

# EXPLORE!



## Why book this trip?

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Exciting trekking to the summit of three active volcanoes in the company of specialist volcanology guide Luca Cosma. Explore the crater-rim zone of Europe's highest active volcano, Mount Etna (3330m), travel by hydrofoil to the picturesque Aeolian Islands and hike to the top of the Gran Cratere on Vulcano Island.

- **Stromboli** - Chance to see volcanic activity by both day and night
- **Taormina** - Visit the famous Greek Theatre with views of a distant Mount Etna
- **Food and Drink** - Refuel with tasty Sicilian home cuisine



**INCLUDED MEALS**

Breakfast: 7  
Lunch: 2  
Dinner: 3

**TRIP STAFF**

Explore Tour  
Leader / Trek  
Guide  
Boat Crew  
Driver(s)

**TRANSPORT**

Bus  
4WD  
Cable Car  
Ferry

**ACCOMMODATION**

4 nights standard  
hotel  
3 nights simple  
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**WALKING GRADE:**

Moderate To  
Challenging

**GROUP SIZE:**

10 - 15

## Itinerary

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

### DAY 1 - Join trip at Catania Airport; drive to our rifugio on Mount Etna's northern slopes

Our Sicilian volcanology adventure starts at Catania airport from where we head to our base for the next three nights, the Rifugio Ragabo, located in the pine and birch forests on Etna's northern slopes. Built in the style of an alpine chalet style, this cosy family-run guesthouse is popular with skiers in the winter and walkers during the summer months. It has a great restaurant that serves up typical local specialities such as home-made antipasti, maccheroni with pork and mushrooms and grilled lamb, all washed down with local wines.

Luca Cosma is a specialist volcanology guide and will be our trek leader for the week. Born on the Aeolian island of Stromboli, Luca has been leading Explore walking groups in Sicily for over 20 years and is proud and passionate about his homeland. He'll share both his scientific knowledge and stories of growing up in the shadow of a volcano. He leads a warm-up walk this afternoon to see a small lava tube.

Today's three kilometre walk is expected to take around one-and-a-half hours.



**ACCOMMODATION:**

Rifugio Ragabo (or similar)

**Grade: Simple Rifugio**



**SINGLE ROOM AVAILABLE**



## DAY 2 - Cable car and 4WD ascent on Etna; trek around the summit craters

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 eruptive activity since 2001. Travelling by minibus to the cable car station on Etna's southern flanks, we take the cable car from 1900 - 2400 metres then swap to a four-wheel drive truck. Alighting at 2900 metres, Luca will, (weather and volcanic activity allowing,) guide us on a tour of the top craters including the Northeast Crater which is the highest point (3330m), 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. Our descent takes us past the eruptive cones from the eruptions of 2001 and 2002 with an overview of the Valle del Bove Caldera, back to the cable car station.

Today's nine kilometre walk is expected to take around four hours with a total ascent of 400 metres and a descent of 900 metres.



### ACCOMMODATION:

Rifugio Ragabo (or similar)



**Grade: Simple Rifugio**



SINGLE ROOM AVAILABLE



MEALS PROVIDED: BREAKFAST, LUNCH & DINNER

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## DAY 3 - Hike among Etna's lava flows and along a lava tube

We take a short drive up the mountain this morning to the remains of the ski station of Piano Provenzana at 1900m - most of it was buried by lava in the 2002 eruptions. Our hike follows the solidified lava flows uphill to arrive at the crater line at around 2500 metres. We follow the crater line to the parasitic cone of Monte Nero then continue to the Grotta dei Lamponi, a long cave known as a lava tube that formed when the softer lava inside the chamber eroded. We can explore inside the lava tube with our head torches for several hundred metres before returning to the edge of the 1923 eruption and eventually, Piano Provenzana.

Today's 13 kilometre walk is expected to take around five hours with a total ascent and descent of 600 metres.



