



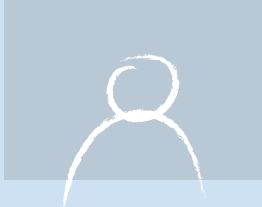
Provincia di
Trapani

Favignana



Welcome





Egadi Islands are...

The *Riserva Marina delle Isole Egadi* - Marine Reserve of the Egadi islands offers the visitor extraordinarily beautiful seascapes and landscapes which melt harmoniously together with archaeological and historical remains. Levanzo, the nearest to the coast, is a small maritime village, whose crystalline waters

were the backdrop to the historic battle of the Egadi islands. The *Genovese cave*, with petroglyphs and paintings from prehistoric times, is reachable by way of a pleasant walk. Favignana, a tourist site, is the largest island and its economic activity was based on its tuff stone quarries and products

linked to tuna fishing; today, the *mattanza* is still carried out from time to time. Marettimo is the furthest island and the wildest. Pathways of notable interest wind their way through the remains of ancient churches and fortalices. Its water is rich in caverns and caves and is a paradise for scuba diving.

Favignana



Levanzo, Cala Dogana



Marettimo, Punta Troia





History

Traces of human presence on the islands are shown from upper Palaeolithic times when the territory was probably attached to the mainland. After the Punics, it was the Romans who dominated the archipelago, following the historic battle of the Egadi islands in 241 B.C. which had as a backdrop

the waters in front. The Arabs left traces of their stay above all in the urban layout of the largest island, Favignana; while the building of various castles (later used by the Bourbons as prisons) is attributed to the Normans. At the end of the XVII century the islands came under the ownership

of the marquises Pallavicini of Genova, who were the first to start the agriculture and who increased the tuna fishing. This process was strengthened by the Florio entrepreneurs, who bought the archipelago in 1874 for more than two million lire and who built fine architecture on Favignana.

Rostrum of boat



Ignazio Florio





Landscape

If, in their superb underwater scenery, the Egadi islands offer the most suggestion, it is certainly true how the parts of the islands which are above water also hold a magnetic charm over the visitor. Favignana, with its varied and diversified landscape, on the butterfly shaped perimeter of its coastline, alternates between rocky and sandy stretches (among the beaches we must mention *Lido Burrone*). Inland, tuff quarries in disuse display distinctive scenery with vast low areas from which enormous columns of stone rise which are similar to skyscrapers, while on the coast, in *Cala Rossa* and *Bue Marino* (so called because it was once

inhabited by the monk seal), large overhangings of tuff carved into a thousand blocks reach down to lap the turquoise sea and offer splendid chromatic contrasts. The summit of Mount S. Caterina is a privileged point from which to admire the entire archipelago as far as the eye can see. Levanzo has a high coast with a few coves, like the suggestive pebble beach of the *Faraglione* and the *Cala Minnula*. The tiny inhabited centre which rose around *Cala Dogana* is reminiscent of the Greek islands with small white houses with turquoise window and door frames, one after the other. Isolated pathways go inland, offering pleasant walks in

unusual and delimited rural surroundings. On Marettimo, the mountain, with numerous pathways running across it, overlooking the sea, iridescent colours present themselves between the light of the sun and the reflections of the sea, while the views around change, towards the castle of punta Troia, the outlines of the other islands and the coast of the mainland. From the small inhabited centre, with fishing houses, one after another, contained between the old port and the new one, the numerous and suggestive caves including those of the *Cammello* and *Tuono* can be reached by way of a suggestive circumnavigation by boat.

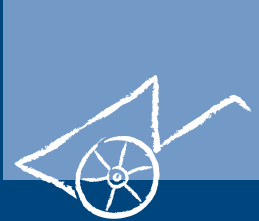


Nature

The vegetation of the archipelago of the Egadi islands is conditioned by their geological origins. In fact, the island of Marettimo, having been separated from the rest of Sicily 600 million years ago, at an earlier time than the others, has developed numerous very rare endemisms. The flora is so rich that it has become a destination for botanists and naturalists from all over the world. The uncontaminated and inaccessible rocks

