



Welcome





San Vito lo Capo is...

One of the most famous Beaches of the island is situated in a basin at the foot of Mount Monaco, at the edge of the small peninsular which encloses the gulf of Castellammare. The town, of maritime tradition developed around an ancient

sanctuary-fortress dedicated to San Vito. Its territory, in addition to the suggestive beach, which is full of people in August, includes the lesser known localities of *Castelluzzo* and *Macari*. Moreover, a large part of the Oriented Natural Reserve

of the Zingaro falls into the San Vito Lo Capo municipality and can be visited on foot. For some years, the town has been host to the *Cous Cous Fest* and, more recently, the wine and food event *Tempu ri Capuna*.

View of the town



Beach with small port



RNO Zingaro





History

The history of the town is linked to Saint Vito who, according to tradition, passed through Egitarso, or Egitallo, the Roman name for the site, during the III century A.D., when he was forced to leave his city Mazara, together with his tutor Modesto and wet-nurse Crescenzia: he lived in the caverns of the area,

dedicating himself to prayer, fed by a crow like the Desert Fathers. It is thought that, after the martyrdom of the Saint around 300 A.D., at the mouth of the river Sele, a small church was built in Egitarso, which was renovated in the XV century, and later become a sanctuary-fortress, on the wishes of the inhabitants of

Erice in whose district the territory of San Vito fell, to give shelter to pilgrims and protect them from pirate attacks. The town, which has been a municipality since 1952, developed between the XVIII and the XIX century, around the sanctuary, as a small fishing village under the control of Erice.

Aedicule of Santa Crescenzia



Sanctuary



Sanctuary, San Vito The Martyr crypt





Landscape

Immersed in a landscape surrounded by high rocks, small beaches and pointed reefs, caves, *bagli* (rural fortified structures) and towers, San Vito welcomes the visitor with the stupendous coastline of *Macari* and the bastion of Mount Monaco with its peak of the same name which, depending from

where you look at it, resembles a priest in prayer or a running dog. From the summit of the mountain, which can be reached by pathways, seeing the view of the three gulfs of Castellammare, San Vito and Cofano together and, on days of high visibility of the island of Ustica is a unique and unrepeatable

experience. From the terrace of the sanctuary there is an incredible view over the three kilometre long beach, the blue sea and the town the regular layout of which, with low houses and straight, parallel roads can be appreciated. On the splendid rocky coast, rise the XVI century towers of the island's defence system.

Gulf of Macari



Mount Monaco



RNO Zingaro





Nature

The extremely limpid sea and the splendid beach of fine sand, made up of fragments of red coral, are the protagonists of the landscape and the economy of the town; thanks to them, the town has been included in the 300 Italian towns with the most beautiful beaches and has also received the *Bandiera blu* - blue flag of Europe. To the east there

are high coastlines overlooking the sea, which are the prelude to the wondrous coast of the *la Riserva Naturale Orientata dello Zingaro* - Oriented Nature Reserve of the Zingaro, which protects one of the most beautiful and integral coastlines of the island, stretching for about 7 kilometres as far as Scopello, and is

characterized by a splendid Mediterranean scrub. No less interesting is the western side of the coast, which is lower and rugged with reefs, with *Cala Rossa* and *Cala Mancina*, the reef of *Isulidda*, a few metres from the rocky coast and the caves. An area of great interest as regards nature and landscape is Mount Monaco, 532 metres high.

RNO Zingaro, Marinella cove

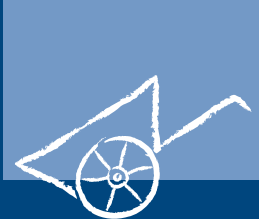


RNO Zingaro, Capreria cove



RNO Zingaro, Chamaerops humilis





Traditions

It is popular belief that San Vito had tried in vain to convert the inhabitants of the village Conturrana, who were punished by God for not having listened to his preaching, with an avalanche which buried the village: it is said that the village is buried under an enormous mass of stones

in Valanga district. The aedicule of Santa Crescenzia, however, is to remember where the avalanche ended, saving San Vito, Modesto and the same Saint, who ignored God's order to not turn around so as not to see the punishment, and turned to stone from the shock:

according to an ancient popular belief, to get over *u scantu* (fear), you should throw a stone into the aedicule. In the sea of San Vito, until 1968 nets were cast for the traditional *mattanza*, the crude capture of the tuna fish which, in spring, are numerous in the Gulf of Castellammare.

