



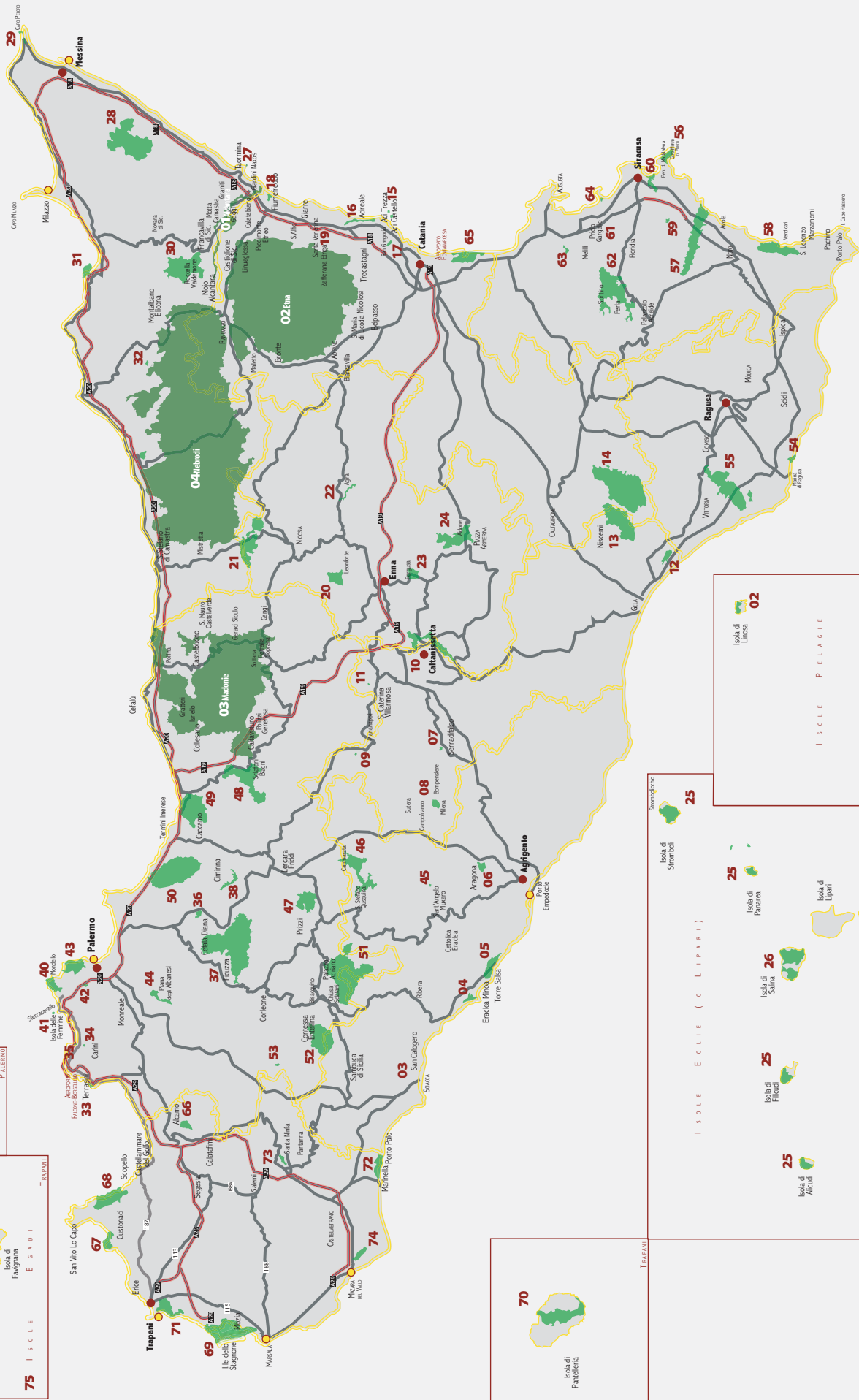
The **Green** island  
Parks, nature reserves and protected areas in Sicily





