the common heritage of humanity. The deciding committee which evaluates potential candidates described their reasons for choosing Syracuse because "monuments and archeological sites situated in Syracuse are the finest example of outstanding architectural creation spanning several cultural aspects; Greek, Roman and Baroque", following on that Ancient Syracuse was "directly linked to events, ideas and literary works of outstanding universal significance".



## EXCURSION TO Enna

**Enna** is a province in the autonomous island region of Sicily in Italy. Its capital is the city of Enna. In the center of the island, it is the only province in Sicily without a seacoast.

Enna is indeed one of the most remarkable in Sicily. This ancient city was placed on the level summit of a gigantic hill, so lofty as almost to deserve to be called a mountain, and surrounded on all sides with precipitous cliffs almost wholly inaccessible, except in a very few spots which are easily defended, abundantly supplied with water which gushes from the face of the rocks on all sides, and having a fine plain or table land of about 5 km in circumference on the summit, it forms one of the most remarkable natural fortresses in the world. Enna is situated near the center of the island; whence the Roman writer [Cicero](#) called it *Mediterranea maxime*, reporting that it was within a day's journey of the nearest point on all the three coasts.

In the province of Enna there are many castles, cathedrals, churches and interesting archeological areas, 8 lakes, many nature reserves and forests.

The *Castello di Lombardia* (Lombardy Castle), perhaps the most important example of military architecture in



Sicily, is the biggest castle of Sicily. It was created in very old times, rebuilt and restructured. It had 20 towers centuries ago, but now it has 6 towers, and among these there is Torre Pisana, a very big tower affording an extensive panoramic vista of the surrounding countryside. The castle was divided into three different spaces separated by walls: the first courtyard is home to a renowned outdoor lyric theater in which high quality shows are performed; the second one houses a large green park, while in the third courtyard it is possible to see the vestiges of royal apartments, a bishop's chapel, medieval prisons and the Pisan Tower.

The *Duomo* (Cathedral), a noteworthy example of religious architecture in Sicily, built in the 14th century by queen Eleonora, Frederick III's wife, but largely renovated after the fire of 1446. The great Baroque facade, in yellow tufa-stone, is surmounted by a massive campanile with finely shaped decorative elements. The cathedral's treasure is housed in the Alessi Museum, and has precious ornaments, the gold crown with diamonds "Crown of the Virgin," Byzantine icons, thousands of ancient coins and other collections.



Lake Pergusa is set between a group of mountains in the chain of Erei, and it is located 5 km from Enna. It is a vital place in the migratory current of lots of birds. In addition to birds, which are certainly the protagonists of the Pergusa nature reserve, here there are also interesting species of mammals, reptiles, amphibians and invertebrates. Around the lake, there is the most important racing track of Southern Italy, the Autodromo di Pergusa, that hosted international competitions and events, such as Formula One, Formula 3000 and a Ferrari Festival.



