

# EXPLORE!

**Sicilian Volcano Hike - Volcanology Special**  
8 days

Italy, Sicily - Trip code BSV



## Sicilian Volcano Hike - Volcanology Special

An exciting one-off trekking trip led by expert volcanology guide Luca Cosma. Trek across an other-worldly landscape of twisted lava to the crater summit of Europe's highest active volcano, Mount Etna (3330m). Travel by hydrofoil to the picturesque Aeolian Islands and hike to the summit of the Gran Cratere on Vulcano Island. On Stromboli, admire the glow of incandescent lava at night and hope to see a natural firework display. In Catania, visit the city's Etna Observatory with volcanologist Marco Neri and hear tales of how eruptions have influenced the lives of Sicilians from ancient times to the present day.

## Trip highlights

### ACCOMMODATION GRADE:

#### Standard

Our standard, mid-range accommodation offers a good level of service, often with other amenities such as a restaurant, bar, garden or swimming pool. Generally rooms will be comfortable with en suite facilities.

### WALKING GRADE:

#### Moderate To Challenging

Combining moderate grade walks with some more strenuous hikes. This grade is ideal if you are fit and want to challenge yourself with a few longer, more demanding trekking days, possibly on difficult terrain or at higher altitudes.

### GROUP SIZE:

#### 10 - 16

Maximum group size ranges from between 6 to 20 people, depending on the type of trip, the transport and accommodation used and activities included. We rarely have groups that are smaller than five or six people and the average is 12 people plus an Explore leader.

# Itinerary

Itineraries on some departure dates may differ, please select the itinerary that you wish to explore.

## DAY 1 - Join trip Catania; vulcanology lecture with Marco Neri

Our Sicilian vulcanology adventure starts at Catania airport from where we head to our base for the next three nights, a comfortable hotel in Linguaglossa, typical Sicilian agricultural town on the northern slopes of the mountain. Luca Cosma will be our specialist vulcanology guide and trek leader for the week. A native of Stromboli, a volcanic island in the Aeolian archipelago off Sicily's north-western coast, you could almost say volcanoes are in his blood!

After some time to settle in, we will also be joined by Marco Neri, a volcanologist/geologist and senior researcher at the National Institute of Geophysics and Volcanology in Catania. Marco has been working on Etna for over 30 years and has studied many volcanoes worldwide. As well as providing us with an introduction to his subject that will set us up perfectly for the week ahead, he'll share some interesting stories of some of the many volcanic and seismic emergencies on Etna that he's been involved with.



**Accommodation: Hotel Il Nido Dell'Etna** (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Dinner

## DAY 2 - Hike to the top craters from Etna's northern slopes

Our hike this morning will take us to the very top of Mount Etna. The highest volcano in Europe, at 3330 metres, it has been in a state of high eruptive activity since 2001. Travelling by minibus to the former ski resort of Piano Provenzana on the mountain's northern flanks, we take a four-wheel drive vehicle to climb the track up Etna's rugged slopes to 2900 m, where the trek to the summit area begins. Weather (and volcanic activity) permitting, we plan to make a tour of the northeast crater which is the highest point, the central crater (the oldest at 2000 years old), the bocca nuova, which formed after the eruption in 1968 and the southeast crater (the youngest dating from 1971). We should be able to enjoy some superb views all the way to the north coast of Sicily and the volcanic Aeolian Islands lying offshore. Descending the mountain, we follow a path that takes us down to the lava flows and volcanic cones from the 2002 eruptions that destroyed Piano Provenzana within just a few hours.

Today's 13 kilometre walk is expected to take approximately six hours with a total ascent of 400 metres and a descent of 1400 metres.



