My Mount Etna Adventure

We were driving on the long, narrow roads of Mount Etna, with no guardrails to keep us from tumbling off the edge. It was night time and the tour guide, Paolo, was driving fast, cutting each corner just barely enough for us to be kept on the road. Then, he cut a corner a little bit too close. We thought we were doomed.

My family and I went to visit my aunt Leslie who lives on Ortigia island in Siracusa, Sicily. We were enjoying the island with all the beautiful, warm beaches that looked out onto the Ionian Sea. But we wanted a little bit more adventure and decided to travel to the biggest and most active volcano in Europe, Mount Etna. We drove to Catania where we met our very friendly tour guide, Paolo by beautiful Mount Etna.

“Hello, how are you today? Are you okay with bumpy roads and heights?” asked Paolo enthusiastically.

“Yes!” we responded politely.

He also translated his words into Italian for the other family that was on the tour with us who agreed as well. Then we were off to the bumpy, but marvelous Etna. He told us facts on the way to our first stop, the lava tube.

Paolo told us “The lava tube was formed hundreds of years ago when lots of hot lava flowed down the mountain. The outer shell hardened while the inside was left molten. The uncooled lava then flowed out of the hardened layer, leaving the tube you are about to see.”

He then handed us helmets and flashlights, for the cave was very dark and narrow.

We stated walking though the massive, dark tube while he told us more about the cave. The ground was very bumpy, and was made entirely out of big, hard lava rocks. The temperature was very cool and humid which was nice because the weather outside was the exact opposite, hot and dry. Eventually, we reached the end. He took a picture of us and the other Italian family. Then, we made our way back to the car. The next stop was the lava craters.

Again, we took very bumpy roads to the three craters. There you could see everything. The hills were as bumpy as a camel’s back and the ground was covered in fine, black sand with green, pink, and purple plants here and there which we later learned were unique to Etna. Then, we walked over to the deep craters. They were about fifty feet deep and especially slippery because of the sand. I got a little too close to the edge and it being especially slippery, almost fell in. But, I managed the pull myself back up and stay standing.

Then it was time for the tour and action to come to an end. Or so we thought.

We were about half way back down the steep, black volcano when the tour guide asked “Would it be okay if we took an off-road street? It will save us ten minutes and it is very beautiful.”

Wanting to see the more scenic route, we responded yes. He took a right and started driving on the narrow road with no guardrails. There were very sharp turns just close enough to keep us from rolling off the edge of the volcano. It *was* a very beautiful route that gave us the chance to see the city of Catania at night. We could see all the bright, flashing lights and fast cars driving around the loud, busy city. But, he took a turn a little bit too close. We started to almost fall off the road but Paolo managed to floor the gas and bring us back up to the road safely.

Once we got back to Catania, we were dropped off at our car which we drove back to Ortigia. I thought about all I saw and what a great experience Mount Etna had been. I enjoyed every part of the tour, even the driving. I do not think I will ever forget it.