

Italy: Sicily, the Noto Valley & Syracuse

Pre-Tour-Extension - Taormina

2 Nights from \$495 per person, double occupancy

- 2 nights at Hotel Monte Tauro
- Airport arrival transportation
- Full-day excursion with a local guide on Mount Etna
- Private tour of Taormina with a local guide
- Hospitality desk
- Daily breakfast
- City information

Only available with the Air Inclusive Package.

FLIGHT DAY: Depart for Your Vacation

Your vacation is about to begin! Spend your first night aloft and arrive ready for an unforgettable trip.

ARRIVAL DAY: Arrive in Catania / Begin Your Pre-Tour Extension: Taormina

A VBT representative will greet you at the Catania Airport to start your adventure off right. A complimentary car service will whisk you to your centrally located hotel in Taormina. From here, you are perfectly positioned to explore this charming city at your leisure.

DAY 1: Continue Your Pre-Tour Extension: Taormina Orientation Walking Tour

At 9:30 a.m., our VBT representative will be in the hotel lobby to answer any questions and help you organize your time in Taormina. Then, enjoy a walking orientation tour through the historic center, where you'll explore the main street, lined with historic landmarks, shops, and cafés. Stroll along Corso Umberto, the city's pedestrian-only thoroughfare, which is home to Baroque and Gothic churches and palaces.

Other highlights include Piazza Duomo, a square beloved by artists such as Oscar Wilde, Alexandre Dumas, and Richard Wagner, and Piazza IX Aprile, a terrace-like square offering stunning views of Mount Etna and the bay. This easy city walk takes approximately two hours.

For those eager to explore further, consider visiting the Greek Theatre before hiking up to Castello Saraceno. You can also take the funicular down to Mazzarò Beach for a refreshing swim in the Mediterranean or simply relax at the hotel's magnificent swimming pool, which boasts stunning views.

DAY 2: Continue Your Pre-Tour Extension: Mount Etna Excursion / Pre-Tour Hotel Night: Taormina

This morning, lace up your hiking boots, dress in layers, and prepare for a truly unique hike on Mount Etna. Your small group will meet your guide—an expert in volcanology and art history—at the hotel at 8:00 a.m. before shuttling to the base of the volcano.

Depending on the weather conditions, your guide will select the best starting point, but you can expect to hike at approximately 6,000 feet (1,829 meters) on unpaved terrain covered with ash and rocks. Along the way, you'll explore lava fields, hike around lateral craters, and even walk inside a lava tunnel. There will be plenty of rest breaks and time for lunch on your own.

At lunchtime, you'll have the opportunity to sample local honeys, creams, and liqueurs, as well as enjoy delicious regional dishes at a typical mountain *rifugio*.

Your excursion will conclude with a visit to the basalt column formations of the famous Alcantara Gorges, and you'll return to Taormina around 5:00 or 5:30 p.m.

You do not need to be an expert hiker for this excursion, but appropriate clothing and footwear are essential. It may also be helpful to bring a second pair of socks, in case they get wet in the gorges.

In the event of bad weather conditions—most likely in March and April, when snow may prevent hiking at higher altitudes—the excursion will be adjusted to a lower elevation, and you will still visit the Alcantara Gorges.

Next Day Instructions:

Plan to meet your VBT representative at 8:30 a.m. tomorrow in the hotel lobby of your Taormina hotel to transfer to your next hotel in Scicli.