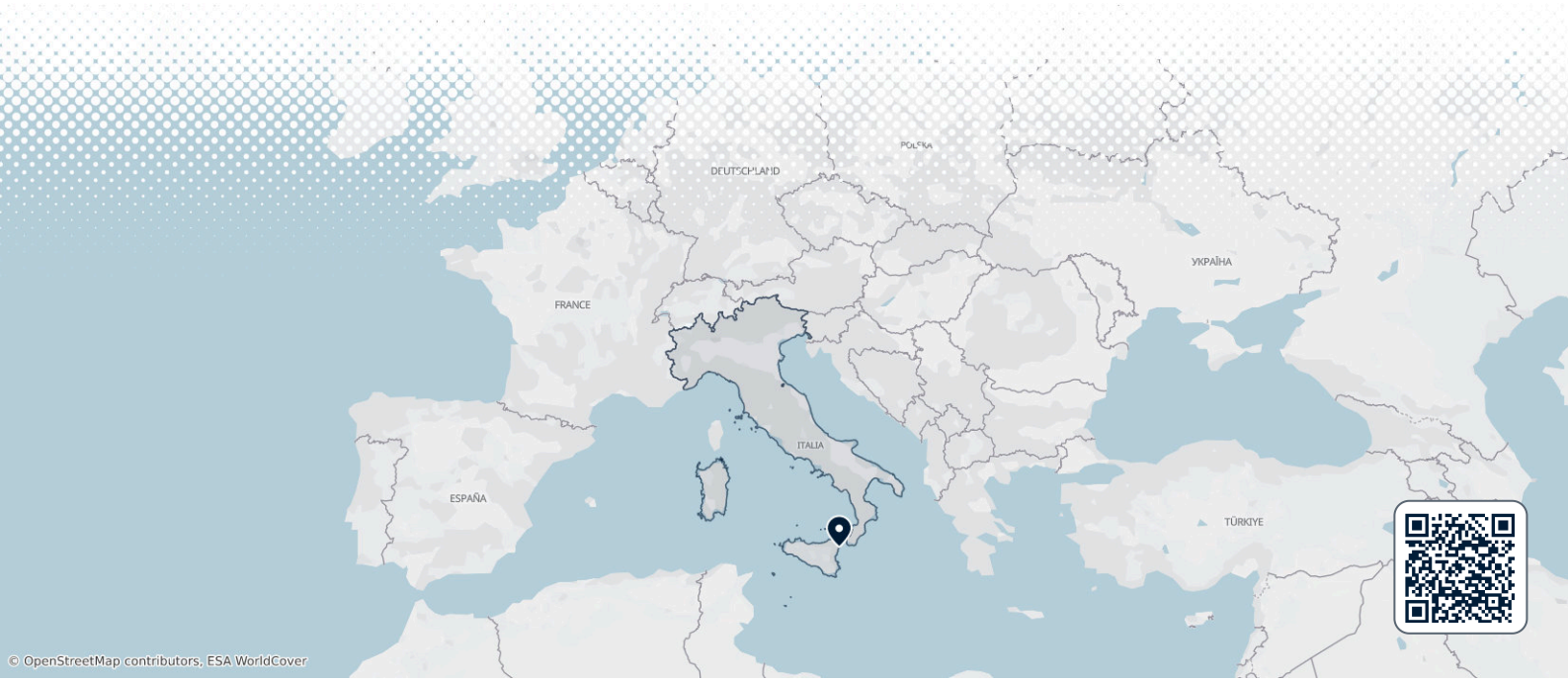


Taormina

Sicily · Italy

TRAVEL GUIDE

Tripomatic



Overview

Taormina sits on a rocky terrace about 200 metres above the Ionian Sea, on the east coast of Sicily. From almost every corner of the old town you see the sea on one side and the cone of Mount Etna on the other. This view made it a stop on the Grand Tour, and it has been a fashionable resort since the late 19th century.

The town is small and easy to walk. One pedestrian main street links its squares, churches and medieval palaces, and an ancient theatre sits on the edge of the cliff. Below the town, a cable car takes you to pebble beaches and a tiny island nature reserve. Taormina suits a relaxed stay of two to four nights that mixes history, sea and day trips to Etna. It is busy and expensive in summer, so plan ahead.

When to visit

Late spring and early autumn are the best times to visit. Days are warm and the sea is good for swimming from June to October. July and August are hot and humid, and the town is very crowded. Winter is mild but often rainy, and some hotels and beach clubs close.

