

Catania Survival Guide



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Discovering Catania

Our history in brief

Catania is the second largest city in Sicily and the tenth in Italy. It was founded in 729 BC and it has a long history characterized by various rulers whose remains now enrich the artistic, architectural and cultural heritage.

The architectural style that prevails is the Baroque, which was recognized by UNESCO as a World Heritage of Humanity.

Some translations of the name of the city of Catania are "harsh lands", "uneven", "sharp stones" and "harsh and rough ground." The latter etymologies are easily justifiable because, for many centuries, the Metropolis of Etna has always been rebuilt in his typical black lava landscape.



The Elephant

The species arrived from Africa during the Ice Ages, and adapted by becoming smaller. It was present in Sicily until present 400.000 years ago. A skeleton of the species is exhibited at the University of Catania.



The Phoenix

Due to eruptions and earthquakes, Catania has been destroyed and rebuilt 9 times. The phoenix, a mythological firebird that rises from the ashes, is one of the symbols of Catania.



Saint Agata

Saint Agata, Catania's patron saint. Agata was born into a rich and noble family from Catania in the 3rd century and she was martyred and killed by the Ancient Romans for her Christian faith.

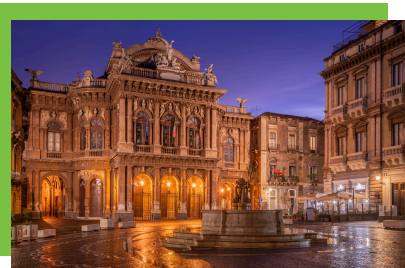


Culture

Teatro Massimo Bellini

an Opera House, dedicated to the famous Catania's composer Vincenzo Bellini. It was opened on May 31st 1890. The concert hall has an excellent acoustic and is considered to be among the best in the world.

It is a majestic building, which today includes an orchestra of 105 elements and a choir of 84.



Biscari Palace

One of the most beautiful Baroque buildings in Catania. It was erected on the remains of the 16th century city walls. The palace is accessed through a large portal facing via Museo Biscari. Among its splendid 700 hundred rooms, It is outstanding façade overlooks a beautiful view of sea from the harbor. Its frescoed halls, full of charm and elegance, represent a splendid setting for concerts, meetings, receptions, gala evenings, fashion shows.



Roman Theatre

Probably built between 1st and 2nd centuries AD, on the pre-existing Greek Theatre. It could seat up to 7000 spectators. Today is still visible the remains of the cavea, orchestra, and some parts of the scene. Next to the Roman Theatre there is the Odeon, which could seat up to 1300 spectators. It was used for the choir rehearsals and competitions.

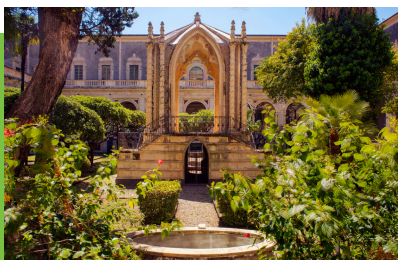
Roman Amphitheater

Second only to that of the Coliseum in Rome, the Roman Amphitheatre in Catania was considered to be one of the best and magnificent edifices. It was built around the 2nd century AD and brought to the light during the excavations in 1904 and 1906. It was oval in shape, built from lava stone, brick and marble. The Roman Amphitheatre could accommodate up to 16 000 spectators. Unfortunately, only one part of it is visible today, because the other part is still buried under the lava bridge.



Via Crociferi

The street is a triumph of 18th century Baroque. The first impressive building is the Church of St. Benedict, followed by the Church of St. Francis Borgia and Jesuit College, used to house the Art Institute. Opposite the College is located the Church of San Giuliano, with a beautiful iron gate and a facade of rare beauty. Continuing on the other side of Via Antonino di Sangiuliano one will find the Convento dei Crociferi. Legend has it that the ghost of a headless horse haunts Via dei Crociferi at night.



Benedictine Monastery

The Benedictine Monastery of Catania, or Monastery of San Nicolò l'Arena, is one of the largest monastic complexes in Europe. 500 years old, today it houses the Department of Human Sciences of the University of Catania and all the activities connected to it. This site, which has become part of the UNESCO World Heritage Site, preserves several wonders inside, such as the hanging garden and even a Roman domus. The underground areas can also be visited with the company OfficineCulturali.