# The**Green**Island

Parks, nature reserves and protected areas in Sicily



**75** I SOLE E GADI

**39** Isole di Ustica

**39** Isole di Levanzo

**39** Isole di Favignana

**39** Isole di Maiorino

PALESTRO

TRAPANI

**70** Isole di Pantelleria

TRAPANI

**25** Isole Eolie (o Lipari)

**25** Isole di Stromboli

**25** Isole di Panarea

**25** Isole di Salina

**25** Isole di Filicudi

**25** Isole di Alicudi

**25** Isole di Lipari

**25** Isole di Vulcano

MESSINA

**02** Isole Pelagie

**02** Isole di Linosa

**01** Isole di Lampedusa

**02** Isole di Lampione

MESSINA

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**Alcantara Regional Nature Park or Alcantara Fluvial Park**

**Alcantara Fluvial Park Body**

via dei Mulini - 98034

Francavilla di Sicilia (Messina province) - tel 0942 981209/fax 0942 981038

[www.parcocalcantara.it](http://www.parcocalcantara.it)

[info@parcocalcantara.it](mailto:info@parcocalcantara.it)

**Total surface area:** 1927,48 hectares **Zone A:** 897,19 hectares

**Year of institution:** 2001

**Communes:** Calatabiano, Castiglione di Sicilia, Francavilla di Sicilia, Gaggi, Giardini Naxos, Graniti, Malvagna, Mojo Alcantara, Motta Camastra, Randazzo, Roccella Valdemone and Taormina

**Province:** Messina and Catania



01

## The Alcàntara Park

▲ top

**The walls of the gorge in the Larderia area, characterised by spectacular columnar basalts.**

**Following the course of the river** - It is impossible to choose a single zone, a single piece of this park that winds along the 50 kilometres of the bed of the river Alcàntara (notice the stress, on the second "a" and not on the third one, Alcàntara, which certainly makes the name more consistent with the Sicilian dialect, but is wrong!) which tell of enormous and terrifying geological events. Geologists, indeed, say that in prehistory here there already flowed a river on a clay bed. On this bed, however, a flow of extremely fluid magma was channelled that provoked the collapse of these sediments, giving rise, today, to the extraordinary colonnades that are admired in the Larderia area, a short distance from Motta Camastra.

Getting there is not difficult. Following the motorway that leads to Catania from Messina, you take the exit for Taormina South and, from here, you follow state highway 185, which runs along the side of the valley of the Alcàntara, a sort of canyon that very probably owes its name to that "al Kantar", arch bridge, built here by the Arabs.

Of this bridge, unfortunately only a few ruins are extant.

In addition to what has been said, there is a spectacular variety of flora growing along the banks of the river. You meet willows, black alders, poplars and oriental plane trees.

For those who love to discover the historical roots of places, inside the territory of the Park there is no lack of museums (and at Motta Camastra a particular botanical garden can be visited), rich in items found in the many archaeological excavations carried out at Francavilla of Sicilia and at Giardini Naxos and Randazzo, following what today is still called "the Greek way."

For the most daring we can also mention the only lava flow cave, in the municipal territory of Motta Camastra, which, although it is not advisable as a route, it is worth going to admire.





**The river with its cold and vigorous waters has hewn out the high walls of basaltic prisms, forming the gorge.**



### A visit

**Presence of guides and/or signs:**

Having reached the entry you go down some steps to the river bank. From there you can continue going up the course of the river. There are numerous paths and itineraries; for details apply to the managing body.

**How to get there:** Go along the A18 Catania-Messina motorway, leave at the Giardini-South Taormina exit and continue on state highway SS 185 in the direction of the Gaggi-Alcàntara gorges.

**What to visit:**

**Catiglione di Sicilia** - A delightful little medieval village characterized by a castle that dominates the valley of the Alcàntara. A must is the basilica of Santa Maria della Catena.

**Mojo Alcàntara** - In the vicinity of the village there is the volcanic cone of Monte Mojo, which is a particular shape.

