



Aeolian Islands

The Aeolian Islands are a volcanic archipelago in the Tyrrhenian Sea north of Sicily, named after the demigod of the winds Aeolus. The locals residing on the islands are known as Aeolians. The Aeolian Islands are a popular tourist destination in the summer, and attract up to 200,000 visitors annually.

The largest island is Lipari thus the islands are sometimes referred to as the Lipari Islands or Lipari group. The other islands include Vulcano, Salina, Stromboli, Filicudi, Alicudi, Panarea and Basiluzzo.

Lipari – the main island and the main town (called Lipari as well) is the transportation hub, with plenty of hotels and makes a good base. Vulcano – right next to Lipari, this island is dominated by the Gran Cratere volcano cone giving off clouds of sulphurous gas. This peak gives great views. The island is popular for its beaches and mud baths.

Salina is lush and hilly – great for a relaxing walk. Some of the film Il Postino was shot here.

Panarea – a smaller, upmarket island with great views across to Stromboli.

Stromboli – the most remote of the islands, it is little more than a volcano rising out of the sea. Popular for trips out at night to see magma spurting out of the cone.

Filicudi and Alicudi lie to the West and are much less visited, particularly Alicudi, which is still primarily agrarian.

The Island of Lipari is ideal for trekking. There are many routes on the island from easy to hard level. The level of difficulty depends on the season. Some tracks are very hard or almost impossible to follow during summer because of the heat. There are maps to be bought on Lipari but one has to ask local people to find some of the tracks.

A short walk downhill can be done on the road from Quattropiani to Acquacalda on the north side of Lipari. This can be done even during summer and takes about 45 minutes. You enjoy the view of Salina and the northern Aeolian islands during this walk. From the Old Kaolin Mine between Pianoconte and Quattropiani it is possible to walk to the thermal bath of San Calogero or to the village of Quattropiani. Downhill near the sea there is the ruin of a Saracen tower and fifty meters away it is possible to walk down on the black cliffs for a bath. From Marina Corta there is a track up to Monte Gallina and Monte della Guardia. You reach the west side of the island and will enjoy the two Faraglioni from upside. You are able to reach the street that takes you from the vulcanologic observatory in front of Vulcano, back to Lipari town.

A dive or snorkel at the Faraglioni is a must. The water is crystal clear and to swim in such water is something very special. But you must be careful with the currents. During autumn, winter and especially during spring, trekking on Lipari gives unforgettable experiences.

Vulcano is an interesting place to visit for the traveler interested in geology and hiking, not to mention soaking in some rays on the beaches. Vulcano is more oriented toward “doing” than “seeing.” However, the beaches are agreeable, particularly on the west side, and you get good views of the active volcano from the small harbor.

Panarea has two small, rocky but scenic beaches, which offer views across the sea to the volcano-island of Stromboli; you can see ash and steam clouds from the volcano's frequent, small eruptions. Footpaths and hiking trails circle the island. The prehistoric ruins at the southern tip of the island at Punta Milazzese make a fine destination at sunrise.

The island is so small that there are no roads, but only paths. There are no cars on the islands, but only motorbikes, 3-wheeled trucks, and golf carts. There is a golf cart “taxi service” that runs between the port and all points in the only town, but for those who can walk up a hill, all points in the town are accessible by foot.

Stromboli is a fully active volcano that is in a constant state of mild activity, punctuated by occasional larger and more violent eruptions. The most recent violent eruption was a brief event in March 2007 that has caused the closure of the summit area. Though the “normal” small eruptions of lava are not dangerous, you should be aware of the possible danger. The local authorities are very aware of Stromboli's state, you should listen to them. If paths to the craters are closed, don't go there. Never climb up the volcano without a local guide. Don't leave paths.

Tours up the Stromboli aren't easy walks. You should be well-equipped, healthy and in good physical condition when going there. As Stromboli is small and its environment is sensitive, you should treat it carefully.

There are two villages on the island, the larger Stromboli and the much smaller Ginostra, a former fishing village rarely visited by tourists (although tourist services are about all that remains there). It is not yet feasible to walk between the villages (although a trans-island hiking trail is under construction as of 2007), and the only way to travel between them is by boat. Together, both villages only have about 350 inhabitants. There is a nice beach with fine black lava sand in Stromboli, where one can relax and swim in the sea.

Need to know

- + Capital city; Lipari
- + National Language; Italian
- + Population; 11,231
- + Area; 37 km²
- + Currency; €uro
- + Calling Code; +356
- + Time Zone; CET (UTC+1)