ACCOMMODATION:  
Rifugio Ragabo (or similar)



Grade: Simple Rifugio



SINGLE ROOM AVAILABLE



MEALS PROVIDED: BREAKFAST, LUNCH & DINNER

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#### **DAY 4 - Hydrofoil to Aeolian Island of Stromboli; hike to crater to observe volcanic activity after dark**

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 which are a UNESCO listed World Heritage site. 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 head torches 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)



Grade: Standard Hotel



SINGLE ROOM AVAILABLE



### **DAY 5 - Hydrofoil to Panarea Island; hike on Panarea. Hydrofoil to Lipari Island**

Departing Stromboli on an early hydrofoil we plan, sea conditions allowing, to stop on the Island of Panarea. The second smallest of the Aeolian's with a year-round population of just 280, it's been a popular summer retreat with the bohemian set since the 1960s. Leaving our baggage at the harbour office, our hike takes us to site of the pre-historic village at Calajunco on a trail that zig zags up and down from sea level to around 150 metres. In the afternoon we catch another hydrofoil to the largest Aeolian island of Lipari where we stay in the port town of the same name. Lipari has a reputation as the liveliest in the Aeolian Islands. This evening we can head out to enjoy some good food and wine in one of the restaurants in the ancient harbour of Marina Vecchia.

Today's four kilometre walk is expected to take approximately two hours.



ACCOMMODATION:  
Hotel Filadelfia (or similar)



**Grade: Standard Hotel**



SINGLE ROOM AVAILABLE



MEALS PROVIDED: BREAKFAST

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### **DAY 6 - Day trip to Vulcano Island; climb the Gran Cratere for Aeolian views**

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 us up to the crater rim, 'Gran Cratere' (400 m) for great views of the 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)

Grade: Standard Hotel



SINGLE ROOM AVAILABLE



MEALS PROVIDED: BREAKFAST

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### **DAY 7 - Return to mainland; walk to Taormina, time to visit the famous Greek Theatre**

We return to mainland Sicily by hydrofoil back to Milazzo and drive south along the eastern side of the island to Taormina. Perched on a cliff overlooking the Ionian Sea, this pretty town is home to many historic churches and a number of lively bars and cafes as well as a Graeco-Roman theatre which is famous for one of the most iconic views in Sicily - that of snow-capped Etna acting as a backdrop to the remarkably preserved columned stage. It was a favourite place during the days of the 'Grand Tour' and was frequented by Goethe, Edward Lear, D.H. Lawrence and many others. Our plan is to enter Taormina on foot, on a downhill walk from the village of Castelmola, perched high above the town. There will be free time here to wander the pretty streets full of cafes, restaurants and souvenirs shops and to pay a visit to the theatre. Our destination for our final night is the seaside town of Giardini Naxos a few kilometres to the south of Taormina.

Today's three kilometre walk is expected to take approximately 45 minutes with a total descent of 320 metres.



ACCOMMODATION:  
Hotel La Riva (or similar)

Grade: Standard Hotel



SINGLE ROOM AVAILABLE



MEALS PROVIDED: BREAKFAST

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### **DAY 8 - Drive to Catania Airport where the trip ends**

The trip ends this morning at Catania Airport, a drive of around an hour- and-a-half.



MEALS PROVIDED: BREAKFAST

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## Trip information

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### 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	Plugs	Religion	Language
+1	2 Pin Round	Roman Catholic	Italian

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#### Sicily

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### Budgeting and packing

#### Optional activities

The following excursions and/or activities are usually available and may be arranged locally. Estimated costs are provided below for guidance only, are on a per person basis unless shown otherwise, and may depend on the number of participants. Prices quoted are correct as of the date these tour notes were originally issued but may change at any time due to currency fluctuations. Please note: These activities are booked and paid for direct with the supplier and do not form part of your Explore holiday contract.

TBC

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

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.

### Local crew

Although entirely voluntary, tipping is a recognized part of life in this region of the world. Some local staff will look to members of the group for personal recognition of particular services provided. In order to make things easier for you, the Tour Leaders may organise a group's tips kitty and if this is the case, they will account for it throughout the tour. Accordingly, we recommend approximately 15€ per person for tipping. 10% is recommended at meal times.

