



Provincia di
Trapani

Santa Ninfa



Welcome





Santa Ninfa is...

Situated in the western hinterland of Sicily between the Modione and Belice rivers which flow into the sea slightly further ahead in Selinunte, Santa Ninfa suffered serious damage in the earthquake of 1968, but its inhabitants reacted bravely to the tragedy and created many industries including the production and

commerce of local products like high quality meat, coming from native breeding farms, and revitalizing the traditional textile craftwork, concentrated in particular on the production of lace, embroidery and material. The presence in the area of a complex system of galleries and meanders of great

speleological-natural interest, allowed the institution in 1996 of the “Santa Ninfa Cave” Integral Natural Reserve for the protection of its marvellous geomorphological patrimony. Nearby, the suggestive archaeological site of Mount Finestrelle is to be found, with numerous caved tombs.

Urban landscape



Pomegranate Fountain, Nino Cordio



RNI Santa Ninfa cave





History

The foundation of the town dates back to 1605 on the wishes of Don Luigi Arias Giardina, landowner of the nearby castle of the Rampinzeri. It carries the name of the Saint from Palermo to whom Giardina was particularly devoted and who is still today patron saint of the town: the municipal coat of arms and the banner carry her effigy. During the

night of the 12th of May 1860, on the eve of the great expedition of the Unification of Italy, two noblewomen prepared the first Sicilian tricolour flag was sewn, which was given to Garibaldi, before the battle of Calatafimi. The earthquake in 1968 seriously damaged the town causing the destruction of 80% of the houses, death and the emigration of many

families. The town only slowly recovered, maintaining its original site and reconstructing a large part of the street system around the few remaining historic buildings. Today it is a lively town which has managed to re-emerge from the ruins, and is characterised by productive and entrepreneurial activities and quality craftwork.

Rampinzeri castle



Municipal coat of arms



First tricolour flag





Landscape

The territory of the town extends between a minimum altitude of 100 metres and a maximum of 465 metres and is crossed by many rivers. The largest is *Fiume Grande*, tributary of Lake Trinità. Where the slopes are steeper, the agricultural landscape has fragments of Mediterranean scrub, but

where the slopes are gentler and in the plains, the landscape becomes regular with modern cultivations of upwards-trained vertical-trellised vines, with other specialised cultivations at intervals, like the *purceddu* melon. The *Nocellara del Belice* olive groves characterise and tell the

story of this landscape which, maintaining its distinctive specifications, overcame the difficult period after the earthquake, bearing witness to the social-economic “rebirth” concentrated on the agri-alimentary industry, tourism and the recovering of the building and cultural patrimony.

View from piazza Belvedere



RNI Santa Ninfa cave



Mount Finestrelle





Nature

From a naturalistic point of view, the *Riserva Naturale Integrale Grotta di Santa Ninfa* - Integral Natural Reserve of the Santa Ninfa Cave represents the most interesting peculiarities. Managed since 1996 by Legambiente, and situated in *Finestrelle* district, a high plain of chalky nature with numerous subterranean cavities: it includes the *Grotta di Santa Ninfa* - Santa Ninfa Cave, of great speleological interest (zone A in integral position) and the “*Biviere*” which is part of the feeding basin, and extends for about 150 hectares (zone B of pre-reserve) with rich flora and fauna. The natural chalky landscape of Santa Ninfa

modelled over time by atmospheric precipitations is characterised by the presence of karstic phenomena both underground (caves) and on the surface, (dolinae, potholes, blind valleys) on the chalky outcrops one can admire suggestive formations, made up of *karren* and basins of corrosion which have modified the original appearance of the rocks. The source of the *Biviere* stream is on clayey terrain, on the slopes of Mount *Finestrelle* (site of a prehistoric necropolis), it flows in a small gorge in correspondence to the chalky outcrop and ends its course above ground in

a large sinkhole. In the steep chalky walls which enclose the valley is the swallowhole, a natural funnel into which water spurts forming the small underground river which feeds the cave. The *Biviere* area, once largely covered in Mediterranean woodland, is today dominated by cultivated land and the reforestations where strips of Mediterranean scrub survive. In the deep valley the thriving riparian vegetation is interesting due to the high diversity of the flora. The fauna includes the hedgehog, the endemic Sicilian shrew and the discoglossid, which is similar to a frog and lives only in the western Mediterranean.