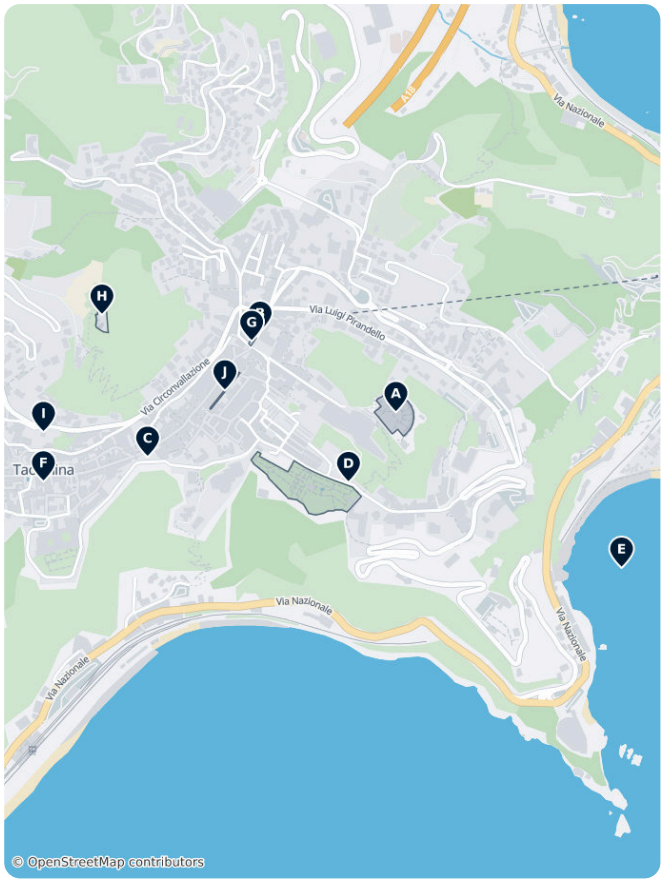
The biggest event is the **Taormina Film Fest**, usually held in June, with evening screenings in the ancient theatre. Through the summer the theatre also hosts concerts, opera and dance under the stars, so check the programme before you book.

MONTH	CONDITIONS	DAY °C avg / max	NIGHT °C avg / min	
January	Fair Fair for sightseeing	13° / 17°	8° / 4°	15 rainy days · Dry air · Calm winds
February	Fair Fair for sightseeing	13° / 17°	7° / 4°	14 rainy days · Dry air · Calm winds
March	Fair Fair for sightseeing	15° / 19°	9° / 5°	14 rainy days · Dry air · Calm winds
April	Good Good for sightseeing	17° / 22°	11° / 8°	Dry air · Calm winds
May	Great Great for sightseeing	22° / 26°	15° / 11°	Calm winds
June	Great Great for sightseeing	27° / 33°	19° / 15°	23 sunny days · Humid air · Calm winds · UV 8 (Very high)
July	Great Great for the beach	30° / 34°	22° / 19°	28 sunny days · Muggy, humid air · Calm winds · UV 9 (Very high)
August	Great Great for the beach	30° / 34°	23° / 20°	25 sunny days · Muggy, humid air · Calm winds
September	Good Good for sightseeing	25° / 30°	20° / 17°	Muggy, humid air · Calm winds
October	Good Good for sightseeing	22° / 26°	16° / 13°	15 rainy days · Calm winds
November	Good Good for sightseeing	18° / 21°	13° / 8°	16 rainy days · Dry air · Calm winds
December	Fair Fair for sightseeing	14° / 17°	9° / 6°	15 rainy days · Dry air · Calm winds

Best months: May, June, July

Climate data: NASA POWER + Copernicus ERA5-Land and ERA5 · 1996–2025

Top sights



- A Ancient Theatre of Taormina is the town's most famous sight. It was built by the Greeks in the 3rd century BC and later rebuilt by the Romans. From the top rows you look over the stage to the sea and Etna.
- B Corso Umberto is the pedestrian main street. It runs through the old town between two medieval gates, Porta Catania and Porta Messina, past shops, cafés and palaces.
- C Piazza IX Aprile is the main square, halfway along the main street. Its terrace has wide views over the coast, with the Baroque church of San Giuseppe and the clock tower beside it.
- D Taormina Public Gardens began as the private garden of *Florence Trevelyan*, an English woman who lived in Taormina. Look for her small brick follies and the views over the bay.
- Below the town, E Isola Bella holds a tiny green island and nature reserve. A narrow strip of pebbles often links it to the beach, and you can visit the island with a ticket.
- F Cathedral of Taormina is a 13th-century church with battlements on its façade, which gives it the look of a fortress.
- G Corvaja Palace is a medieval palace with a square tower. In 1410 the Sicilian Parliament met here to choose a new king.
- H Saraceno Castle crowns Monte Tauro above the town. A stairway cut into the rock leads from the church of Madonna della Rocca up to the castle, which you can visit with a ticket. The views are the widest in the area.
- I Badia Vecchia is a 14th-century Gothic tower-palace with battlements, mullioned windows and a band of coloured stone inlay. It is not regularly open, so admire it from the street.
- J Naumachie is a long Roman brick wall with niches, close to the main street. It was probably part of a large Roman water reservoir.