Aedicule of Santa Crescenzia



Secco tuna warehouse





Religion Remembrance Bonds

The town dedicates impressive celebrations to its Saint from the 13th to the 15th of June, with singing, musical and sporting events, parades, exhibitions and a suggestive historic re-enactment of the landing of the Saint accompanied by Saints Modesto and Crescenzia who, landing on the beach at sunset to the sound of the sirens of the

boats of the fishing fleet and to the launching of multicoloured rockets, move towards the town accompanied by music bands. The picturesque procession through the streets of the town and fireworks close the event. Another traditional religious appointment is on the 18th and 19th of March, on the occasion of the

festivities for San Giuseppe (Saint Joseph), with the procession of the statue of the Saint, the bonfires (*vampe*) in various areas of the town, and the lunch offered to the Sacred Family, impersonated by three people in a house where a votive altar has been set up, decorated with characteristic loaves of bread.

Landing of San Vito



Procession of San Vito



Saint Joseph, *vampe*





Art

Inside the sanctuary in the chapel of San Vito enriched with local marble and with statues by Orazio Ferraro (1624-1628) is situated, in the centre, the statue of the Saint, a fine work of the Gagini school from 1587, with episodes of his life linked to his stay in the town, engraved in the base.

The particularly smooth appearance of the feet is due to the secular custom of the pilgrims of kissing the feet to show their devotion. Contemporary works of art are fittingly used as sacred decoration: the altar and the sculpture depicting *San Vito* by Capri Otti, both in bronze and the *Crocefisso* by

Mario Cassisa in the same material, and the two candlesticks in marble by Ibrahim Kodra. The modern simulacrum in marble of San Vito (2005) on the door of the sanctuary is by Martin Emschermann and the bronze statue of the Saint (1999) on the jetty is by Toti Taormina.

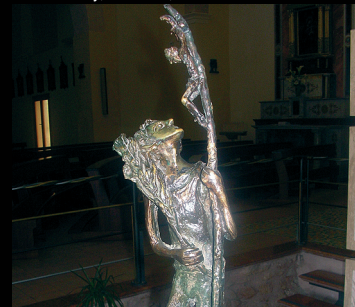
Sanctuary, chapel of San Vito



Sanctuary, San Vito, Capri Otti



Sanctuary, San Vito, M. Emschermann





Archaeology

The presence of man in the territory is documented by prehistoric petroglyphs, paintings and lithic material found in numerous caves. Some incisions are visible on the walls of the *Uzzo* cave, in the Zingaro Nature Reserve, in which fragments of vases, flints, obsidian and over twelve human skeletons

and animal bones have also been found. In the area of *Piana di Sopra*, the cave of the *Cavalli* conserves Neolithic paintings in red, with labyrinth like designs, sun symbols and anthropomorphic figures while the so called cave of the *Racchio*, with an illuminated anti-cavern in

front of it, contains linear incisions of presumably magic character and two cave paintings depicting deer. A stone's throw away from the ex-tonnara there are ancient cetariae tubs, dating back to the IV century B.C used to make the delicacy *garum* (fish sauce), which the Romans loved to eat.

Cavalli cave



Emiliana cave



Garum tubs





Monuments

In the main square the sanctuary-fortress rises. Robust and impressive in its fortress-like appearance, it is dedicated to San Vito and was presumably built in the XV century, encompassing the structure of a pre-existing early Christian church and reinforced in the XVI century; recent restorations (2003) have brought to light

a hypogeum with two wells which was probably for cultic activities. The chapel of Santa Crescenzia is a small, suggestive building in a quadrangular layout, an original example of architecture of the end of the XV century - beginning XVI century, with Arabic, Norman and Gothic influences. And with a

particular solution of the cupola supported by a fanned stairwell. Along the coast the *Sciore*, 'Mpisu and *Isulidda* towers rise, built in the XVI century to defend from pirates who infested the Mediterranean sea; In the *Golfo del Secco* there is the tuna fish warehouse on land which is now in disuse, documented since 1412.