Park Environmental Education Centre - Piazza del Carmine 5  
Castiglione di Sicilia - Tel. 0942 984505

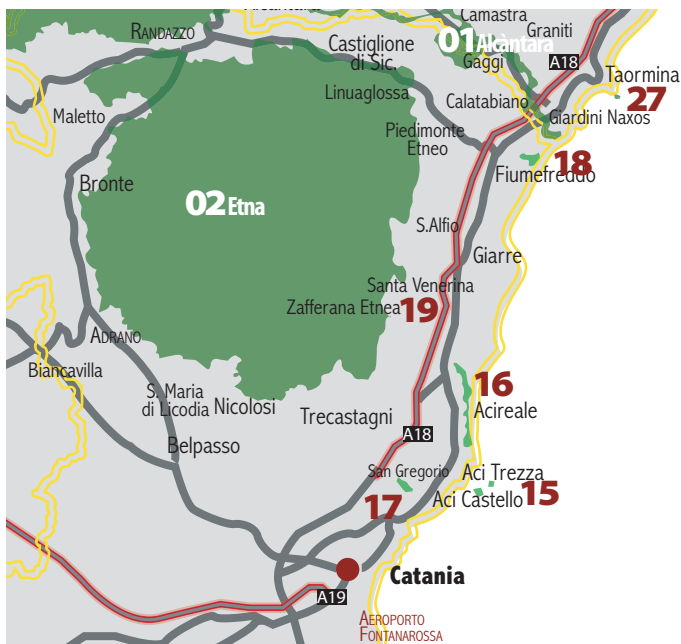
**Curiosity** The Alcàntara and its valley were present in the writings of historians in antiquity. As long ago as the 5th century BC Thucydides mentioned the waters of the river Achesines, meaning "healthy river", and its estuary in the environs of Naxos. Under the Arabs the name changed to Al Qantar, i.e. bridge, with reference to a bridge with several arches built by the Romans in the imperial age, of which no trace is now extant.

### Other information

Messina Tourist Board - via Calabria is. 301 bis - 98122  
Tel. 090 640221 - fax 090 6411047  
Emergency: 118



**The luxuriant greenery of the Park.**



**Etna Regional Nature Park**

**Etna Park Body**

via del Convento 45 - 95030 Nicolosi (Catania province)

Tel. 095 821111 - fax 095 914738

[www.parcoetna.it](http://www.parcoetna.it)

[ufficiostampa@parcoetna.it](mailto:ufficiostampa@parcoetna.it)

**Total surface area:** 58.095 hectares **Zone A:** 19.000 hectares

**Year of institution:** 1987

**Communes:** Adrano, Belpasso, Biancavilla, Bronte, Castiglione di Sicilia, Giarre, Linguaglossa, Maletto, Mascali, Milo, Nicolosi, Pedara, Piedimonte Etneo, Ragalna, Randazzo, Sant'Alfio, Santa Maria di Licodia, Trecastragni, Viagrande and Zafferana Etnea.

