



Provincia di  
**Trapani**

**Poggioreale**



**Welcome**





## Poggioreale is...

The new Poggioreale is displaced on overlapping bastions, each one in a ring around a circular square; the scenographic piazza Elimo was designed by the famous architect Paolo Portoghesi. However, the identity of Poggioreale is not to be found in its new inhabited centre, but in the striking ruins of the old “ghost town” which

was abandoned following the earthquake of 1968. In the later archaeological site of “Castellazzo” one can discover the most ancient history of the territory and enjoy one of the most suggestive views over the province that anyone could imagine. If the agricultural vocation of the territory is seen in the small ethno-

anthropological Museum, the town regularly becomes animated with festivals and events which offer the visitor the flavours and colours of ancient traditions, including the *Sagra della ricotta e dei Formaggi* - Ricotta and Cheese Festival, the *Sagra della Muffuletta* - Muffuletta Festival and the *Calici di stelle* - Chalices of the stars.

Ruins of Poggioreale



Piazza Elimo



Murano glass Nativity scene, P. Madè







## History

The foundation of the ancient *Podium regale*, a “knoll fit for a king”, which took place in 1642 by *ius populandi*, gave the marquis Francesco Morso di Gibellina the title of Prince of Poggioreale; it was, in fact he himself who wanted the agriculturists of the Bagnitelli, Mandria di Mezzo and Busecchio strongholds

to move to the bottom of Mount Castellazzo, where he owned a seasonal residence. For centuries the town developed as a agricultural centre, until the night between the 14th and 15th of January 1968 when a violent earthquake hit the Belice valley: the old inhabited centre of Poggioreale, was 80%

damaged and many houses collapsed under the strong tremors of the earthquake. The old town was abandoned and the new town was transferred further downstream on the hill of the Baglio della Mandria di Mezzo where the population has maintained its uses, customs and traditions.

Castellazzo of Poggioreale



Ruins, Piazza Elimo



Ethno-anthropological museum





## Landscape

Today's Poggioreale is not far away from the old centre which was destroyed in the earthquake of 1968. It is a modern town, conceived in a completely different way to the original, in which an architecture was realised which was a complete departure from the typology of the town which

had been destroyed. Today Poggioreale is in a panoramic hill position, north of the river Belice which flows not far away. This new town is organised into three overlapping bastions, each formed by a residential nucleus in the shape of a ring around a circular town square. Green

hills, a mountain, a “knoll fit for a king”: this is the natural scenery of Poggioreale which has kept itself alive in the context of its landscape which, through its cultivation of olives and vines, is the only element able to help it find that identity which the earthquake tried to cancel.

View of valley of alto Belice



View of Mount Castellazzo



Olive groves and vineyards





## Nature

**R**eferences to the naturalistic order, traceable to the ancient presence of Mediterranean wood, are present in some remaining elements which characterise the landscape as far as Mount Castellazzo. The vegetation goes from the garrigue of ampelodesma, dwarf palm,

broom, asphodel and euphorbia, to scrubs with secondary formations, fruit of an intense decline of the original woods. Thus shrubs and vegetation characterised by thorns, like blackberry bushes, blackthorn, hawthorn, wild pear, and smoke-bush, once used for the extraction of

tannin, are prevalent. In spring, thanks to this mosaic of vegetation, a migrating bird of various colours is present; the bee-eater, recognisable for its long tail, pointed wings and sharp beak, and also the buzzard while on the fields, one can observe the skylark with its melodious song.

*Crataegus monogyna*



*Fillirea latifolia*



*Pistacia lentiscus*







## Traditions

On the 18th and 19th of March, for the celebration of San Giuseppe (Saint Joseph), *artari* votive altars are made, to ask a favour of the Saint or to thank him for having received one, according to a custom dating back to the XVIII century; they are covered with a white sheet and

decorated with laurel, big round loaves of bread called *cucciddati*, oranges and the typical *squartucciati*, sheets of pasta filled with minced figs made into symbolic shapes and artistically engraved with special knives. The women of the town prepare these splendid decorations, with patience

and great skill, creating incredible pasta “embroidery”. In front of the altar, a table is laid for three people, once three poor people, alluding to the Sacred Family, to whom on the 19th, a lunch with numerous dishes is offered, prepared above all with the firstlings of the fields.