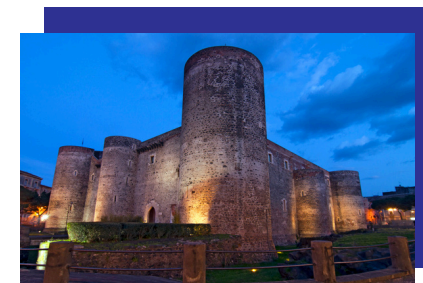
Saint Agata Cathedral

The beautiful Cattedrale di Sant'Agata is the Cathedral of Catania; it was rebuilt several times during the centuries in which the city was the victim of earthquakes and eruptions, and it was built on what remained of ancient Roman thermal baths. Inside the visitor is enchanted by the style baroque, there is also the chapel dedicated to Saint Agata, The Patron Saint of Catania, where her relics are still preserved today, you will also find the tomb of Vincenzo Bellini, the famous composer from Catania.

Ursino Castle

Built by King Frederick II of Swabia in the 13th century, Ursino Castle is one of the most important buildings in the city of Norman origin, as well as one of the symbols of Catania.

During the Sicilian vespers it was the seat of Parliament and then it became the residence of the lineage of Aragonese sovereigns. Today it is the headquarters of Civic Museum of Catania; they say that it witnessed apparitions and manifestations of spirits and ghosts.



Nature

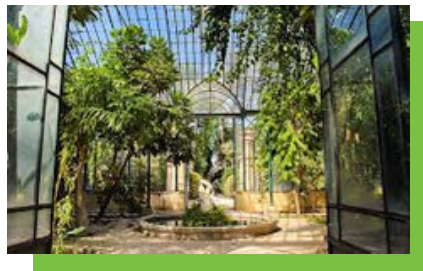


Villa Bellini

It is the biggest and nicest park in Catania, dedicated to the composer Vincenzo Bellini, who was born in the same city in 1801. Villa Bellini has an ancient and interesting history, and hosts many statues, fountains, and plants. It's a place of relaxation and fun for the locals and the tourists, who can walk along its avenues, admire its monuments and enjoy its greenery.

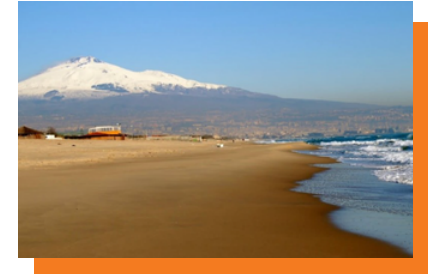
Botanical Garden

Located in the neighborhood of the northeastern area of the city, that once was an ancient maritime village. Ognina has a history linked to the myth of Ulysses, and still preserves its small port, called Porto Ulisse. Ognina is a place of history and tradition, but also of beauty and charm.



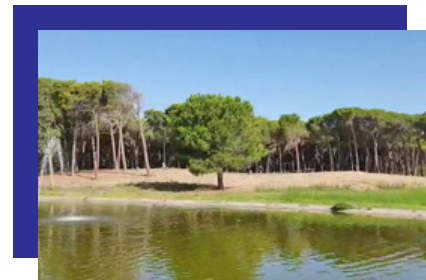
Playa

It is the longest and most popular beach of Catania, that stretches for about 18 km along the southeastern coast of the city. The Playa of Catania is a beach of golden sand, bathed by a crystal clear sea, that offers all the services and comforts for a seaside holiday. The Playa of Catania is also a place of nightlife that hosts clubs, pubs, restaurants and other venues.



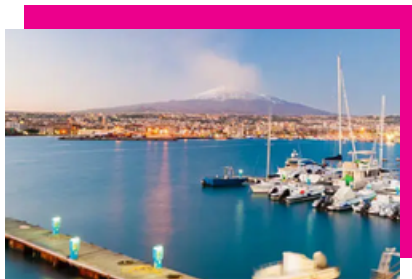
Playa's Grove

Called "Boschetto della Playa", it is green area located in the final part of the Playa beach but on the opposite side of the road from the sea. It hosts a little pine forest and a small lake. The entrance to the park is free and it's open every day. This place represents an ideal destination for those who love to relax and have picnics with friends, or simply look for an oasis of peace and tranquility close to the sea.



