

# Mount Etna, Europe's Most Active Volcano, Puts On a Show

By **RUSSELL GOLDMAN** MARCH 1, 2017  
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Credit  
Antonio Parrinello/Reuters

In a fiery reminder of its presence and its power, Mount Etna roared to life this week on the island of Sicily, sending red-hot fountains of molten rock and ash high into the air and down the slopes of Europe's largest and most active volcano.



Credit

Antonio Parrinello/Reuters

The latest eruption, which began on Monday and is expected to last at least several more days, could be seen for miles. Mount Etna's frequent eruptions have been watched and feared for thousands of years. An especially large one in the 17th century changed the shape of Sicily's coastline with a huge outpouring of lava. More recent outbursts have tended to be smaller, but still dangerous enough to prompt evacuations of nearby villages and disrupt air traffic with plumes of smoke and ash.



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Antonio Parrinello/Reuters

By Tuesday, Italian authorities said the latest eruption posed no further danger to the towns that dot the mountain's slopes, and flights in and out of the closest airport in Catania were operating normally again.

[A big eruption in 1981](#) destroyed 12,350 acres of vineyards and woods, as well as scores of rural homes and vacation villas. Lava flows cut telephone and power lines, buried railroad tracks and blocked highways.

[Tremors from a 2002 eruption](#) led to the evacuation of 1,000 people.



Credit

Antonio Parrinello/Reuters

The 10,922-foot volcano has nurtured the island's residents more than it has threatened them. Its eruptions have give northeastern Sicily a mineral-rich soil that is prized by farmers and vintners, and the mountain draws many tourists.