

## **TRIP TO CATANIA (SICILY): ACTIVITIES AND VISITS FROM 5<sup>TH</sup> TO 9<sup>TH</sup> OCTOBER 2010.**

### **5TH OCTOBER 2010**

#### **Departure from Barajas airport**

We went from Villafranca to Madrid to take the plane to Milan. We left at about 2:35pm , arriving at Linate airport at about 4:30pm. We waited for 90 minutes in the airport, so we left at about 6:30pm, arriving to Catania two hours later.

In the airport we took a bus to “Villa de Girasoli” hotel, located in the city center, in Enrico Pantano Street.

**Catania** is the second largest city in Sicily, after Palermo. It is on the east coast and it is the capital of the eponymous province. It has 298,957 inhabitants-(752,895 in the outskirts), the sixth biggest city in number of inhabitants in Italy. It is bordered in the North by Etna, the most active volcano in Europe. Catania was founded in the 8th century BC, according to Plutarco, and its name comes from the word “Katane”, which means volcanic land. It has been destroyed seven times by volcanic eruptions and earthquakes, the most catastrophic being in 1169 and 1693. The first head office of the University of Sicily, founded in 1434 by Alfonso V de Aragón, is in this city.

Temperatures are mild during the whole year. In winter they rarely drop under 10°C.

During the days we were there, the weather was excellent, about 23°C and 24°C.

### **6TH OCTOBER 2010**

At about 8:30am, after having breakfast in the hotel, we went from Piazza Trento, along the Viale XX de Setiembre and the Viale Regina Margherita, to “Francisco de Santis” High School, a 20 minute walk. In this school we had the work meeting.

The school head, Anna Giufrida, gave us a very warm welcome and after a short presentation we started the work group with the other participating countries. During the morning, the meeting was in the library and we did PowerPoint presentations about our schools, towns and countries.

At about 1:00pm we went to a small restaurant close to the school where we had a snack. We started work again at 2:30pm and finished at 7:30pm. In the afternoon we did the project work plan and decided on the deadlines for the participating schools' work to be presented.

We went back to the hotel on foot to see more of the city. In the evening we were invited by the Italian school to a restaurant in the oldest part of Catania.

## **7th OCTOBER 2010**

### **Trip to Taormina**

It is a small town on the east coast of Sicily, in the province of Messina, between Messina and Catania. It has 10,991 inhabitants.

It is on the border of the province of Catania, and it extends to Taormina mountain, 200m above sea level, opposite the Etna volcano.

Taormina has been a very popular tourist destination since the 19<sup>th</sup> century. It has fantastic beaches (accessible via a cable car) and a very rich heritage, above all the Greco-Roman theatre. There is also, an Arabic castle, which is located in the old citadel (Arx).

The visit to Catania finished at 5:00pm. In the evening we were welcomed by the President of the province of Catania, better known as "Sindaco", similar to our mayors.

Before being welcomed by the President, we visited the enormous presidential palace in the Piazza del Duomo accompanied by the Master of Celebrations who explained the importance of the valuable paintings in the palace, specially the ones of Agata of Catania, the patron saint of the city.

Without doubt, the most important monument in Catania is Santa Agata Cathedral, in Piazza del Duomo. It is an amazing temple consecrated to Saint Agata, the young virgin martyred by a Roman consul, who sacrificed her life before renouncing her faith.

It is an Italian baroque building with a lot of decoration and it is as beautiful inside as outside. The church has been destroyed and rebuilt several times due to earthquakes and eruptions of the nearby volcano Etna, but it was originally constructed between 1078-1093. The current façade of the church dates back to 1700 and was designed by Vaccarini, the same architect who designed other important buildings in the city like Piazza del Duomo and Palazzo de los Elefantes (Town Hall).

The church is on the Latin cross plan, with a nave and two aisles. The Chapel of St. Agatha with her tomb is very interesting, although there are other famous tombs too. Also, the paintings have amazing colours and they are very well preserved.

This temple is visited a lot by tourists and local people, who have strong faith and they feel protected by it and think it keeps the volcano calm. It is said the temple is one of the amulets of the city together with the Fontana Dell' Elefante, a fountain with a huge elephant which represents Liotru, an animal which was Eliodoro's wizard, who lived in the 8th century BC and who had the skill to convert men into animals. The elephant statue is from 1736.

## **8th OCTOBER 2010**

### **Visit to Etna**

At 9:00am we went to visit Etna volcano. With a basal circumference of 140km, it is one of the most active volcanoes in the world and is in an almost constant state of activity. In Greek Mythology it is Cyclops' house.

On 19th December 2009, several tremors from Etna were registered. Altogether, there have been more than 30 tremors, the most intense being of 4.6 degrees on the Richter scale.

On 26th November 2006, a torrent of 2,000 metres of lava came out of Etna, moving one metre per second. According to vulcanologists, the lava went down the south side of the mountain. The earthquake, 5.7 degrees on the Richter scale according to the USGS, and 5.9 grades according to the Euro-Mediterranean Sismology Centre, took place in an area near the volcano, but at a depth of 222 kms.

## **9th October 2010**

### **Departure from Catania airport to Spain**