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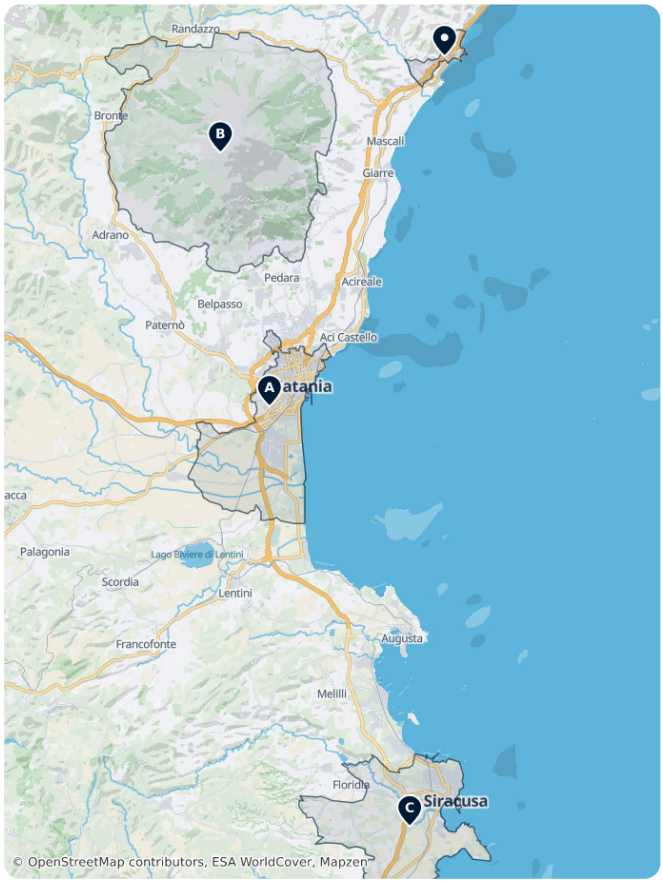
What to experience

These are the moments that define a stay in Taormina.

- **A summer show under the stars**: Watch a concert, opera or film screening in the Ancient Theatre of Taormina, with Etna behind the stage. Book early for big names.
- **Cable car down to the sea**: Ride the cable car to Mazzarò, then walk along the shore to swim in the clear water around Isola Bella. Bring water shoes for the pebbles.
- **A boat trip along the coast**: Small boats leave from the beaches at Mazzarò and Isola Bella. They visit the sea caves of Capo Sant'Andrea, including the Grotta Azzurra, with its blue light.
- **Sunset from the cliffs**: Climb the stone steps to the church of Madonna della Rocca, cut into the rock, and watch the light change over the bay.
- **The passeggiata**: Around sunset, locals dress up for the slow evening walk. Join them for an aperitivo or a granita on the terrace of Piazza IX Aprile as the lights come on along the coast.

Day trips

Taormina is a good base for the north-east of Sicily. These trips are listed from closest to farthest.



- **Castelmola**: a small village on the hill above Taormina, reached by local bus or a steep walk. It has narrow streets, a ruined castle and even wider views.
- **Giardini Naxos**: the beach town just below Taormina, a short bus ride away. Parco Archeologico di Giardini Naxos protects the remains of Naxos, the first Greek colony in Sicily, with a small museum.
- **Savoca**: a hill village about 30 minutes north by car. Scenes of *The Godfather* were filmed here, and its church and bar are still popular with fans.
- Alcantara Gorge: a narrow canyon of black lava rock with a cold river, under an hour inland by car. In summer you can wade into the gorge.
- Ⓐ Catania: Sicily's second city, about an hour by train or bus. It has Baroque streets of dark lava stone and a famous fish market.
- Ⓑ Mount Etna: Europe's highest active volcano. Most visitors join a guided tour or drive to the south side, about 1.5 hours away, where a cable car climbs higher.
- Ⓒ Syracuse: the ancient city of Ortigia and a large Greek theatre, about two hours south by car or train.

Where to explore

Taormina is part of Sicily.

- **East coast**: Catania and Mount Etna are the closest major destinations. Farther south are Syracuse and the Baroque town of Noto.
- **North coast and islands**: Palermo and Cefalù are on the other side of the island. The Aeolian Islands are reached by ferry from the north coast.

Getting there

- **By air**: Catania Airport is the nearest airport, about 65 km south. Interbus and Etna Trasporti coaches run direct to the bus terminal on Via Pirandello in Taormina in about 1 hour 20 minutes, with frequent departures in summer and fewer in winter. A taxi or private transfer takes about an hour. See Interbus.
- **By train**: Taormina-Giardini station is on the coastal line between Catania and Messina. It is at sea level in Giardini Naxos, below the town. Local buses climb from the station to the centre in about 10 minutes. Book trains with Trenitalia.
- **By bus**: Regional coaches connect Taormina with Catania, Messina and other towns in eastern Sicily. They stop at the Via Pirandello terminal, a short walk from the main street.