**Province:** Catania



02

## The Etna Park

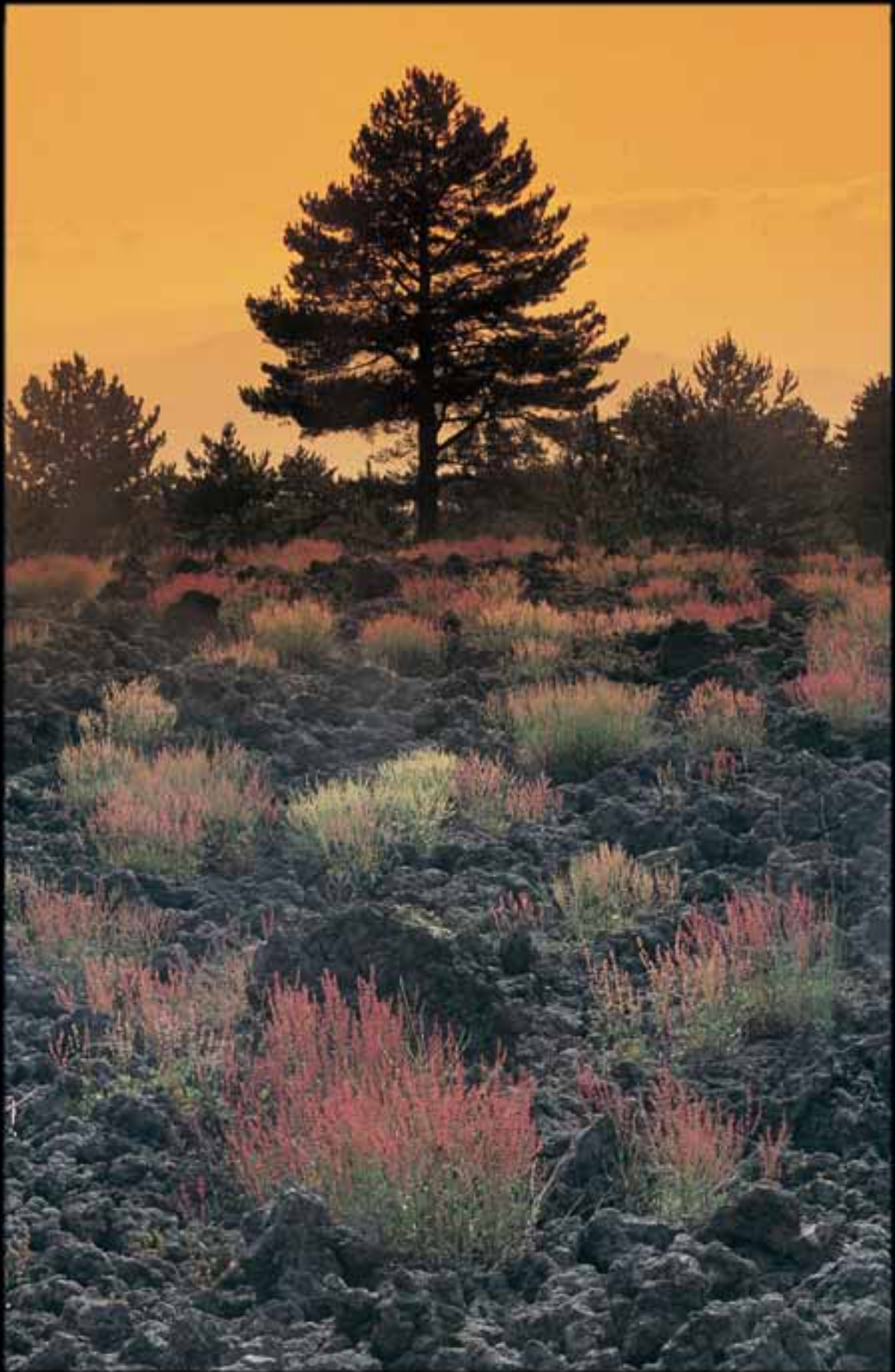
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**1983 eruption: the magma slides on the rocks, affording spectacular games of colour.**

**Between sky and fire** - The Etna Park is not distinguished only by the fascination of the lava flows that incessantly mark and modify its territory. The whole area of the park is also made unique by a plant universe that makes up and breaks down all the colours of the palette of Mother Nature, from the tonalities of green in the lower vineyards, to the yellows of the apple orchards and oak and chestnut woods as you climb up further, to the dark colours of the beech and birch forests that begin to close off the light and then abruptly allow the force of the volcano to take possession of the whole available space, up there, where the clouds caress the lapilli expelled from the bowels of the Earth.

Here, among the downy oak woods and the ferns, there is extraordinary life that feeds on what the fire giant succeeds in allowing to grow along the slopes. Here you still meet the wild cat, the fox, the porcupine, the weasel, the dormouse, just to quote some exemplary types of fauna, because the true king of these places is the superb golden eagle, which has come back to nest with a few brave individuals right among the puffs of the highest volcano in Europe. Obviously, a lot of other birds pass through here, from the peregrine falcon to the owl, the sparrow hawk to the heron, and wild doves.

