

Route 6

- **Tour:** Sikania
- **Starting point:** Cefalù
- **Arrival:** Taormina
- **Points of interest:** Cefalù - Vulcano
Etna - Catania - Taormina
- **Km:** 209



Cefalù is point of departure for a trip that has like target the climb and discovery of the largest Volcano of Europe, the Etna.

■ **History and traditions:**

Etna

Etna was known in Roman times as Aetna, that possibly comes from the Greek word aitho ("to burn").

The Arabs called the mountain Gibel Utlamat ("the mountain of fire"); this name was later changed into Mons Gibel and subsequently Etna's current local name Mongibello.

The mountain's regular and often dramatic eruptions made it a major subject of interest for Classical mythologists and their later successors, who sought to explain its behaviour in terms of the various gods and giants that populated Roman and Greek legends. Aeolus, the king of the winds, was said to have imprisoned the winds in caves below Etna. The giant Typhon was confined under Etna, according to the poet Aeschylus, and was the cause of the mountain's eruptions. Another giant, Enceladus, rebelled against the gods, was killed and was buried under Etna.

Hephaestus or Vulcan, the god of fire and forge, was said to have had his forge under Etna and drove the fire-demon Adranus out from the mountain. The Greek underworld, Tartarus, was supposed to be situated beneath Etna.

Taormina

The remains of the Greek theatre, are not actually Greek, as the theatre was rebuilt by the Romans in the 2nd century BC on the site of the original theatre. With a diameter of 109 metres (after an expansion in the 2nd century), this theatre is the second largest of its kind in Sicily; it is frequently used for performances and concerts. The Taormina Film Festival has been held for over fifty years, with international film stars viewing films on a screen set up for the occasion inside the Greek theatre.

Cefalù

The Cathedral of Cefalù located in Piazza Duomo was built under the patronage of Roger II of Sicily, beginning in 1131. This style of Norman architecture would be more accurately called Sicilian Romanesque, the mosaics

inside are among the most famous in the world.

■ Sightseeing and Landscape:

Etna

Mount Etna is an active volcano on the east coast of Sicily, close to Catania. It is the largest volcano in Europe, currently standing about 3,320 m (10,900 ft) high. It is the highest mountain in Italy south of the Alps. Etna covers an area of 460 square miles (1190 km²) with a basal circumference of 140 km.

It is one of the most active volcanoes in the world and is in an almost constant state of eruption. Although it can occasionally be very destructive, it is not generally regarded as being particularly dangerous, and thousands of people live on its slopes and in the surrounding areas.

Etna is an isolated peak about 18 miles (29 km) from Catania which dominates the eastern side of Sicily. Its shape is that of a truncated cone with a ragged top, which is actually a complex of large volcanic cones hosting four summit craters. At the top of the mountain is a volcanic wasteland, dominated by old lava flows, scree and volcanic ash. Few plants grow there and it is covered by snow for much of the year.

Taormina

Taormina has been a very popular tourist resource since the 19th century. It has beautiful beaches (accessible via a Funicular) by the Ionian sea, which is remarkably warm and has a high salt content. Isola Bella is a stunning nature reserve just south of Taormina. Tours of the Capo Sant' Andrea grottos are also available. Taormina is built on an extremely hilly coast, and is approximately a forty-five minute drive away from Europe's largest active volcano, Mount Etna.

Cefalù

A gorgeous little town located on the north coast between Palermo and Messina, has about 50,000 inhabitants and is one of the major tourist attractions in the region. It has Roman baths, an ancient cathedral, marvellous beaches and is a tranquil city full of history.
