



Provincia di  
**Trapani**

# Castellammare del Golfo



**Welcome**





## Castellammare del Golfo is...

This town, which rises on the gulf of the same name, finds its identity in the sea. Founded as a marine trading centre for the traders of the nearby Segesta, watch towers and defensive bulwarks of the castle are reflected in its sea. And it is the sea where life is led, and which animates the summer

evenings. In the surrounding area, archaic landscapes are still conserved, like the village of Scopello, set on a rock which overlooks the stacks and an old *tonnara* (tuna warehouse). Part of the *Riserva Naturale Orientata dello Zingaro* - Oriented Nature Reserve of the Zingaro falls into the

territory of Castellammare where, next to the uncontaminated beaches considerable endemic manifestations of flora and fauna are to be found. For potholing lovers, the caves of Mount Inici with extremely deep “*orridi*” (ravines), underwater lakes and extremely suggestive views are not to be missed.

View from castle



Scopello, tuna warehouse



RNO dello Zingaro







## History

The Swabians named the town *Castrum ad mare de gulfu*, from where the present name derives. But before this, the Elymian Segesta had its emporium and its important port here, appreciated and used later by the Phoenicians and then by the Romans for commerce. In medieval times it became a stronghold with

the castle built by the Arabs who called it *Al Madarig*, the steps, underlining the town's position with its descent towards the port. Even today, steps link the different quarters and lead down to the sea. In 1560, close to the castle, a feudal town was founded which, during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, extended as far as

the slopes of Mount Inici. Thanks to the *tonnare* (tuna warehouses) for fish and the tuna production, and above all for the grain loader, between the XV and the XIX centuries, the port became a strategic point for commercial flow both in and out of the town and a great amount of grain was exported.

Remains of Phoenician port



Castle



Steps to the sea





## Landscape

The coastal landscape of the gulf of Castellammare, in the shape of an amphitheatre, frames the town of the same name with its fishing port and the castle in very suggestive scenery, overlooked by the imposing Mount Inici and, in the east, the magnificent beaches. To the west the coast becomes

rocky, and extremely jagged, characterised by high rocks overhanging the sea, with the stacks of Scopello and the coast of the Zingaro, with coves of extraordinary beauty: straight away the point and inlet of Cala Bianca and the point of the Grottaro and then, the very beautiful large bay of

Guidaloca, characterised by crystalline water and a low sea bed. The vegetation of the rocky areas overlooking the sea is particularly rich: in the stepped areas, going down towards the sea, dwarf palms grow, while next to the road, there are superb carobs, olive trees and euphorbia.

Gulf of Castellammare



Coastal landscape



RNO dello Zingaro, cove





## Nature

The mountainous complex made up of calcareous masses, characterized by the reliefs of Mount Inici (1064m), Pizzo delle Niviere (1043m) and the Pizzo Stagnone (802m) which overlooks Castellammare, is covered mostly by a conifer wood, while on the summit a remaining strip of historic oak wood survives. The undergrowth is mostly made up of blackberry bushes, butcher's broom, ivy, wormwood, blackthorn, hawthorn, bramble rose and broom. The rock plants are also very interesting, including the *Scabiosa cretica* and the *Ceterach officinarum* (stonebreaker), which grows

in the cracks in the rocks. Where rainwater collects, the discoglossid, an amphibian very similar to a small frog lives. It can survive a long way away from permanent ponds. A snail *Marmorana scabriuscola*, which has adapted to narrow fissures, lives between the rocks. Among the birds, the kestrel can be seen, hunting insects and small rodents. Another natural area of extraordinary value is the *la Riserva Naturale Orientata dello Zingaro* - Oriented Nature Reserve of the Zingaro with a noticeable diversity of areas, which in part has a plant species composition of great interest from the point of view of

nature and landscape. This semi-natural area resulting from thousands of years of work of shepherds, farmers and craftsmen has endemic displays including the *Serratula cichoracea subsp. mucronata*, also present on the north African coastlines and numerous terricolous orchids. In this garigue, near the rocky outcrops, the endemic iris, the buttercup and the hyssop flower. Aspects linked to wet areas, extremely localised in the depressions downstream in Monte Acci, represented mostly by reeds and sedge, have an important role also as regards the fauna of the area.