**Accommodation: Hotel Il Nido Dell'Etna** (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast, Lunch & Dinner

## DAY 3 - Cable car and trek to caldera and lava flows of the Valle del Bove

Today we drive around the cone of Etna to its southern flanks to take the cable car up to its mid station point at 2450 metres. Our hike takes us through an otherworldly landscape of subsidiary cones and twisted lumps of lava, up to a highpoint of 2600 metres before it descends to end on the rim of the old caldera, the Valle del Bove. This vast bowl shaped chasm, with precipitous lava cliffs 900 metres high, was formed by a violent and tortuous eruption sometime in the remote past. We'll also see the huge lava flow from the more recent 1991/93 eruption that was diverted, by the dropping of concrete blocks from helicopters, to save the town of Zafferana.

Today's 14 kilometre walk is expected to take approximately five hours with a total ascent of 150 metres and a descent of 1100 metres.



**Accommodation: Hotel Il Nido Dell'Etna** (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast, Lunch & Dinner

## DAY 4 - Drive to Milazzo, hydrofoil to Stromboli island, crater hike at sunset

We make an early start this morning to drive to the port city of Milazzo on Sicily's northwest coast, gateway to the Aeolian Islands. We catch a fast hydrofoil to the awe-inspiring island of Stromboli, a classic cone-shaped island volcano which rises dramatically from the depths of the sea to 900 metres with a cloud of smoke almost permanently gracing its peak. Around its base are some small communities, whose white-washed houses splashed with scarlet bougainvillea, provide a vivid contrast to the dark volcanic rock of the powerful crater behind. The walking on Stromboli is a one of a kind and a spectacular experience as the volcano here is constantly erupting.

In the afternoon we climb on a zig-zagging path all the way to the crater rim, a hike of around four hours at a slow and steady pace with plenty of stops to admire the tremendous view. Our aim is to reach the summit for sunset and then to relax and spend some time observing the volcanic activity after dark, the best chance to observe the light show caused by the lava erupting from the volcano. Our descent by the light of our headtorches is expected to take around two-and-a-half hours. The top section of the climb and descent of the mountain is on volcanic ash so it's important to have good walking boots and you may find walking poles helpful too.

Today's eight kilometre walk is expected to take approximately six-and-a-half hours in total with a total ascent and descent of 980 metres.



**Accommodation: Villaggio Stromboli** (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

## DAY 5 - Hydrofoil to Lipari; tour of the island's volcanic features

Leaving Stromboli we take the ferry to the picturesque island of Lipari and its harbour of the same name, where fishing boats vie for room with luxury yachts. Above the town stands an imposing castle, and excavations here show that the island has supported a civilisation for over 5000 years. There's a fascinating museum with an excellent explanation of the volcanology, history and archaeology of the region from Neolithic times to the present day. In the afternoon we take a tour of the island by bus with stops along the way to see various volcanic features such as the obsidian and pumice flows. Originally obsidian was extracted from open mines and, as the hardest stone available at the time, provided trade and income to the area. Later, pumice became the mainstay of the economy. Back in Lipari there's time to relax on the beach take a dip in the sea and sit and enjoy good food and wine in one of the harbourside restaurants.



**Accommodation: Hotel Filadelfia** (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

## DAY 6 - Boat to Vulcano island, walk to the top of Gran Cratere

This morning we take a small boat to the neighbouring island of Vulcano, named after Zeus' son Vulcan, the God of fire and metalworking. Although now dormant, Vulcano has erupted spectacularly throughout the centuries - the last dramatic explosion being only 100 years ago. In 183 BC a huge eruption gave birth to 'Vulcanello' (the Little Volcano) visible from the port. Today, Vulcano puffs out a steady stream of gases and vapour. Even offshore the presence of the sulphur, which was once mined here, is obvious. Our hike on the island takes up to the crater rim, 'Gran Cratere' (400 m) for views of the Aeolian Islands scattered around us. After descending, you may wish to try a mud bath - reputedly an excellent cure for arthritic complaints! Having caked ourselves from head to toe, it's then time for a swim in the azure sea - the water here is very warm, an indication of how close the boiling interior of the earth comes to its crust. We return to Lipari for our final night on the Islands.

Today's seven kilometre walk is expected to take approximately three hours with a total ascent and descent of 386 metres.