Molo di Levante

Located inside the commercial harbor, it is a fascinating place that offers a spectacular view of the sea and the Etna. Perfect to watch the sunrise or take a walk.



Saint Giovanni Li Cuti

It is a small fishermen's port located in the northeastern area of Catania. The adjacent beach is characterized by black volcanic sand and rocks.



Ògnina

It is a neighborhood of the north-east area of the city, that once was an ancient maritime village. Ognina has a history linked to the myth of Ulysses, and still preserves its small port, called Porto Ulisse. Recommended place to complete a walk along the seafont (Lungomare di Catania)



Etna

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Folklore



Pescheria

It is the ancient fish market of the city, that is located between Piazza Pardo and Piazza Alonzo di Benedetto. It is a suggestive and picturesque place, where you can feel the folklore and the vitality of the locals. Here you can admire the stalls of the fishmongers, who display the fresh and colorful catch, and who attract the customers with their voices: incessant, colorful and typical of the market.

Fiera

The historic market of Catania, called Fiera from the citizens, It is open daily, with the sole exception of Sunday, and has a vast assortment of products: from gastronomy to clothing, from household goods to ethnic products, up to fruit and vegetables and the sale of second hand items. From Tuesday to Friday it is open from 7:30 to 14:00. On Saturday it is open until 18:00. Taking a walk through its streets is a true Catanese experience.



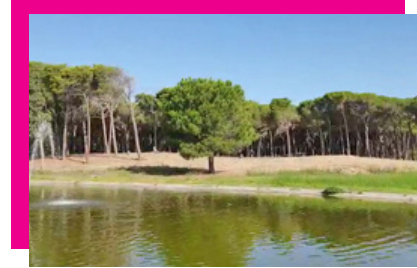
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Via Plebiscito and Castello Ursino's steak houses

Via Plebiscito is one of the most famous and folkloristic streets of Catania and, together with Castello Ursino area, it is home of "arrusti e Mangia", a typical gastronomic tradition of Catania, that consists of eating meat cooked on barbeques in the middle of the street.

Horse meat is part of this tradition since the time where from a noble food imported from France it became, in the twentieth century, symbol of gastronomic conquest of the humble classes.



Sicilian Puppets

Sicilian puppets are traditional marionettes used in a form of popular theater called "Opera dei Pupi," typical of Sicily. Opera dei Pupi, born in the eighteenth century, was proclaimed by UNESCO patrimony in 2001. The puppeteers animate the puppets to represent in installments stories derived from epic-chivalric literature of medieval origin, with particular reference to the Carolingian cycle, or the chanson de geste of the paladins of Charlemagne. The puppets represent historical, legendary and chivalric characters, such as Orlando and Rinaldo.



Saint Agata Feast

"The Feast of Saint Agata, held every February 5th in Catania, is one of the largest religious festivals in the world. Over three days, the city is filled with processions, fireworks, and celebrations as thousands of devotees carry the saint's relics through the streets. The most iconic moment is the 'Candelore' procession, where large, ornate candles are carried by locals as a symbol of devotion. This event blends faith, culture, and community, making it a unique experience in Sicilian tradition."

Moor's heads

The 'Moor's Heads' (Teste di Moro) are traditional Sicilian ceramic vases, often depicting the faces of a Moorish man and a Sicilian woman. According to legend, a love story between a Moor and a young woman ended tragically, with her turning his head into a planter to keep him with her forever. These vases, now symbols of Sicilian craftsmanship and folklore, are commonly found in homes and shops, representing the island's rich cultural heritage.



The Pine

The Sicilian pine cone, or 'pigna', is a popular ceramic symbol in Sicilian culture, representing prosperity, abundance, and good luck. Often used as decorative elements in homes, balconies, or gardens, these beautifully crafted pine cones are believed to bring positive energy and protection. Rooted in ancient traditions and mythology, the 'pigna' reflects Sicily's deep connection to nature and its rich artisanal heritage



Calcio Catania

Calcio Catania is the historic football club of the city, founded in 1929. Throughout its history, the team has experienced both triumphs and challenges, with memorable seasons in Serie A where they earned a reputation for resilience and determination. The club is a source of immense local pride, and its loyal fanbase, the 'tifosi rossazzurri,' passionately supports the team. On match days, the Stadio Angelo Massimino comes alive with energy, as fans create an unforgettable atmosphere that reflects the deep connection between the club and the city of Catania.



