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Mount Etna - It's Alive!

Dual vents on Europe's largest active volcano send plumes of steam in the direction of Riposto, a town along the eastern coast of Sicily. Mount Etna sits above a geologic hotspot, where the African plate subducts beneath the Eurasian plate. The active, 10,922-foot stratovolcano is about 500,000 years old. This image dates from August, 2014.

In 2013 Mount Etna was declared a UNESCO World Heritage site, largely for its "exceptional level of volcanic activity". In spite of the hazards, about a quarter of the island's population lives in the volcano's immediate vicinity. And why wouldn't they - thanks to Etna the soil is rich and fertile, vineyards and olive groves abound, and tourists spend money with considerable enthusiasm.

The moral of this story - if life gives you lava, make a Mediterranean paradise.