A very good excursion for a first approach to the mountain can be along the Gurridda path, about a kilometre and a half long, which, although it is rich in peculiarities, is extremely easy. The Park Body, regarding this path, does not fail to underline that it is available to everybody, including the disabled, and that the environment that one discovers here is particular. Apart from the particular morphology of the lava (the path runs along the northwest slope of Etna), here it is possible to see the only example of a vineyard that for much of the autumn and winter period is completely submerged by waters.





## Fascinating landscape at Piano Vetore: Etna broom flowering among the craters.

### A visit

#### Presence of guides and/or signs:

Seeing the size of the Park and the many different accesses to it, there are a great many itineraries and excursions and so it is advisable to turn directly to the park Body, also for a guide, which is indispensable for some excursions.

However, we will recommend eight excursions.

#### In one day:

- Piano Provenzana - Monte Nero
- Monte Zoccolaro
- Monte Nero degli Zappini
- Monte Gallo - Rifugio della Galvarina
- Case Piraio - Monte Spagnolo - Cisternazza

#### In about 5 days:

- All round Etna
- In a little train, the Circumetnea one
- Going around Etna by car

**How to get there:** From Catania in the north direction follow the Etna Park signs

#### What to visit:

**The Nuova Gussonea botanical gardens** - They are on the south slope at a height of 1770 metres, not far from the Grande Albergo hotel, and were created over ten years ago for easier contact with and knowledge of the Etna ecosystem. These are mountain gardens, managed by the Demesnal Forestry Board and by the University of Catania, in which the most significant kinds of plants on Mongibello are present.

**Randazzo** - A medieval village built in lava stone, dominated by the San Martino church, on which there looms up a Gothic bell tower. There is an interesting collection of Sicilian puppets at the Vagliasindi Archaeological Museum in the Swabian Castle.

### Curiosity

**The Bove valley** - It is a vast depression on the eastern slope of the volcano and is a kind of natural reservoir into which lava flows are channelled. Above all after the 1991-93 eruption, because of plentiful lava tongues, the morphological structures of the southern part of the Etna were modified. The Bove valley has steep walls with very marked inclinations (even 30 degrees) and differences in level close on 1200 metres.

**Eruptive activity** - In the last three centuries, in which the recording of eruptive events has been sufficiently reliable, about seventy eruptions have been reported, i.e. an average of one every five years. Nevertheless, the distribution pattern of eruptive activity in a space-time context must be considered irregular and therefore one cannot make permit medium-term forecasts regarding possible developments. It is simpler for the volcanologist to have short-term indications and therefore to foresee the opening of temporary mouths, considering that opening is often preceded by seismic "swarms" that are connected with the opening of the fractures from which the magma that will feed the eruption escapes.

### Other information

Catania Tourist Board - via Cimarosa 10 - 95124

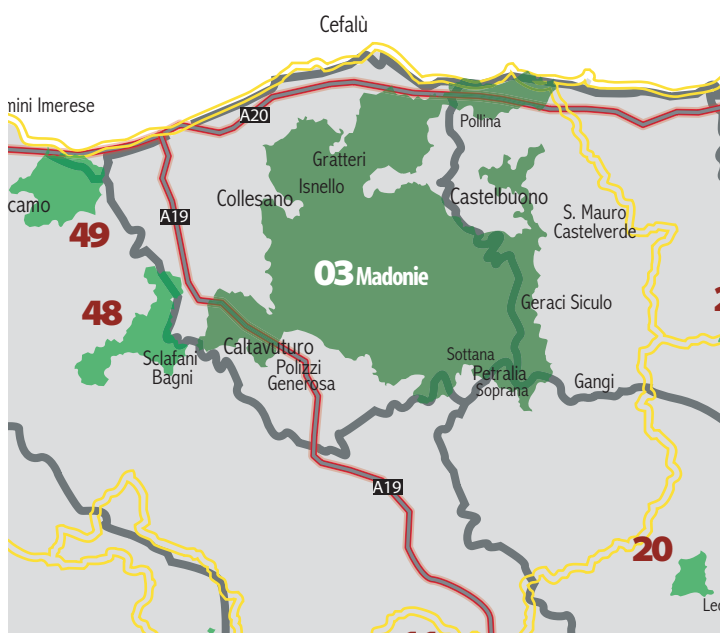
Tel. 095 7306211 fax 095 316407

[www.ap.t.catania.it](http://www.ap.t.catania.it)