Volunteering

Volunteering can be of different types: blood donation, elderly/disabled assistance, hospital rescue, rescue and cooperation in emergency situations, diving rescue, forest rescue, social welfare rescue, logistics, and charity fundraising.

The Municipality of Etna has established the Municipal Coordination of Civil Defense Volunteers, which serves as a link between the various volunteer organizations that collaborate with Civil Defense.

olunteer organizations in Catania - Useful addresses

<https://www.caritascatania.it/>

Ambulanze Croce Verde Catania - Via Caruso Antonino, 6

Ass. di Famiglie Disabili Intellettivi e Relazionali - Via Asiago 10

Associazione Donatori Volontari Sangue San Marco - Via Ofelia 35

Associazione s.Marco -Via Plebiscito 630

Centro di Servizio Per il Volont.Etneo - Via Teseo 14

Ass.Centro di Servizio Per il Volont.Etneo - Viale Castagnola 4

Ass. Confraternita di Misericordia di ct Porto - Via Dusmet Cardinale 2/p.circum

Associazione Comitato Cittadino Rinascita - Viale Grimaldi 15

Fidas - Via Galermo 173

Unione Gruppi Anziani Fiat - Via Sabotino 8

Save The Children Italia Onlus - Viale Jonio 105

Save The Children Italia Onlus - Via Vittorio Emanuele ii 108

Associazione di Promozione Sociale Beato Dusmet - Via Teatro Greco 32

Anffas Onlus di Catania - Via Asiago 10

Croce Gialla Onlus - Corso dei Mille 4

MISERICORDIA S. Maria di Ognina - Sanitaria

MISERICORDIA S. Leone - Catania - Sanitaria

MISERICORDIA Trappeto Nord - Sanitaria

MISERICORDIA Catania Porto - Sanitaria

CROCE ROSSA ITALIANA - Sanitaria

Montepalma Soccorso Onlus - Via Brescia 26

Societa' Per l'Assistenza al Malato Oncologico Terminale Catania Organizzazione Non

Lucrativa di Utilita' Sociale - Via Enna 18

Associazione Italiana Famiglie Invalidi - Via Ughetti 68

Agape' Onlus Agape' Onlus - Via Vecchia Ognina 142/B



Transports

Buses

Operated by AMT, covering various city areas and landmarks.

*AMT Lines "BRT 1-5" are the fastest and direct way to go to Cittadella



To the Airport

There is the Alibus, a shuttle bus.

The ticket price for the ALIBUS line is €4.00 and is also valid on all other AMT urban lines for a total of 90 minutes.

From 5am to midnight, the Alibus serves each stop concerned approximately every 25 minutes, so twice an hour. To check the updated timetable and stops, go to the website amts.ct.it

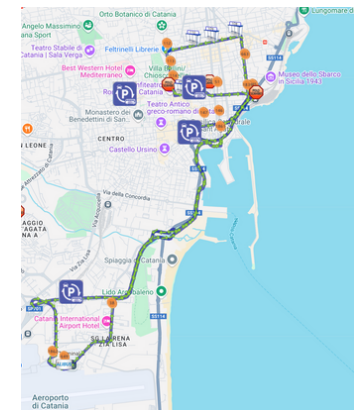
It can be purchased in the following ways:

- On the bus in cash or with payment cards
- Using the AMT Catania app
- At the season ticket office and AMT retailers
- At partner hotels

Warning: travel tickets for other company lines are not valid for travel on ALIBUS vehicles, in particular:

- AMT 90-minute tickets, daily tickets and special and/or reserved tickets
- FCE tickets
- AMT ordinary season tickets

ALIBUS
CATANIA AIRPORT SHUTTLE BUS



Metro

Operated by FCE, the subway Connects the city center with suburbs; efficient and fast.



Trains

Local services linking Catania with other Sicilian cities

Student Passes

Discounted monthly and annual passes are available for students, offering savings and unlimited travel on public transport.