Sciore tower



Secco tuna warehouse



Mpisu tower





Museums Science Education

The museum of the sanctuary holds silverware, liturgical furnishings and sacred works of art linked to the cult and to the pilgrimages in honour of Saint Vito. The wooden statue of the *Immacolata*, by an unknown Sicilian sculptor of the XVI century, coming from the *Secco tonnara* (tuna warehouse) is worth particular attention. Also

exhibited are donations from villages in Italy linked to the figure of Saint Vito including the *centa*, an ex voto (votive offering) of the shepherds of San Gregorio Magno, made with wax candles. In the wall hangings room, a green velvet chasuble from the end of the XVI century stands out. In San Vito there is a centre which for the last few years has been

organising international school camps of underwater archaeology, putting into practice a scientific method through which oceanographic surveys, excavations, plans and recovering of materials, creation of scuba diving itineraries, and also cataloguing, and classification of findings are carried out.

Museum of the Sanctuary



Museum of the Sanctuary



Museum of the Sanctuary





Typical produce

The typical craft produce is connected to the marine and agricultural activity of the territory, the fishermen create *conzi*, long fishing lines to which hooks are attached, *cannizzi*, palm branches destined to be anchored to

the sea bed, *coppi*, mobile nets, *nasse*, baskets which fish cannot get out of once inside; the *curinari* with fast hand movements make plaits of the leaves of the dwarf palm, creating the *curina* to make bags, hats, fans of

ancient fashion and also the *panara*, bread baskets made out of olive and cane branches. This traditional activity is flanked by the working of iron and production of artistic ceramics.

Curinari



Conzi





Wine and food

In San Vito, added to the splendid aspects of its landscape is the suggestion of a traditional cuisine in which fresh fish is always present; the local fleets carry out, in fact, the so-called *pesca artigianale*, that is, fishing just under the coast, on small crafts during the night, particularly aimed at the capturing of mullet,

sargo, umbrine, saddled bream, rock fish, octopus, squid, and lobster which are put on the market straight away, first thing in the morning, directly in the harbour area. *Busiati* (busiati pasta), *pane cunzatu* (bread with oil, cheese and anchovies), *pasta coi ricci* - (pasta with sea urchins) are the important dishes of a

simple and imaginative gastronomy, where *couscous*, of Arab origin, made from bran, steamed and dressed with fish broth, is the absolute protagonist. In the town hamlet of Castelluzzo, renowned for its olive trees, a perfumed and fragrant oil is produced which is perfect as a condiment for any dish.

Cous Cous



Pasta with fish sauce



Sea urchins





Shows and events

A series of appointments are repeated regularly during the tourist season in San Vito Lo Capo. In the last week of September the *Cous Cous Fest*, an exceptional Mediterranean cultural and wine and food review, takes place with tastings, shows and the inevitable competition between chefs

from different ethnic backgrounds who contend the victory palm for the realisation of the best *couscous*, considered to be a dish of peace and symbol of integration of people of different ethnic backgrounds. *Tempu ri capuna* is another gastronomic and cultural

event which, in the Autumn period, promotes the gurnard fish and bluefish which are proposed as the bases for many dishes. *Libri, autori e buganvillee*, takes place in via Venza between July and September and is a series of meetings used to present works by famous Italian writers.

Cous Cous Fest



Tempu ri Capuna



Libri, autori e buganvillee





Entertainment, sport and free time

Some diving centres offer scuba diving excursions to discover the splendid coral sea beds of particular biological interest. Sailing clubs offer sailing, canoeing, kayaking, windsurfing, water skiing, mono skiing and swimming courses. It is possible to go on boat excursions and,

pescaturismo, (tourist fishing excursions) with boats which welcome tourists on board who are then given the possibility of admiring suggestive areas and to find out about the various local ichthyic species. Many tourist structures have swimming pools, football fields, bowls areas,

basketball pitches and tennis courts and are also equipped for entertainment shows. The town has a bowling green and a public five-a-side football field; one can also practice trekking and horse riding and go on pleasant excursions to discover the enchanting surrounding area.

Small port



Tennis court



Excursion to the Zingaro





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Provincia Regionale
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