Scopello, stacks





## Religion Remembrance Bonds

**T**he church of the *Madonna delle Scale* is a destination for pilgrims. It was built by Benedictine monks, on the site of a miracle which occurred on the 7th September 1641, when a young shepherdess was saved by the Madonna during a storm: until the 1960s, the miracle was celebrated with the *Festa delle verginelle* - celebration

of the young virgins, during which broad bean pasta was offered to nine or twelve young girls to remember the food eaten by the young shepherdess; today it is celebrated from the 6th to the 8th of September with the *Sagra della pasta con le fave*, Broad bean pasta festival accompanied by processions and fireworks.

On the evening of the 18th of March, to honour San Giuseppe - Saint Joseph, a fire with high flames - the *vampata* is lit. From the 29th of April to the 1st of May, shows, processions, fairs and fireworks are dedicated to the same saint, and these events are repeated from the 20th to the 22nd of May for the celebration of Santa Rita.

Madonna delle Scale Church



Broad bean pasta festival



Saint Joseph Festival, la vampata





## Art

The Mother Church, internally decorated in marble, stuccoes and frescoes, holds fine works of art including the statue in majolica of the *Madonna del Soccorso* from 1599 locally attributed sometimes to Giovanni Maurici and Giovanni D'Antonio and sometimes to Luca Della Robbia. The vault is decorated with frescoes by

Giuseppe Tresca (1768). Also of importance is a Crucifix with apostles (1650) by Orazio Ferraro. There are also frescoes by Domenico La Bruna (1738), taken from the church of the Inici Castle. Above the entrance door of the small church of *Madonna del Rosario*, known as *di l'Agnuni* one can admire a fine bas-relief in marble of the Gagini school, (XVI

century) depicting the *Madonna col Bambino con S. Nicolò ed un eremita dinanzi al Crocifisso* - Madonna with child and S. Nicolò and a hermit in front of the Crucifix. Also noteworthy is a painting on stone board (XVIII century) in the church of the *Madonna delle Grazie* and the paintings from the XVII and XVIII centuries in small church of Purgatory.

Mother Church, Madonna del Soccorso



Mother Church, fresco, La Bruna



Church of Rosario, bass-relief







## Scopello

From the top of some high ground, the small and suggestive village of Scopello dominates the countryside of the whole of the Gulf of Castellammare. It rose on the site of the mythical city of Cetaria, so called due to the abundance of tuna fish. Its name comes from the Greek *Skopelòs*, the rock or from the Arab *Iscubul* to indicate

the majestic and picturesque stacks, covered in Mediterranean vegetation which emerge from the enchanting sea. Scopello welcomes the visitor with the lovely Guidaloca inlet, covered in white pebbles, and protected by an old tower which, with the two towers of the *tonnara*, one situated on a small headland and the

other embedded in a rugged cliff, ensured the surveillance of the area and its protection from any danger coming from the sea. The *baglio*, a typical rural construction with an internal courtyard, situated on the site of an Arab hamlet enriches the landscape of the small village with its square and the ancient drinking trough.

Scopello, towers



Scopello, tuna warehouse



Scopello, baglio





## Monuments

The imposing and suggestive castle of Arab origin, enlarged in Norman and Swabian times, was the most important fortress of western Sicily and contains elements of great architectural importance, like the spiral stairway from medieval times inside a circular keep and the door with architraves with late gothic decorative patterns. The

Mother Church is the most important of the religious buildings, with its present Baroque style (1726-36). The church of the *Madonna di l'agnuni* (of the corner), of presumed Norman origin, with a fine sixteenth century doorway, is important. The church of *Madonna delle Scale* (XVII century) situated on the mountain slope is suggestive.

Not to be forgotten is the ex-monastery of the *Padri Crociferi* (1659) now the Town Hall. In the immediate vicinity of Castellammare, the *baglio* (rural fortified structure) of Inici and the castle of Baida have resisted time as have the towers, the *baglio* and the *tonnara* (tuna fish warehouse) of the suggestive village of Scopello.

Castello, spiral stairway



Mother Church



Baida Castle





## Museums Science Education

The castle holds an interesting scientific-museum centre divided into sections: *archaeology* with anchor stocks and Roman amphorae; *marine activity*, with equipment for sailing and tuna fishing; *Nostra Principalissima Patrona* - our main patron Saint dedicated to the festivities in honour of the *Madonna del Soccorso*, "Castellamare on set"

with documentation about films, series, advertisements and reality shows filmed in Castellammare. The museum centre is completed with a well equipped conference room and spaces dedicated to cultural and landscape heritage and cultural and entertainment events. In the east wing there is the Museo dell'Acqua e dei Mulini -

museum of water and windmills and the *Ethno-Anthropological Museum "Annalisa Buccellato"*. In an old fishermen's house in the ancient maritime town is a small *Museum of the Sea* which holds various pieces of marine tools and equipment from tuna fish warehouses, once numerous in the gulf.