Getting around

- **On foot**: The old town is compact and the main street is closed to most traffic. Side streets are steep and often have steps, so wear comfortable shoes.
- **Cable car**: A cable car runs from the edge of the old town down to the beach at Mazzarò, near Isola Bella. Cabins leave about every 15 minutes, and it runs late into the night in summer. Buy your ticket at the station.
- **Local bus**: Town buses link the centre with the train station, Giardini Naxos and the village of Castelmola. Regional buses for longer routes leave from the Via Pirandello terminal.
- **Taxi**: Taxis wait at ranks in the centre. Agree on the fare before you leave.
- **Cycling**: Steep hills and narrow streets make cycling impractical.

Getting around on foot & by bike

WALKABILITY

High

The old town is small and its main street is closed to most traffic. Side streets are steep and often have steps.

CYCLING INFRASTRUCTURE

Low

Steep hills, narrow streets and summer traffic make cycling impractical.

Driving

- **Is a car worth it?**: Not for the town itself. A car is useful for Etna, the Alcantara Gorge and hill villages, but buses and tours cover the main trips.
- **Restrictions**: The historic centre is a **restricted traffic zone (ZTL)**. Only drive in if your hotel registers your number plate in advance.
- **Parking**: Use the large multi-storey car parks at Lumbi or Porta Catania. A shuttle bus runs from Lumbi to the centre. Expect to pay a few euros per hour, and more in high season. There is also paid parking at Mazzarò, by the lower cable car station.
- **Roads**: Roads up to the town are narrow with sharp bends, and they are congested in summer.

Food & drink

Taormina's food is the cooking of eastern Sicily. In summer, start the day with a **granita** (crushed fruit or almond ice) and a soft brioche bun. Other local specialties are fried rice balls called arancini, cannoli filled with ricotta, and pasta alla Norma with aubergine and salted ricotta. Fresh fish and swordfish are common on menus near the sea. In Castelmola, try the sweet almond wine served in the village bars.

The best areas to eat are the side streets and small squares off Corso Umberto, where prices are often lower than on the main street. For seafood with a sea view, go down to Mazzarò and the bay of Isola Bella.

What to eat & drink

LUNCH

Pizza Margherita
Thin-crust pizza topped with tomato, mozzarella, and basil, invented in Naples and still best there.

DINNER

Spaghetti alla Carbonara
Pasta with egg, cured pork cheek (guanciale), pecorino cheese, and black pepper, a Roman classic.

Risotto alla Milanese
Creamy saffron-infused rice dish from Milan, often served alongside braised veal shank.

Lasagna · Lasagne al Forno
Layered baked pasta with ragu, bechamel, and cheese, a staple of Emilia-Romagna cooking.

SNACKS & STREET FOOD

Prosciutto and Cheese · Prosciutto e Formaggio
Cured ham paired with regional cheeses, a common antipasto plate found nationwide.

SWEETS & DESSERTS

Gelato
Dense, slow-churned Italian ice cream, traditionally lower in fat and air than American-style ice cream.

Tiramisu · Tiramisù
Layered dessert of coffee-soaked ladyfingers and mascarpone cream, dusted with cocoa.

DRINKS

Espresso · Caffè
A short, strong shot of coffee drunk quickly, usually standing at a bar counter.

Wine · Vino
Italy is one of the world's largest wine producers, with regional styles from Piedmont's Barolo to Tuscany's Chianti.

Aperol Spritz
A bittersweet orange aperitif mixed with prosecco and soda water, a staple of the early-evening aperitivo.

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Safety & health

Taormina is a very safe town. The main risk is pickpocketing in crowds on the main street, at the bus terminal and on the cable car in summer. Keep valuables out of sight in parked cars.

- **Restaurants**: Check menu prices before you order, especially for fish sold by weight.
- **Sea and sun**: The beaches are pebbly and the sun is strong in summer. Wear water shoes, use sunscreen and drink water.
- **Etna**: Conditions on the volcano change fast. Near the summit craters you may only walk with an authorised guide, so follow local rules and go with a licensed guide.

History

Greek settlers founded Naxos on the coast below Taormina in the 8th century BC. It was the first Greek colony in Sicily, and you can see its remains in Parco Archeologico di Giardini Naxos. After Naxos was destroyed, its people moved up the hill in the 4th century BC and founded Tauromenion, today's Taormina.