Altar of Saint Joseph





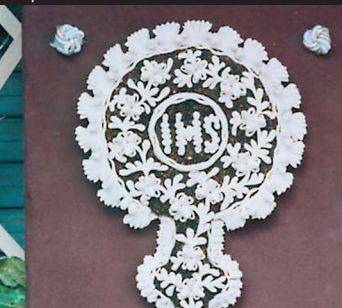
## Religion Rememberence Bonds

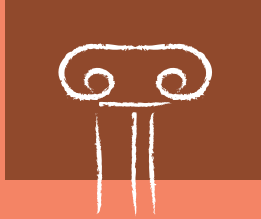
The religious festivals are very well attended, from that of the Patron Saint Antonio da Padova on the 12th and 13th of June with processions and shows, to the festival for San Giuseppe, *Padre della Provvidenza* - Father of Providence, on the 18th and 19th of March. The actual creation of the altars comes from a profound need of those who have made a

votive offering, to thank the Lord for a favour bestowed, by intercession of San Giuseppe (Saint Joseph). The Christian symbology, both of the elements which make up the altar, and the *squartucciati* which are in the shape of palms, doves, peacocks, fish, hearts, monstrances, baskets and holy water stoups is, therefore of great

importance. There is a purely devotional rite of offering those who visit the altar *caliati* chickpeas, pastries and cakes and blessed bread or of distributing the dishes of the lunch in syntony with the words of Jesus Christ: *Freely you have received, freely give* (Matthew 10,8), therefore *pi San Giuseppi grazie un si dici* - you do not say thankyou to Saint Joseph.

*Squartucciati*





## Art

A particular nativity scene in Murano glass is permanently exhibited in a small, post-modern building, behind piazza Elimo, designed by the architects Purini and Termes as a bus station, which has now been transformed into an exhibition room with large windows which allows one to see the so-called *presepe*

*incantato* - enchanted nativity scene. The seventeen intensely realistic figures of characters and animals which make up the scene measure from thirty to ninety centimetres in height and were made from drawings created by Pippo Madè from Palermo, in the famous Venetian glassware workshops of the renowned

maestro Rosin with the particular technique “*a mano volante*” which allows the creation of chromatic special effects through different types of fusion. The characters are the typical ones of Sicilian nativity scenes: in addition to Mary, Joseph and Jesus, there are also “shepherds” and animals, including a camel.

Murano glass Nativity scene



Murano glass Nativity scene



Murano glass Nativity scene







## Archaeology

**O**n Mount Castellazzo there is an interesting archaeological site where recent excavations have brought to light an ancient settlement presumably of Elymian origins. It is probable that the site, only partly brought to light, and of small dimensions, was inhabited from VII century B.C, even

if it is believed that some populations might have lived there in earlier times. According to a local hypothesis, on Mount Castellazzo or Elimo, around the year 1184 B.C. the city of Elima was founded, its name taken from the Trojan leader who, fleeing from his city by sea, found salvation

on the coast of western Sicily; it is not excluded, however, that it might be the mysterious Entella, the third Elymian city which chronicles by ancient authors talk about, and which, together with Erice and Segesta, was one of the main communities of that civilisation.

Archaeological area of Mount Castellazzo



Indigenous painted pottery



Indigenous engraved pottery





## Monuments

The town welcomes the visitor with the scenic Piazza Elimo a sort of Greek agorà, designed by the famous architect Paolo Portoghesi who, inspired by classic models, used fluted columns, statues, straight-lined architraves and triangular tympaniums to re-evolve propylaea, stoà and Greek

temples in an extremely suggestive and particular dimension. The theme, repeated willingly by the architect, is that of a small temple with two columns and façade, proposed also in the base and lantern of the clock tower which stands out, and the façade of the Town hall. The Chapel of

Sant'Antonio da Padova is by architects Purini and Termes, with a courtyard in front of it, a large churchyard with freestanding pilasters; the municipal theatre, an uncompleted work designed by Luigi Giocondo presents itself with vaguely classic shapes and is inspired by the nearby works by Portoghesi.