Santa Ninfa Cave

It is made up of a predominantly horizontal cave which extends for about 1400 metres, which represents an extremely interesting environment due to the presence of a complex system of meanders and galleries, once completely full of water; the upper fossil branch is now dry while in

the lower branch, the waterway coming from the Biviere still flows. The cavity ends in a narrow siphon, not practicable by man which is crossed by the stream which then re-emerges down stream at the entrance of the cave, making a spring. The cave is characterised by splendid concretions like

cortins, stalactites, wall inflorescences, pisoliths known as cave pearls due to their beauty and rarity. The high naturalistic value of the Santa Ninfa cave is also linked to the presence of an interesting cavernicolous fauna, which are adapted to living in dark places with a high level of humidity.

RNI Santa Ninfa cave, cannulae



RNI Santa Ninfa cave, stream



RNI Santa Ninfa cave, vault



RNI Santa Ninfa cave





Religion Remembrance Bonds

The inhabitants of the town are greatly devoted to their patron saint, Santa Ninfa, to whom are dedicated, on the 12th of November, the date of her death in the year 316, impressive festivities where religion and folklore events are mixed. On the 19th March there are the well attended festivities for San

Giuseppe - Saint Joseph with the customary procession and the preparation of votive altars decorated with characteristic loaves of bread. The citizens of Santa Ninfa who emigrated to Venezuela wanted to pay tribute to their town by putting a bronze bust of Simon Bolivar, a south American hero (1783-1830),

in Magazzinazzi district which has on the base an inscription with a phrase from the same leader: "I wish to show the gratitude of Venezuela towards those virtuous and magnanimous foreigners who abandoned their town to come to America bringing science, art, industry, talent and virtue".

Santa Ninfa



Altar of Saint Joseph



Simon Bolivar Bust





Archaeology

In the area of the *Riserva Naturale Integrale Grotta di Santa Ninfa* falls the archaeological area of mount *Finestrelle*, in dialect *finestreddi* indicating the similarity of the rocky tombs to small windows. The around forty tombs from the late Bronze age and the first centuries of the 1st millennium B.C. are

dug into the rock and put one next to the other in a horizontal line on more than one level: they are made up of a funerary cell of rectangular or semicircular or semi elliptic layout with an entrance hall in front. In the necropolis some clay articles, including two bowls with two handles of the Villanovan type

and an amphorae, kept in the Archaeological Museum of Palermo have been found. At the summit of the mountain a large crater has been found with geometric decoration 40 cm high. Excavations carried out in the west of the mountain have brought to light the remains of a small prehistoric settlement.

Mount Finestrelle



Mount Finestrelle, rocky tombs



Mount Finestrelle, rocky tombs





Rampinzeri Castle

The so-called Rampinzeri Castle stands on a rise in a splendid panoramic position; its name is of Arab origin and it is a historic place of great suggestion, which rose in the stronghold of the same name, owned by Giardina Bellacera, then by the De Stefani family, and which is today municipal property. It is an ancient seventeenth century *baglio* (rural fortified

structure) with two courtyards and a small church, transformed in the XVIII and XIX centuries until it assumed the appearance of a small Neo Gothic castle. It was indicated by Giuseppe Tomasi di Lampedusa in *Il Gattopardo*, as the stopping off point and refreshment place of Prince Fabrizio Salina, and his followers, during the seasonal move

from Palermo to Santa Margherita Belice. It also played host to king Vittorio Emanuele III, his son Umberto, the duke Amedeo D'Aosta, the head of government Mussolini and the whole Grand Council of Fascism who watched the final stages of the *grandi manovre* from the roof terrace, on the 17th of August 1937.

Rampinzeri castle, small church



Rampinzeri castle, entrance



Grandi manovre





Monuments

The earthquake of 1968 seriously damaged the artistic-monumental patrimony: the modern fountain *La melogranana e le rane* - the pomegranate and frogs by Nino Cordio, native of Santa Ninfa, represents the rebirth of the town and the unity and strength of the population which has renewed itself. The Mother Church, wished for by Simone Giardina in 1659,

was reconstructed to the plans of the architect Paolo Di Stefano, encompassing part of the pre-existing structure, while the church of Purgatorio (Purgatory), dating back to the time of the founding of the town, has been restructured; of the Badia church, built at the end of the XVIII century and the beginning of the XIX century the only remaining part is the

façade with a roof with two sloping sides completed by a large gable. Some historic buildings are interesting, such as the house of the Di Stefano family from the end of the XVIII century, and the nineteenth century *palazzo Mauro* and *palazzo Piazza* with a large doorway-balcony and internal courtyard. There is also the fine doorway of the ex Patti oil factory.