represent a precious botanic garden. The vegetation of Favignana and Levanzo presents a floral retinue which is different to that of Marettimo, where the scrub is enriched by the strawberry tree (*Arbutus unedo*) and the cistus (*Cistus* sp.). On all three islands, the scrub is characterised by bushes of holm oak (*Quercus ilex*). On Levanzo, occasional bushes of kermes oak (*Quercus coccifera*) can be found. On the slopes which

descent towards the sea, the scrub becomes lower and is joined by rosemary (*Rosmarinus officinalis*), erica (*Erica* sp.), mastic (*Pistacia lentiscus*) and also by the dusty miller (*Senecio cineraria*). The islands are ports of call for numerous species of birds including the osprey (*Pandion haliaëtus*), the buzzard in its southern form (*Buteo buteo*) and Bonelli's eagle (*Hieraetus fasciatus*), permanently in the archipelago.



Traditions

The Egadi islands, and in particular Favignana, are often associated with the *mattanza* (from the Spanish *matar*, kill), that is the tuna fishing, a spectacular activity in which faith, myth and rituality mix together. The *mattanza* dates back to the Arab period and is carried out in late Spring, when the tuna, in full reproductive

period, let themselves be carried by the current and are more easily noticeable. The operations are directed by the *Rais*, the head of the *tonnara* (tuna warehouse) who assumes an almost shamanistic role, defining the time scale, the coordination and the modality of the work. A complex system of interconnected nets,

prepared during the previous months, channels the tuna into the death chamber. At this point the tuna are harpooned and hoisted aboard the boats whilst they toss vigorously desperately trying to escape. This event, seems cruel and feverish, with the blood of the large fish colouring the blue of the water.

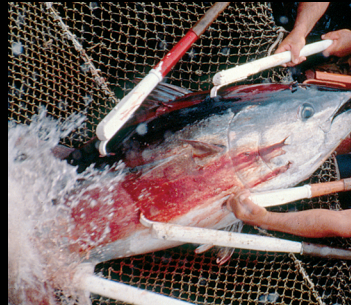
Mattanza (Tuna killing)



Mattanza (Tuna killing)



Mattanza (Tuna killing)





Religion Remembrance Bonds

On Marettimo, between the 18th and the 19th of March, one can see the celebrations in honour of San Giuseppe, patron saint of the village. During the days before, the inhabitants set up small altars inside their houses and the island fills with followers and visitors. During the first day, three bonfires representing the Sacred Family are lit (the

Adduminaria rite). The streets of the village become animated with music bands, while other rites take place (like that of the *Alloggiata*, which recalls Jesus, Mary and Joseph's search for shelter). On the 19th of March a meal takes place in the square, the preparation of which involves the whole village: it is set up on a stage and it hosts three characters representing the

Sacred Family. On this occasion, typical desserts are made, like the *cubbaita* and *cassatelle*. In the afternoon the simulacrum of the Saint is carried in a procession. The saint is also celebrated on Levanzo and Favignana; with less sumptuousness than on Marettimo, processions and the distribution of characteristic bread is organised.

Marettimo, Lunch of Saint Joseph



Marettimo, *Adduminaria*



Marettimo, Loaves of Saint Joseph



Favignana, Lido Burrone





Archaeology

Various findings show the presence of man since prehistoric times. On Levanzo the *Grotta del Genovese* - Genovese Cave holds a fine example of prehistoric art; once you are used to the semi-darkness, you can make out prehistoric petroglyphs depicting animals (among these, a deer stands out for its well captured movement) and three human figures (probably in a

ritualistic-magic dance) and also a rock painting in black from Neolithic times with men, idols and animals. Although there is no proof, within the Egadi islands, it might be possible to identify the island of the goats which Homer talks about in the *Odyssey*. On Favignana, near *Cala San Nicola*, the remains of a Phoenician necropolis dating back to around the VIII century B.C. has been

found, while at the *Grotta del Pozzo* and *Grotta della Ficara* caves (on Mount Santa Caterina), some Punic inscriptions have been found. On Marettimo at a crossroads between the pathways which go across the mountain, one arrives at a Roman fortalice in "*opus reticulatum*" (presumably from the I-III century A.D.) and nearby the small medieval basilian church.