## 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	Dinner price	Beer price	Water price
£5.00 - 10.00	£15.00 - 20.00	£2.00 - 4.00	£1.00 - 2.00

### Foreign Exchange

Local currency	Recommended Currency For Exchange
Euro.	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**

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## **Transport, Accommodation & Meals**

### **Transport Information**

Bus, 4WD, Cable Car, Ferry

### **Accommodation notes**

For the first three nights of this trip we stay at a mountain refuge - Rifugio Ragabo, in the pine and birch forests on Etna's northern slopes. Built in the style of an alpine chalet style, it's a cosy family-run guesthouse that is popular with skiers in the winter and walkers during the summer months. The rooms are small and simply furnished - all are en suite. It has a great restaurant that serves up typical local specialities such as home-made antipasti, maccheroni with pork and mushrooms and grilled lamb, all washed down with local wines.

On the island of Stromboli we stay at Hotel Villaggio Stromboli. Built in a white-washed 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. La Riva is a characterful family-run hotel that is located just a few metres from the beach in the seaside resort and fishing village of Giardini Naxos. The en suite rooms are furnished with Sicilian antiques, there is a cosy bar area and great views of the bay from the restaurant.

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## 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.

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 complimentary transfers will be arranged from the Explore designated airport or train station to your trips joining point, and then back from the ending point to the designated airport or train station. Generally the airport or station that Explore have selected will be the one that is closest to the town or city where the trip starts, or the one nearest to the joining point. It will be either an airport or train station but not both.

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

## Italy

### Vaccinations

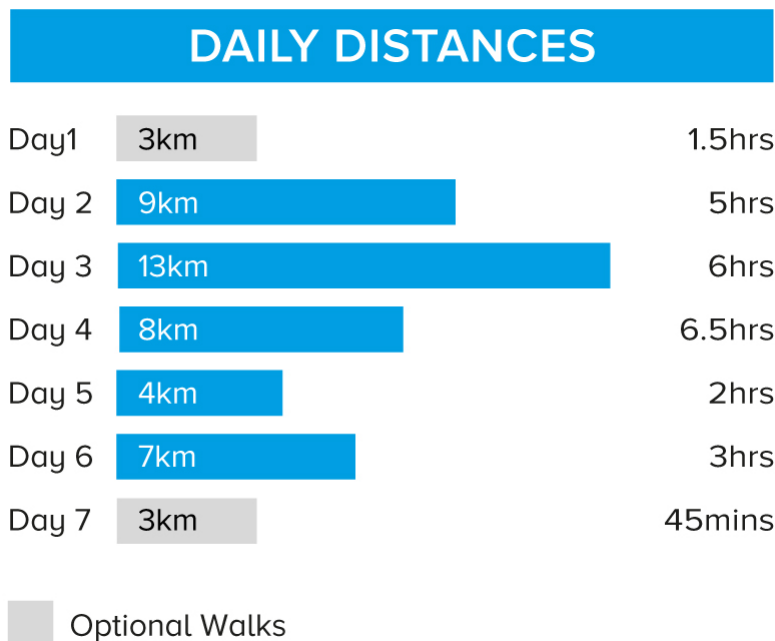
Nothing required. Tetanus recommended. Please check the latest requirements with your travel clinic or doctor prior to departure. The above is not an exhaustive list. Further information regarding vaccinations and travel health advice can be found by following the NHS and NaTHNaC links at Explore Travel 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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### Walking and Trekking information



### Walking grade

Moderate to challenging

### Trek details




Walks on 5 days for between 2 to 6.5 hours with optional walks on 2 further days. 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 3330 metres.

Please note that the summit treks on Etna and Stromboli are weather and volcanic activity

dependent. It's possible that the local authorities may decide to close the summits with little or no notice. Should this occur alternative walks will be arranged. Due to the volcanic dust and sulphur fumes on the volcanoes, this trip may not be suitable for asthma sufferers or customers with heart conditions.

**Max walking altitude (m)**

3330

 <p><b>AWARD WINNING EXPLORE LEADERS</b></p>	 <p><b>PRICE GUARANTEE PROMISE</b></p>	 <p><b>AIRPORT TRANSFERS</b></p>
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