In the 3rd century BC the Greeks built the Ancient Theatre of Taormina. The Romans rebuilt it after Taormina became a Roman colony. The brick wall of Naumachie also dates from Roman times. In the Byzantine period Taormina was the last major Byzantine stronghold in Sicily, until the Arabs took it in 902. The Normans arrived in the late 11th century.

In the Middle Ages, noble families built the palaces that still line the main street. In 1410 the Sicilian Parliament met in Corvaja Palace to choose a new king. From the late 18th century, writers and artists arrived on the Grand Tour, including *Johann Wolfgang von Goethe*. Later the town attracted a wealthy foreign community. *Florence Trevelyan* created the gardens of Taormina Public Gardens, and the writer *D. H. Lawrence* lived here in the early 1920s. In 2017 Taormina hosted a G7 summit.

Country facts

Quick practical facts for Italy at a glance:

CURRENCY

EUR €

EMERGENCY

112

ELECTRICITY



Type C / Type F / Type L
230 V · 50 Hz

LANGUAGES

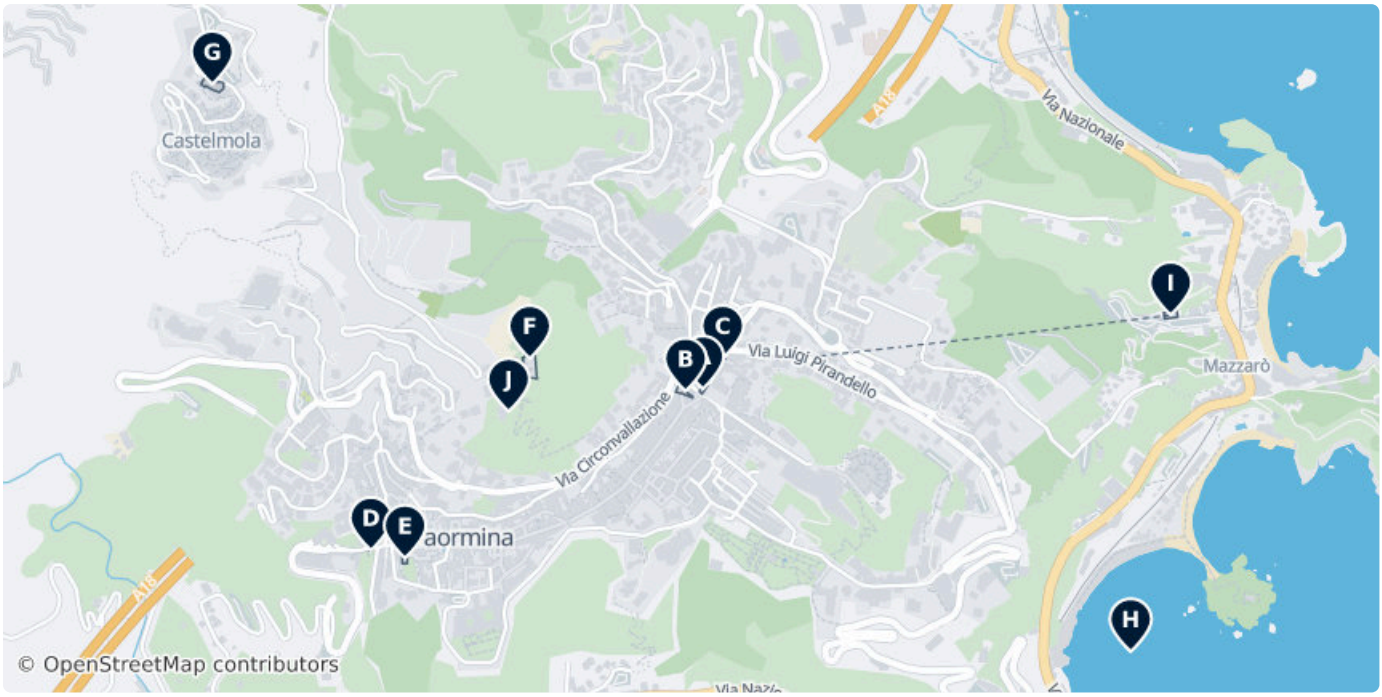
Italian

TAP WATER

Safe to drink

Taormina Must-Sees

Taormina's historic center is defined by its medieval fortifications, including the 14th-century stone gateways of Porta Messina and Porta Catania. The town features significant architectural landmarks like the Palazzo Corvaja and the Palazzo Duchi di Santo Stefano, which showcases Sicilian Gothic design. Above the town on Mount Tauro, the Saraceno Castle and the Sanctuary of Madonna della Rocca offer views of the coastline, while the nearby hilltop village of Castelmola contains ruins of a Norman fortress. The coastline below is accessible via cable car, leading to the nature reserve of Isola Bella.





A Corvaja Palace

Palazzo Corvaja is a medieval palace in Taormina, Sicily, Italy. It was principally built at the end of the 14th century and is named after...