**Accommodation: Hotel Filadelfia** (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

## DAY 7 - Hydrofoil back to Sicily; drive Catania, visit to the Etna Observatory

We travel by hydrofoil back to Sicily, passing monumental columns of basalt jutting vertically upwards from the seabed. Arriving in Milazzo, we board our bus and travel to the east coast city of Catania, Sicily's second city (after Palermo). This afternoon we will meet up with Marco Neri once again, at the Etna Observatory which is part of the National Institute of Geophysics and Volcanology. The Institute continuously monitors all seismic and volcanic activity throughout Italy and works closely with the

National Department of Civil Defence. Marco will talk to us about the monitoring and research work undertaken here.

After our visit there will be some free time to explore this lively city. Founded by the ancient Greeks, Catania was an important cultural and political centre during the Renaissance. The city has been buried by lava a total of seventeen times in recorded history. Although many of its ancient monuments have been destroyed, a number of Greek and Roman remains can still be seen in the city-centre, including an ancient theatre and thermal baths. You may also like to visit the cathedral or the ancient Benedictine monastery, which is a jewel of Sicilian Baroque architecture. If the weather is hot, we recommend trying 'granita', a local specialty made up of shaved ice and fruity syrup accompanied by a delicious brioche pastry.



**Accommodation: Habitat - Catania** (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

## DAY 8 - Trip ends after breakfast in Catania

The trip ends today in Catania after breakfast.



Meals Provided: Breakfast

## Walking and Trekking information

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### Walking grade

Moderate to challenging

### Trek details

Four day walks of between three to six-and-a-half hours. The two walks on Mount Etna and Vulcano Island are graded Moderate whilst the Stromboli ascent of just under 1000 metres is graded Challenging. Terrain will be a combination of easy walking trails on compacted volcanic deposits with more challenging sections of loose ash and scree.

### Max walking altitude (m)

3330

# Why book this trip

This specially designed trip to trek on and explore some of Europe's most active volcanoes will both educate and inspire. Trekking in the company of specialist volcanology guide Luca Cosma, we will be able to access both the barren yet beautiful moonscapes of the top crater zone on Mount Etna and observe volcanic pyrotechnics in action after dark on the top of the Stromboli volcano. We also meet with Marco Neri, a geologist/volcanologist with the National Institute of Geophysics and Volcanology in Catania. Marco has been working on Etna for over 30 years and has studied many volcanoes worldwide. As well as providing us with an introduction to his subject at the start of our week, he'll share some interesting stories of some of the many volcanic and seismic emergencies on Etna that he's been involved with as he guides us round Catania's Etna Observatory.

## What's included?



### Included meals

Breakfast: 7  
Lunch: 2  
Dinner: 3



### Transport

Bus  
4WD  
Boat  
Cable Car  
Ferry



### Trip staff

Explore Tour Leader / Trek  
Guide  
Driver(s)  
Guest Lecturer



### Accommodation

7 nights standard hotel

## Trip information

### Country information

#### Italy

##### Climate

April/May and October/November are pleasantly warm. June/September are the hottest months. Showers are common in Autumn.

##### Time difference to GMT

+1

##### Plugs

2 Pin Round

##### Religion

Roman Catholic

##### Language

Italian

#### Sicily

## Budgeting and packing

### Clothing

You will need light layers of clothing for walking during the day and a fleece and waterproof jacket as temperatures can drop on Etna. Gaiters are useful to stop the volcanic ash getting in your walking boots. A sunhat is essential and bring a swimming costume if you wish to bathe in the sea or enjoy the mud baths on Vulcano.

### Footwear

We recommend you bring walking boots - leather or fabric are both fine. Make sure that your boots are worn-in and comfortable before the start of the trip. We recommend that you wear/carry your walking boots as hand luggage on the international flight: should your luggage be delayed, your well broken-in boots will be irreplaceable.

Bring trainers and sandals for relaxing and other sightseeing.

### Luggage

20kg

### Luggage: On tour

Bring one main piece of luggage and a daypack.