Levanzo, Genovese Cave



Favignana, Pozzo Cave



Levanzo, Genovese Cave





Monuments

On Favignana there are two buildings attributed to Norman times: the Santa Caterina fort on the mountain of the same name and the San Giacomo fort (today inaccessible as it is used as a prison). The Mother Church, built in '700, dominates the main square of the village, while other monuments are owed to the Florio family.

The *tonnara* plant is fine, as is the *marfaraggio* known as *Camparia*, the Palazzo Florio in neo-Gothic style, Neapolitan on the outside, art nouveau on the inside and the small church of Sant'Antonio, all works by Damiani Almeyda. The plant and the *Camparia* have a stately appearance with their pointed arches and the vaults

which give them the sense of sacredness of work. On Marettimo, the Spanish castle of *Punta Troia*, from its strategic position, dominates the village; its origins are dateable to before the XVII century, in fact, already from '700, the building was used as a gaol for political prisoners (inside, the patriot Guglielmo Pepe was imprisoned).

Favignana, Mother Church



Favignana, tuna warehouse



Favignana, palazzo Florio





Museums Science Education

On Favignana, the small *Antiquarium* is worth a visit. It is situated in Palazzo Florio and holds a number of archaeological finds from the sea bed in front of the archipelago. Most of the finds are anchors or

amphorae coming from ships which sank in the sea of the Egadi islands, which show the passage of the Punics and the Romans. One particularly precious object kept in the museum is a pewter flask,

hermetically closed, containing wine which is still intact (datable to the XV century). Panels and plastic models reconstruct the complex history which has passed through the archipelago.

Marettimo, museum of the sea



Amphorae





Typical produce

If today the Egadi islands live from tourism and only few fishermen still carry out their ancient job, it must be remembered how on Favignana it was the tuff stone extraction that constituted one of the main economic activities of the archipelago. Almost all the habitations on the islands and also in the nearest towns

(Trapani, Marsala...), in fact, are built in local conchigliare tuff stone which is white grained, and particularly valued for its compactness and its fine grain. The extraction was a particularly tiring job carried out by hand: first, the harder external part was taken away, then the internal part, the calcarenite or limestone

was extracted. After being cut into blocks, the material was exported to Sicily and Tunisia. Today the spectacular landscape of the extraction areas is very suggestive, the vegetation that has grown in the quarries, and the incandescent light of the sun give this scenery different colours, which change according to the hour of day.

Favignana, Tuff Quarries





Wine and food

In the archipelago of the Egadi it is the fish who are the protagonists of the food and wine traditions and, in particular, the tuna which is cooked in many different ways: not to be missed are the tuna fishcakes which are cooked in sauce or marinated. Every part of the tuna is used: the male's

sperm is called *lattume* and is usually fried; from the female's eggs comes the *bottarga* (served as a hors d'oeuvre, sliced and dressed with oil or grated over pasta). The *ficazza* is a sort of tuna salami made with parts of the back and the remaining parts of the animal, minced, dressed and

conserved. In addition to the tuna, fresh fish can be tried everywhere, often flavoured with aromatic plants picked on the surrounding uplands (mint, thyme, rosemary). Another speciality is pasta with sea urchin: spaghetti without sauce, dressed with sea urchin eggs which have an intense flavour of the sea.

Tuna products





Shows and events

Over the last few years, the famous *mattanza* now being rare, the Egadi islands offer an ideal scenario for sailing events and regattas. During the last few years, various events have been

organised by private entrepreneurs and by the FIV like the *Targa Florio del mare*. In the month of April, on Favignana, the *Sagra della Cassatella*, a typical dessert from the Trapani area made

of fried puff pastry filled with sweetened, aromatised ricotta, takes place. Food festivals and conventions are entrusted to the local administration and their scheduling is annual.

Targa Florio del mare



Trofeo Challenge Ignazio Florio





Entertainment, sport and free time

Most of the activities which can be carried out in the archipelago are connected to the sea. A number of diving centres organise under water group excursions, but

it is also possible to take part in organised boat tours which circumnavigate the island, allowing one to reach the least explored caverns and to enter the caves. On

Marettimo, the pathways which climb the mountain offer superb views and can be visited on the backs of donkeys with the help of a guide.

Boat tour



Underwater excursions





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