Largo Santa Caterina, 98039 Taormina, Messina, Italy (37.85391, 15.28849)

+39 0942 620198



B Odeon romano sec. II d.C.

A small 2nd-century Roman theater built under the reign of Octavian Augustus. It was designed for musical and literary performances rather than large spectacles, originally seating approximately 200 people.

7 Via Fratelli Ingegneri, Taormina 98039, Italy (37.85387, 15.28810)



C Messina Gate

The northern entrance to Taormina's historic center, marking the start of the Corso Umberto. This stone gateway was once an integral part of the town's defensive fortifications.

4 Vico Zecca, Taormina 98039, Italy (37.85446, 15.28894)



D Porta Catania

Completed in 1440, this southern gateway marks the end of Corso Umberto. The stone arch is notable for featuring the carved coat of arms of the Kingdom of Aragon.

Corso Umberto, Taormina ME, Italy (37.85101, 15.28094)

taormina.it/what-to-see/going-through-the-town



E Palazzo Duchi di Santo Stefano

A 14th-century palace showcasing a blend of Sicilian Gothic, Arab, and Norman architectural styles. It features decorative friezes crafted from lava stone and white Syracuse marble.

6 Vico De Spuches, Taormina 98039, Italy (37.85087, 15.28172)



F Saraceno Castle

Situated on Mount Tauro at an elevation of 397 meters, this medieval fortress was constructed on the site of an ancient Greek acropolis to defend the town from naval attacks.

Via Madonna della Rocca, 16/18, 98039 Taormina ME, Italy (37.85446, 15.28456)



G Kastelmolo

The ruins of a fortification located in the hilltop village of Castelmola. The site offers panoramic views of Mount Etna, the Ionian coast, and the surrounding Peloritani mountains.

SP10, 98030, Italy (37.85938, 15.27734)



H Isola Bella bay

A nature reserve featuring a small, rocky island connected to the mainland by a narrow pebble beach that emerges during low tide. The bay is known for its clear waters and marine biodiversity.

Via Nazionale, 98039 Taormina ME, Italy (37.84920, 15.29822)

I Funivia Taormina - Mazzarò

A cable car system connecting the historic center of Taormina with the seaside district of Mazzarò, providing transport to the local beaches and the Isola Bella nature reserve.

Piazza della Funivia, Mazzarò 98039, Italy (37.85523, 15.29913)