Sport

CUS – University Sport Center

Located at the Cittadella Universitaria, the Scientific Campus of the University. Out of the historical center, it can be reached by metro and bus. It includes: Gym, Fencing Hall, Fitness and Recreational-Sporting Activities course rooms, Indoor Boulder Hall, Synthetic Soccer Fields, Soccer/Rugby Field, Multipurpose Field (Basketball/Volleyball), Weights Hall, Basketball Hall, Athletics Track, Beach Volleyball Field,, Martial arts hall.



Outdoor Facilities

Villa bellini (Paz, roma) Lungomare
Piazza Europa
Parco Gioieni
Circolo Nautico - Port of Catania (Molo Levante)

Campi basket
Skate park

Waste management

Home waste

In the city center, waste is left in the early evening (between 8pm and 9.30pm) next to the building's door, closed in transparent bags. Waste must be appropriately recycled and disposed of according to the following calendar.



Use Thursday only for waste that does not belong to any category such as sanitary towels, broken glasses and crystal, faience, rubber, receipts, cotton, non-recyclable plastic (such as vases, pens and DVDs).

Special waste

Small special waste (batteries, medicines, electronics) should be taken to the Ecological Island (Via Galatiolo 169) or delivered to specialized shops. Big special waste (appliances, mattresses, furniture) should be taken to the Ecological Island or should be displayed outside the door of the building after having booked the collection by the Municipal Service provided by Consorzio Gema (+39 328 0065690) by calling or writing on Whatsapp.

Textile

Old textiles, linen, clothes, shoes, accessories can be left next to the garbage in a transparent bag only on the first Monday of the month.



Safety

General recommendations

We remind you that it is a metropolitan city, it is better not to walk alone at night in dark areas. We also recommend that you ride a bicycle or scooter wearing a helmet and only on cycle paths or pedestrian areas.

Single Emergency Number

The Single European Emergency Number (SEN) 112 (one-one-two) is the telephone number to call emergency services in all European Union countries.

You can call the Single European Emergency Number to urgently request intervention:

- of the Police Forces
- of the Fire Brigade
- of healthcare
- of assistance at sea.

The 112 operator forwards the call to the Operations Centre responsible for the type of emergency.

You can call the Single European Emergency Number, 112, free of charge from a landline or mobile network even when your phone does not have a SIM card, is blocked or you have no phone credit.



112 where are you APP

It is an emergency app connected to the Centrali Uniche di risposta (CUR) of the NUE 112. It allows you to make an emergency call with the simultaneous sending of the exact position of the caller. The app detects the position via GPS and/or data network and displays it on the phone; at the time of the call, the position is transmitted via data network or via SMS if the data network is not available. If you cannot speak, the app allows you to voluntarily make a silent call; with specific buttons you can signal the type of assistance required.

Drinking water

Tap water in the city is generally drinkable (check the regulations in your neighborhood), but we recommend that you filter it because it is very calcareous and not easy to digest. You can buy a filter jug or a tap filter.

Guardia Medica

If you need urgent but non-life-threatening medical assistance during your stay in Catania, you can go to a Guardia Medica (Out-of-Hours Medical Service). These clinics provide free medical care for temporary residents, including Erasmus students.

Address: Corso Italia, 234



Nightlife

Catania is very famous for its nightlife: restaurants and bars around are full even during the week and numerous clubs offer evenings with all genres of music and for all the ages!

Ready to enjoy the *Italian movida*? Let's discover the main meeting areas are:

Ombrellini: the address square is full of pubs and bars. Covered by colorful umbrellas (in Italian "umbrellas") it is the perfect place to dine and have a drink with friends. On foot, you can reach some winter clubs such as the "MA" or the "Supercinema", which offer parties several nights a week. The most famous pub in the area is the Ostello: open for lunch and dinner, it has competitive prices and downstairs has a room with an underground lava cave (which can be visited during the day for €2 and which can be booked for dinner in the evening) through which passes the Amenano, Catania's hidden river.

Via Gemmellaro: it is a long, narrow street that begins with the "Santa Filomena Food District", a charming and welcoming street full of gourmet restaurants and pizzerias all worth trying! Then it continues with the real Via Gemmellaro, a street full of pubs, including Vermut, famous for its excellent value for money. Next to it is the small Piazza Sciuti, also full of places and tables outside.

Castello Ursino: area of trattorias with typical food, bars and a kiosk, it is a meeting point with a large square, often frequented by local and international students.