### Equipment

You should bring a 2 litre water bottle, sunhat, sunglasses and sunscreen. Trekking poles are highly recommended. You will need a head torch for the Stromboli descent after dark.

Hard hats are provided locally for the Etna and Stromboli summit hikes.

### Tipping

#### Explore leader

At your discretion you might consider tipping your Explore Leader in appreciation of the efficiency and service you receive.

### Country Information

#### Italy

##### Food and drink

The costs for meals may vary depending upon location, type of restaurant and number of courses eaten and so the prices given are an average guide. Local restaurants located off the beaten track may be less expensive, whereas an upmarket restaurant located in the centre of a major city may charge more.

##### Lunch price

£5.00 - 10.00

##### Dinner price

£15.00 - 20.00

##### Beer price

£2.00 - 4.00

##### Water price

£1.00 - 2.00

##### Foreign Exchange

##### Local currency

Euro.

##### Recommended Currency For Exchange

GBP.

**Where To Exchange**

We recommend that you change any currency into Euros prior to arrival. Bureau de Change are generally only found in major cities and large airports.

**ATM Availability**

Major towns.

**Credit Card Acceptance**

Larger hotels and restaurants.

**Travellers Cheques**

Only in major towns. Please note, the exchange rate for cash and Travellers Cheques is poor.

## Sicily

### Food and drink

The costs for meals may vary depending upon location, type of restaurant and number of courses eaten and so the prices given are an average guide. Local restaurants located off the beaten track may be less expensive, whereas an upmarket restaurant located in the centre of a major city may charge more.

### Foreign Exchange

## Transport, Accommodation & Meals

### Transport Information

Bus, 4WD, Boat, Cable Car, Ferry

### Accommodation notes

**Booking a Single Room**

All of our group tours are planned and operated on a twin-share basis, meaning that the standard cost is based either on individual travellers sharing accommodation with another group member of the same sex, or people who book together sharing accommodation. Please refer to the tour notes where the single room option availability is detailed on a night by night basis for this tour, and the price for the available nights is detailed on the dates & prices tab by departure date. For Self-Guided trips the Single Room supplement offers the option of a single room each and is charged per person. The Single Room supplement also applies to the third person in a party of three that will be accommodated in a single room.

This trip stays in comfortable Standard graded accommodation throughout. Il Nido dell' Etna is situated in the centre of the market town of Linguaglossa on the northern flanks of Mount Etna. Rooms are spacious, well appointed with a small balcony and there is a restaurant and bar. The hotel is named after the Sicilian painter and sculptor Nino Cordio and many of his paintings are on display throughout the hotel. On the island of Stromboli we stay at Hotel Villaggio Stromboli built in a whitewashed Aeolian style, there are superb sea views from its panoramic terrace and all elegantly furnished rooms also have their own small terrace. On Lipari, family-run Hotel la Filadelfia is situated in the centre of this lively port town and has a small swimming pool, restaurant and bar. Habitat is a contemporary boutique bed and breakfast conveniently situated in the historic centre of Catania in a restored building that was once a fish factory.

## Essential Information

### FCO Advice

We strongly recommend that you check your government's travel advisory for up-to-date information and advice about your



destination: safety and security, entry requirements, health, local laws and customs. For UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office advice click [here](#).

For more information from Explore about travel advice, click [here](#)

### **Under 18 immigration guidance**

Please note that some countries require proof of parental consent when travelling overseas with under 18s. Please check requirements with the relevant embassy or consular office well in advance of travel if this applies to your party.

## **Price Guarantee**

Once your booking has been confirmed we guarantee the price will not increase, whatever the circumstances. Before booking please ensure you have read our important tour pricing information. [Booking Conditions](#)

## **Visa and Passport Information**

Visas are not required by UK, E.U Nationals, Australian, New Zealand, US and Canadian citizens. Other nationalities should consult their local embassy or consular office.

All visa information is subject to change. You should confirm all visa related questions with the relevant Embassy prior to departure.