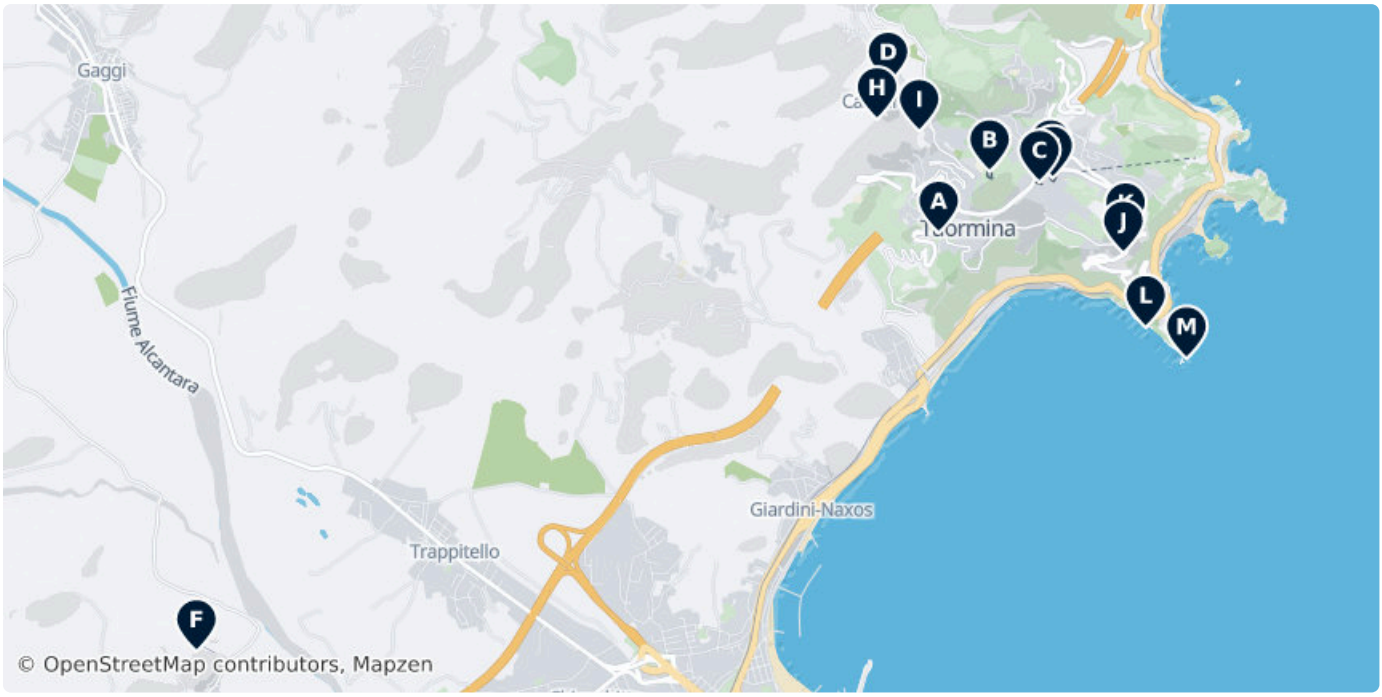
J Santuario Madonna della Rocca

A 17th-century sanctuary built directly into the living rock of Mount Tauro. The site includes a small chapel and a terrace overlooking the ancient Greek Theatre and the coastline.

Galleria Montetauro, 98039, Italy (37.85350, 15.28408)

Ancient Ruins and Historical Sites

Taormina's archaeological landscape spans centuries, from the 2nd-century Roman Odeon and thermal baths to medieval defensive structures. Key sites include the Saraceno Castle perched on Monte Tauro and the stone gates of Porta Catania and Porta Messina. The surrounding area features Iron Age necropolises like Cocolonazzo, Byzantine burial sites, and submerged Roman columns near the coast, providing a detailed look at the region's Greek, Roman, and medieval history.





A Porta Catania

Also known as the Porta del Tocco, this 1440 stone gateway marks the western entrance to the historic center and features the Aragonese coat of arms.

Corso Umberto, Taormina ME, Italy (37.85101, 15.28094)

taormina.it/what-to-see/going-through-the-town



B Saraceno Castle

A medieval fortress situated 397 meters above sea level on Monte Tauro. Built on the site of an ancient Greek acropolis, it served as a strategic defensive point.

Via Madonna della Rocca, 16/18, 98039 Taormina ME, Italy (37.85446, 15.28456)



C Odeon romano sec. II d.C.

A small Roman theater built in the 2nd century AD. It was primarily used for musical and literary performances and is located behind the Church of Saint Catherine.

7 Via Fratelli Ingegneri, Taormina 98039, Italy (37.85387, 15.28810)



D Kastelmolo

A 9th-century Norman fortification built to defend the village of Castelmola. The ruins offer panoramic views of Mount Etna and the Ionian coast.

SP10, 98030, Italy (37.85938, 15.27734)



E Messina Gate

The northern entrance to the city, originally part of the defensive wall system. It marks the start of Corso Umberto.

2 Via Costantino Patricio, Taormina 98039, Italy (37.85446, 15.28889)

F Castello di San Filippo

Medieval fortification ruins located near the Alcantara Valley, historically used for regional defense and surveillance.

(37.82753, 15.22814)

G Terme Romane

Remains of a Roman bathing complex featuring brickwork and drainage systems, illustrating the ancient city's infrastructure.

27 Vico Zecca, Taormina 98039, Italy (37.85410, 15.28905)

H Vecchi pozzetti romani dell'antica Milia

Ancient Roman water wells or cisterns located near Castelmola, part of the historical supply system for the settlement of Milia.

(37.85739, 15.27655)

I Necropoli di Cocolonazzo

An Iron Age burial site dating back to the 9th–8th century BC, consisting of rock-cut tombs characteristic of the Siculian culture.

Via Cuculunazzo, 98030 Castelmola ME, Italy
(37.85672, 15.27955)

J Tombe Bizantine

Rock-cut burial chambers dating to the Byzantine era, located along the slopes leading toward the Greek Theater.

(37.84989, 15.29406)

K Necropolis

Ancient burial grounds featuring various tomb styles from different historical periods, located outside the original city walls.

Via Luigi Pirandello, 98039 Taormina ME, Italy
(37.85092, 15.29423)

L Antica Garita

A small ancient sentry box or guard hut used for coastal surveillance and defense.

(37.84572, 15.29566)