Town Hall



Theatre





## “Ruins of Poggioreale”

There is a suggestive atmosphere in the old centre which was abandoned after the earthquake of 1968 that destroyed 80% of it, defined as a ghost town and chosen as the set for some scenes of famous films like *La piovra*, *L'uomo delle stelle*, *Malena*, *Cefalonia*. In the urban fabric one can still see the chess-

board style layout, the road system and the buildings, most of which still have their perimeter walls. It is possible to walk up Corso Umberto I, *la strada di la corsa* - the street of the curse along which there are the remains of the main buildings: the Town Hall, the school, the post office, the municipal

theatre, the church of Sant'Antonio da Padova. From Piazza Elio, the large stairway which leads to the Mother Church can be made out, of which remain some parts of the perimeter walls and the high bell tower. The ancient Cannoli fountain, in the centre of the square of the same name also remains.

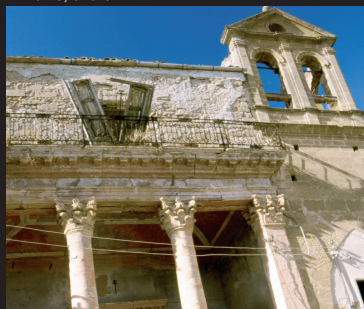
Ruins, bell tower



Ruins, theatre



Ruins, church







## Museums Science Education

The predominantly agricultural vocation of Poggioreale is documented in the Ethno-anthropological Museum which is connected to the Town Library and holds the historic mementoes of the population. The visitor will find here a forgotten world, linked to the activities carried out in the fields, the

blacksmith's barrel maker's and cobbler's workshops or, simply, in the home represented by tools, instruments and objects, now of almost unknown shapes and names which when pronounced in dialect seem to take on more significance than their Italian meaning. Particular objects include *li vertuli di Poggioreali* - typical

local saddle-pack used to contain meat, and the pair of gerle, chests in the form of an upside-down cone, *canceddi*, for the transport of containers of water in terracotta. A small display cabinet holds a collection of archaeological material coming from Mount Castellazzo, inhabited since prehistoric times.

Ethno-anthropological museum



Ethno-anthropological museum



Ethno-anthropological museum





## Wine and food

**A**griculture had determined the history of the town since it originated and it is still today the main activity, with vineyards of high quality producing excellent white and red wines which have procured the title *City of wine* to Poggioreale. Other produce includes oil, cereal, musk melons and water melons and vegetables. Some breeders - cheese makers still produce cheese in the traditional way, above all *pecorino* in the versions: *tuma*, *primo sale* - first salt, semi matured and matured,

and also “*zabbina*” (ricotta in its whey) and *ricotta da pasto* which reigns supreme in the preparation of delicious *cannoli*, *cassatelle*, cakes and *cassate*. A real speciality is the *Vastedda del Belice*, a PDO, stretched curd cheese shaped like a small round loaf made with milk from native sheep and much appreciated by connoisseurs and gourmet chefs. *Nfigghiulate*, batter filled with onion and sausages, *stigghiola* of lamb, pastries made with figs (Christmas *cucciddati*) and almonds are real delicacies. For the San

Giuseppe lunch, there is a particular first course 3/4 of which is spaghetti dressed with a special tomato sauce enriched with broccoli, wild fennel, *puddicini* and other herbs, sprinkled with toasted breadcrumbs and a 1/4 of which is white rice with beans. Typically local is the *muffuletta*, a soft roll with a strong aroma of wild fennel, to be eaten preferably dressed with a good extra virgin olive oil made from the *Nocellara del Belice* PDO olive, with grated *pecorino* cheese and pieces of salted sardines.



## Shows and events

To enliven the lives of the people of Poggioreale, there are festivals and exhibitions promoting typical local products, cheese in particular: Ricotta and cheese are, in fact, the protagonists of the exhibition and festival which takes place on the third Saturday in May, during which in addition to tasting the numerous varieties of

cheese, one can also see the practical demonstration of the work cycle with traditional equipment. Another appointment in the first week of November, is the *Sagra della Muffuletta - Muffuletta* festival, which is a typical, very soft bread roll. In the month of August, there is the *Estate poggioreale* - Summer in Poggioreale, with

music, theatre performances and entertainment and the *Calici di stelle* - Chalices of the stars evening, in which the fine local red and white wines are protagonists, is characterised by merriment and flavour. The *Mostra degli squartucciati* - Exhibition of squartucciati, for San Giuseppe (Saint Joseph), in March is also interesting.

Ricotta and cheese festival









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Provincia Regionale  
di Trapani



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