Ethno-anthropological Museum



Museum centre, marine activity



Museum of the sea







## Typical produce

**P**art of the territory is in the extraction area of the Rosso di Sicilia marble, used in all the external and internal applications in the building and furnishing fields; it is a Jurassic limestone, dark red in colour, similar to the red marble of Verona, uniform with splashes of ochre and rare veins of calcspars. In craft

laboratories skilled embroiderers realize real works of art following ancient methods including the technique of the *sfilato siciliano* - Sicilian drawn thread work; there is a well known school of embroidery which offers courses and periodically organizes exhibitions. Some craftsmen are still able to

make shoes made to measure; the *curinari* with fast hand movements make plaits of the leaves of the dwarf palm creating the *curina* to make bags, hats and fans and they are also good at making reed baskets and bread baskets with olive branches. In the sea in front of the town there is a tuna fish farm.

Red marble of Sicily



Craftsmanship



Tuna farms





## Wine and food

Castellammare is in the production zone of the *Valli Trapanesi* PDO oil, made from the *cerasuola*, the *biancolilla* and the *nocellara del Belice* olives, and the DOC wine Erice which includes fine white wines from *catarratto* and *grillo* grapes, white and red wines from the *nero d'Avola* and *pignatello* plus the international vines which have a particular character

according to the zone of production. Couscous, bran dressed with fish broth, pasta with sardines, tuna cooked in various ways, sun dried tomatoes, *bruciuluna*, slices of meat which are rolled and stuffed, are the highlights of a simple and imaginative cuisine in which the flavours of the sea mix together with the flavours of the countryside. A real delicacy

is the *pane cunzato* (dressed bread) of Scopello. In the pasticceria (cake shop) there are *così ruci*, Christmas pastries filled with figs, the *pignulata*, with honey, the *ricotta cassatedde*, the *picuricchi*, Easter lambs made out of *pasta reale* (marzipan) and the traditional *cannoli* and *sfince*, sweet fried pastries and the typical *biancomangiare* a simple milk dessert.

Couscous



Sun-dried tomatoes



Cunzato bread





## Shows and events

**D**uring the summer months the *Castellammare Estate* - Castellammare Summer takes place with a calendar rich in theatre and music productions, and *Cinema sotto le stelle* - Cinema under the stars, partly held in the cloister of the ex-monastery of the Crociferi; The port with its restaurants exclusive bars is the night life centre of the

town. On the 13th of July, the remarkable historical re-enactment, in the port illuminated by spectacular fireworks, of the miracle carried out by the Madonna in 1718 when five English ships who were pursuing a Spanish merchant ship were made to flee, is carried out. The celebrations to honour the patron saint *Maria SS del*

*Soccorso*, from the 19th to the 21st August are suggestive, with the procession in the sea of the simulacrum of the Madonna. Together with the religious celebrations, games at the sea, shows and a fair are held. At Christmas, Castellammare holds various initiatives and a live nativity scene in the town hamlet of Balata di Baida.

Ex monastery of the Crociferi



Maria del Soccorso Festivities



Living Nativity Scene







## Entertainment, sport and free time

Castellammare is above all an important tourist centre, for pleasure crafting and bathing. During the summer, many people stay here and visit the beautiful beach, with its bathing stations, the various coves along the coast, and the crystalline sea of Scopello. Splendid excursions can be effectuated in motorboats

around the Zingaro and San Vito area and many sporting events can be practised: horse riding, tennis, water skiing, sailing, windsurfing and other water sports. In Scopello, a Diving Centre offers guided immersions also at night, in the most interesting areas of the coast where shipwrecks

and suggestive caves can be found. In Ponte Bagni district on the Caldo river, there are the historic springs *Segestana*, with sulphuric, salty, sulphate, alkaline, earthy water which emerges at 44,1 °C. The station has two swimming pools and the Regina cave (with a Roman vault), which is a natural sauna.

Underwater Immersions



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Thermal station





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