

CATANIA, SICILY TRAVEL GUIDE

Introduction and brief history

Catania is located on the east side of the island of Sicily, Italy, on the Mediterranean sea. Catania was founded by the Greeks in the VIII century BC on a plain between the sea and the active volcano Etna, which provides fertile volcanic soil.

The city of Catania, during all its history, had to deal with the forces of nature such as earthquakes and volcanic eruption that destroyed it several times. However, every time its citizens rebuilt it without ever giving up. The last big geological events in Catania, Sicily, were the Etna eruption of 1669, which covered part of the city, and the following earthquake, in 1693, which destroyed Catania entirely. This is why Catania's historical centre appears today completely in baroque style, with buildings made of black volcanic stone and white calcareous stone. Also, the streets are all orthogonal and regular, fruit of a precise town-planning scheme. There is still something left, however, of the previous ages and civilisations that influenced Catania. There are still a Greek and a Roman theatre left, a medieval building (Castello Ursino) and medieval elements in the apsis of the cathedral.



Like the rest of Sicily, Catania hosted various civilisation and cultures throughout the centuries such as the Greeks, the Romans, the Arabs, the Normans, the Catalans, the Spanish and the English who were allied with Sicily during the wars against Napoleon. Unlike Palermo, the capital of Sicily, Catania has always had a dynamic bourgeois merchant class and different industries (i.e. tobacco, textile, sulphur refineries) flourished during the centuries, alongside a thriving agriculture.

Written by Valeria Lo Iacono – need to learn about [flights, flying and travelling to Catania, Sicily?](#)