Mother Church



Church of Purgatorio



Palazzo Di Stefano





Museums Science Education

The Nino Cordio museum named after the painter, engraver and sculptor artist from Santa Ninfa (1937-2000), holds works by the artist and contains the reconstruction of the artist's workroom. The town has also dedicated the Public Library to him which has a patrimony of 7,000 volumes; a purpose-made section, Fondo Professor Giuseppe Bellafore contains

about 3,000 volumes of medieval Art History. In the Town Hall there is a permanent photographic exhibition on the earthquake of 1968 entitled *Percorso della memoria* - Journey through Memory which documents life in the tents, the state of the houses, the few restored buildings which were recuperated and made relievable. In the visitors' centre

of the *Riserva Naturale Integrale Grotta di Santa Ninfa* - Santa Ninfa cave Reserve, educational and informative material is available on the protected area and district. Legambiente organizes excursions in the reserve and in the Finestrelle Wood. In scientific circles, Santa Ninfa is remembered for being the birth place of the scientist Teodoro De Stefani Perez, a great entomologist.

Nino Cordio museum



Ethno-anthropological museum



Excursions on Mount Finestrelle





Typical produce

Fervid productive and entrepreneurial activities are based on small companies above all in agricultural food sector and that of the working and selling of beef and pork for which there are companies of national importance. The activity induced by the building industry is linked to the working of conglomerates,

concrete, marble, wood, iron and aluminium and also the production of pipes. Another important sector is that of production and commercialization, also abroad of electronic appliances for television reception and transmission, the making of antennas and TV signals. This fervid entrepreneurial activity is

displayed in the *Centro Artigianale* (craftwork centre) of Sacramentello district, conceived as a multipurpose structure. The production of lace, embroidery and artistic fabrics of ancient cultural use, has today been transformed into important working and entrepreneurial opportunities.

Crafts centre



Embroidery





Wine and food

A typical local product is the sausage, prepared with meat cut with the tip of a knife, dressed with salt and pepper and aromatised with wild fennel from Santa Ninfa. The cuisine is based on genuine local products like cheese, beef and pork, extra virgin olive oil, wine and honey. Among the specialities

there is the *la brucculata*, a bread dough filled with finely chopped cauliflower and dressed with onion and cheese, *fave a frittedda*, fresh fava beans dressed with wild fennel, onion, garlic, abundant olive oil and fried; *l'agghiummuniata*, a large slice of veal, dressed and cooked in tomato sauce. Also typical

is the *pane cunsatu*, warm bread dressed with good local oil, oregano, tomato and other elements. The territory of Santa Ninfa falls into the production zone of two PDO products: the Valle del Belice Extra Virgin Olive Oil and the *Vastedda Valle del Belice* a typical sweet curd cheese made with Belice sheep milk.

Sausage



Local cheese



Valle del Belice PDO olive





Shows and events

Between July and August *l'Estate Santaninfese* (Santa Ninfa Summer) takes place which includes cinematographic projections in the square, musical events, including *CantaBimbo*, cabaret, treasure hunts, and popular games. At the end of August, a very important event, the *Sagra della Salsiccia*

- Sausage festival, takes place: cut with the tip of a knife, and aromatised with wild fennel, the sausage is barbecued and served with bread and good local wine. Popular games, music, singing and dancing cheer the day which ends with spectacular fireworks. A non religious appointment which the people of Santa

Ninfa never abandon is the traditional *Fiera di San Vito*, which takes place on the 12th and 13th of September. During the celebrations for Santa Ninfa on the 12th November, the *Sagra del pani cunsatu*, seasoned bread, takes place. Important sporting events take place in the sports centre.

Sausage festival



Cunsatu bread festival





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Provincia Regionale
di Trapani



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POR SICILIA 2000-2006, Mis. 2.02 d
PIT 6 Alcesti. Int. 28/3 codice
1999.IT. 16.I.PO.01/2.02/9.03.13/0058

*Foto Archivio Provincia Regionale di Trapani; eccetto foto 22 - 23 - 24
(Archivio grafico e fotografico del Servizio II per i Beni Archeologici,
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