If you do require assistance in obtaining a visa then you may consider applying through Explore's recommended visa service in the UK, Travcour. See [www.travcour.com](http://www.travcour.com) to download the relevant visa application for your trip, if applicable (UK citizens only), along with details of how to apply for your visa through Travcour. The Team at Travcour will be happy to answer specific questions relating to visa applications, please call them directly on 0208 5431846.

It is your responsibility to ensure that you are in possession of a full passport, with the correct validity for your chosen destination.

## **Booking conditions**

Before booking your Explore trip, please ensure that you read both our [Essential Information](#) and [Booking Conditions](#).

## **Transfers**

[Find out more about Trip Transfer Terms and Conditions before you book.](#)

### **Booking a land only package with Explore**

Customers who have chosen to book on the 'Land Only' arrangements of our tour, please ensure that you have checked your tour specific 'Joining Instructions' prior to booking your own travel arrangements. Your joining instructions can be found below in the dates and prices information.

You may also be eligible for the Free Explore Transfer.

### **Joining Tour Abroad**

Customers booked on the 'Land Only' arrangements will now receive a Free Transfer, provided you arrive and depart on the tour only itinerary start and end dates. The transfers will be from the Explore designated airport or train station to the joining point of your tour, and then back from the ending point to the designated airport or train station. The exception to this rule is customers who are booked on a tour where the joining and ending point is at the designated airport or train station.

Free transfers are not available for Self-Guided, Polar, Tailormade or Tours for Churches customers.

If you are not eligible for the Free Transfer then you will need to make your own way through to the joining and ending point. On a majority of our tours Explore will be able to provide a private transfer at an additional cost. Please ask for a quote at the time of booking.

For more information regarding the Explore Free Transfer click [here](#)

## **Insurance**

It is a condition of booking with Explore that you have adequate valid travel insurance. It is your responsibility to arrange appropriate travel insurance and ensure you have read and understood the full terms and conditions of your travel insurance policy to ensure that you are covered for all activities you intend to undertake whilst on the tour, including all optional activities. Your Insurance Policy must fully cover you for medical expenses and emergency repatriation to your home country. Please ensure your policy includes medical emergency helicopter evacuation in the event of illness or injury and covers the entire duration of your holiday. If you are trekking at altitude please ensure that there is no upper altitude limit which may limit or exclude cover for your trip. The cost of many of our Polar Voyages will exceed the capped amount covered by standard insurance premiums and you will be required to pay an additional premium to cover the full value of your trip. Please ensure that you are covered for the full amount of your holiday cost, as insufficient cover could invalidate a claim under the policy. Medical and repatriation insurance cover is not mandatory for UK residents who are travelling on trips within the United Kingdom.

Read more information about what travel insurance is required.

## **Flight information**

Explore offers a wide range of flexible flying options to make joining and leaving our trips easy. Read more about them [here](#).

**Flight Information**

You are able to book this tour on a 'land only' basis or as a 'flight inclusive' package. Your flight inclusive package will be fully protected by the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) ATOL protection scheme.

**Booking a flight inclusive package with Explore**

We have a good selection of flights not only from London but from many regional airports around the UK allowing us to compare fares between scheduled carriers as well as low cost and charter airlines. Our dedicated flights team will match the best flight options to your arrival and departure airport.

On our website we display a UK flight inclusive package guide price which is generally based on a London departure. To avoid paying supplements or to secure your preferred flight option, we recommend booking as early as possible, especially for peak travel dates.

**Maximum altitude (m)**

3330

**Included activities**

Due to the volcanic dust and sulphur fumes emitted by the volcanoes visited, asthma sufferers and customers with respiratory or heart conditions of any kind should take medical advice before travelling.

**Italy****Vaccinations**

Nothing required. Tetanus recommended. Please check the latest requirements with your travel clinic or doctor prior to departure. The above is not an exhaustive list. Further information regarding vaccinations and travel health advice can be found by following the NHS and NaTHNaC links at [Explore Travel Health](#) and from your local healthcare provider. Visa and vaccination requirements are subject to change and should be confirmed by you before travelling.

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**Sicily**

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