Piazza delle Belle: small square hidden among the ancient buildings inside San Berillo, a neighborhood that was abandoned and degraded for decades and which the city is slowly reclaiming. The First is the pub that began commercial activity in that area, carving out welcoming and evocative spaces among the ruins of the abandoned neighbourhood.

Piazza Teatro: area with many pubs and where you can walk through the streets until you reach Piazza Scammacca, a new restaurant-covered market with typical food, events related to food and wine and excellent cocktails.

Borghetto Europa: a little far from the historic center, it is located near the sea. It's a small modern space full of restaurants and clubs that often has live music. It is very welcoming, but strongly not recommended on weekends because it is too crowded. It is a good point from which to start a walk overlooking the sea along the Lungomare up to San Giovanni Li Cuti, a fishing village nestled in the city and closed to cars.

Ciminiere and via Raffineria: Clubs area, starting from the Centro Zo, inside the Le Ciminiere exhibition center (famous for the chimneys that constituted the former sulfur refinery), up to the streets around via Raffineria, former industrial area always populated by refineries: today the large factories have been transformed into clubs.

In summer, nightlife moves to the sea: there are a number of clubs that organize parties and dancing every night, both on the sandy seafront, "La Playa," and on the rocky seafront of Aci Castello and Aci Trezza. However, for these destinations at night a car is needed.



Discovering Sicily



Daytrips



Ragusa



Pantalica



Gole dell'Alcantara



Noto



Siracusa



Vendicari



Trips around Sicily



Palermo



Agrigento



Isole Eolie



Trapani



Siracusa



University of Catania

History

The University of Catania has ancient roots dating back to 1434 when it was founded as Studium Generale. Over the centuries, the university has played a significant role in promoting education and culture in the region. Today, it stands as a prominent academic center with a rich history and a strong tradition of offering a wide range of study programs.



Morphology

The campus of the University of Catania is spread across various locations, each with its own atmosphere and architecture. University buildings range from modern structures to historical ones, creating a diverse academic environment. The morphological diversity reflects the city's history, providing students with a variety of stimulating contexts for their academic experience.

Where to study

Each Department has its own library (called a study room) within its buildings: these rooms are freely accessible during the opening hours of the building.

The University of Catania provides well-equipped study spaces distributed across various campuses and locations. Students can find quiet places for individual study or collaborate with peers. University libraries are rich in academic resources, offering an ideal environment for research and study. Additionally, there are outdoor spaces and collaborative study rooms that foster idea-sharing and collaboration.

Services for International Students

The university welcomes students from around the world and offers a range of services to ease their adaptation. International students can benefit from orientation programs, assistance in securing accommodation, Italian language courses, and administrative support. Moreover, the international office provides useful information on visa matters, health insurance, and other practical needs. The academic community in Catania is open and inclusive, promoting a supportive environment for students from diverse cultures.



What is ESN?

ESN International

Erasmus Student Network (ESN) is one of the biggest non-profit student associations in Europe. Headquartered in Brussels, ESN International promotes and encourages Erasmus exchange programs and transnational training, providing support to students before, during and after their mobility. Its 15.000 volunteers help over 350,000 international students every year. The motto "Students Helping Students" is the animating principle of the projects carried out by ESN.

ESN Italy

ESN Italia is the largest national division of the European Network and has 53 active sections in more than 40 Erasmus cities, more than 2,000 volunteers and 30,000 subscribed international students every year.



ESN Catania

Born in 2008 as ASE Catania, the student association joined the ESN Network in 2009, becoming ESN ASE Catania. Since then, the association has supported thousands of Erasmus and international students hosted by the city's Tertiary Education Institutions. The main activities carried out every semester include: welcome activities, city tours, home search support, trips around Sicily, parties, city tours, cineforums, conferences, activities with local students, language tandems and much more. The Association's weekly event is called MartENS and is repeated every Tuesday evening with activities such as DrinkPong or other. The association is made up of numerous local volunteers, often former exchange students themselves, and is led by an annually elected Board.



ESN Card



ESN Card

The ESN Card is your personal document in ESN! Owning one allows you to have lots of discounts on our countless Local or International Partners like Ryanair! You can check the full list of partners on Esncard.org.