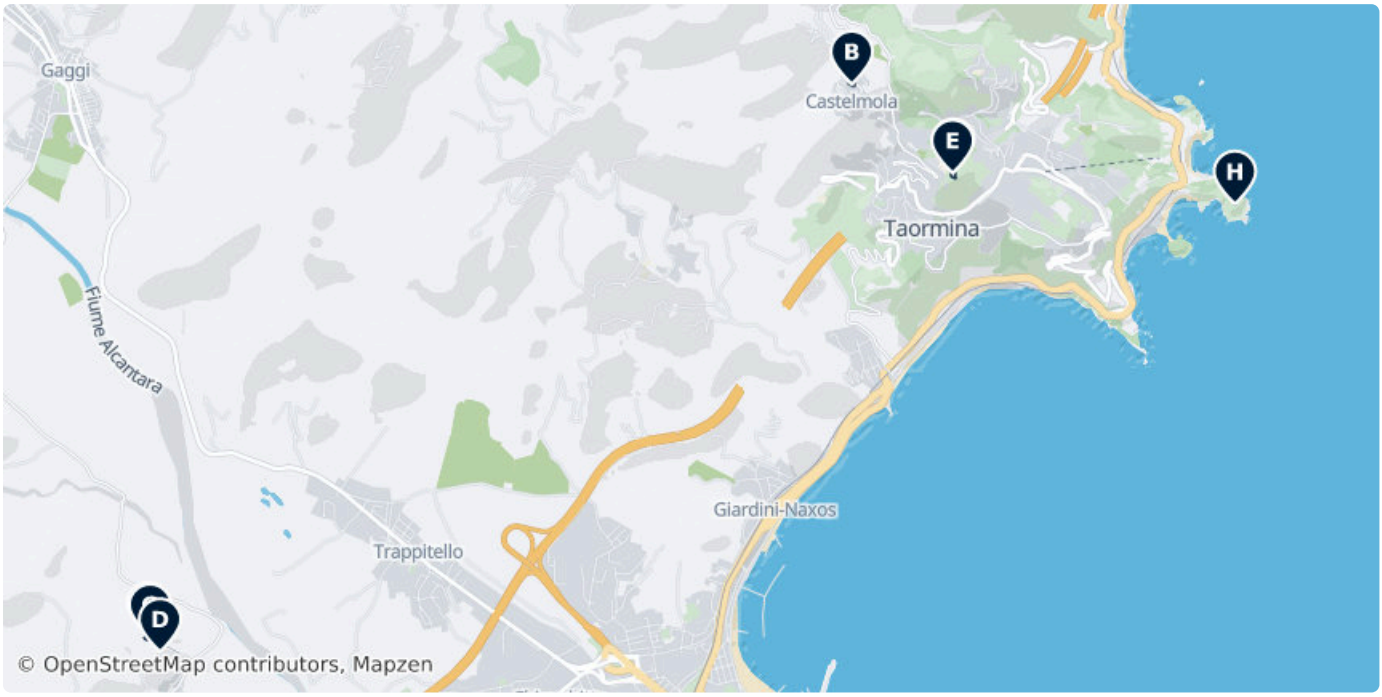
M scuba - Colonne romane

Submerged Roman marble columns located on the seabed near Capo Taormina, likely the remains of an ancient shipwreck.

Italy (37.84397, 15.29857)

Castles and Fortifications

Perched on the rocky heights above Taormina and the Alcantara Valley, these fortifications represent centuries of Mediterranean history. The collection includes Saracen strongholds on Monte Tauro, medieval ruins in Castelmola, and the Arab-Norman architecture of Calatabiano. These sites served as strategic defense points, featuring ancient acropolises, fortified towers like Torre di San Nicola, and archaeological remains that illustrate the region's transition through Roman, Byzantine, and Norman rule.





A Saraceno Castle

Built by the Arabs on the site of an ancient Greek acropolis, this fortress sits 397 meters above sea level on Monte Tauro. Its stone walls and strategic position once protected Taormina from inland attacks.

Via Madonna della Rocca, 16/18, 98039 Taormina ME, Italy (37.85446, 15.28456)



B Kastelmolo

Medieval ruins situated at the highest point of the village. The site features 16th-century walls and served as a key defensive lookout over the Ionian coast and the Alcantara Valley.

SP10, 98030, Italy (37.85938, 15.27734)

C Castello di Calatabiano

An Arab-Norman fortress located 160 meters above sea level. It features a 15th-century portal and the remains of a chapel, accessible via an inclined elevator.

(Unnamed Road), 95011, Italy (37.82834, 15.22746)

Mo–Su Closed

D Castello di San Filippo

A fortified complex near Calatabiano, historically linked to the defense of the Alcantara River valley.

(37.82753, 15.22814)

E Casteltauro

Also known as the Saracen Castle, these medieval fortifications occupy the site of Taormina's ancient acropolis on the summit of Monte Tauro.

(Unnamed Road), 98039, Italy (37.85439, 15.28452)

F Castello di Calatabiano

Arab-Norman fortress featuring the Salone dei Cruyllas and archaeological remains dating back to the Byzantine era.

(37.82845, 15.22728)

G Castello Arabo Normanno di Calatabiano

Historic fortification showcasing layers of Arab and Norman construction, including a keep and defensive walls overlooking the Alcantara River.

95011 Calatabiano CT, Italy (37.82834, 15.22743)

Mo–Su Closed

H Torre di San Nicola

A historic coastal watchtower that formed part of the region's maritime defense system against pirate incursions.

98039, Italy (37.85265, 15.30460)

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