Emergency: 118



**From above. Working crater. Etna in winter.**



**Madonie Regional Nature Park**

**Madonie Park Body**

corso P. Agliata 16 - 90027 Petralia Sottana (Palermo province)

Tel. 0921 684011 - fax 0921 680478

[www.parcodellemadonie.it](http://www.parcodellemadonie.it)

[epm@parcodellemadonie.it](mailto:epm@parcodellemadonie.it)

**Total surface area:** 39.941,18 hectares **Zone A:** 5.733 hectares

**Year of institution:** 1989

**Communes:** Caltavuturo, Castelbuono, Castellana Sicula, Cefalù, Collesano, Geraci Siculo, Gratteri, Isnello, Petralia Soprana, Petralia Sottana, Polizzi Generosa, Pollina, San Mauro Castelverde, Scillato and Sclafani Bagni

**Province:** Palermo



03

## The Madonie Park

▲ top

**The Grattara cave in the Madonie.**

**Where extinct trees grow** - No, this is not a piece of nonsense. In the area of Monte Scalone, Monte Cavallo, Monte dei Pini and Vallone della Madonna degli Angeli you meet just over twenty *Abies Nebrodensis* plants, which are unique in the world and today unfortunately are considered as heading for extinction. This is a truly magic place inside the Madonie Park, a place you can easily get to by going along provincial highway 9 from Polizzi Generosa in the direction of the Quacella amphitheatre. After eight kilometres you come to a gate which leads into the path for the Vallone della Madonna degli Angeli. It is along this easy path inside a wonderful wood that after about one and a half kilometres you meet these rarities, all catalogued and severely protected and easy to recognise from the bell foliage and the little cross branches.

If, instead, you want to go and discover the dairy tradition, you can choose the Pomieri-Piano Sempria path, going along provincial highway 54 from Petralia Sottana towards Piano Battaglia. You come to Pomieri, from which, after a short and easy walk, you come to the Lapazza houses, a sheep-farming settlement that is still working, ready to let you taste ricotta and cheese made there, and also possibly to show you some of the old-style processing of these typical products. Continuing through Pizzo Canna, in addition to meeting the stream of the same name, going right through the territory in which the golden eagle nests, you pass Vallone Sambuchi and come to a well-deserved resting place on the Ferro plateau. With another little effort, a climb of just 500 metres, you come to the Piano Pomo clearing, which affords one of the finest views of the Park. Lastly, you go down towards Piano Sempria, in the company of remarkable monumental oak trees. For the fittest, at Piano Battaglia there starts the path that leads to Pizzo Carbonara, the highest peak in the Park (1912 metres above sea level). Along the path, look out for fossils, which are abundant here, from corals to calcareous sponges. The rest is unspoilt nature that it is worth discovering step by step!





## Madonie wood covered in snow.

### A visit

#### Presence of guides and/or signs:

In the Park there are a great many paths, all adequately indicated and signposted. For guided visits, maps and specific itineraries, apply to the managing body.

**How to get there:** Palermo-Catania A19 motorway, Buonformello exit, take state highway 113 as far as Campofelice di Roccella. Then take state highway 286 for Collesano-Isnello, along which you will find the relevant signs. Or take the A20 Palermo-Messina motorway, Cefalù or Collesano exit.

#### What to visit:

**Cefalù** - One of the finest towns in Sicily, it is dominated by the superb majesty of the Cathedral, an architectural expression of Arab-Norman art, and by the mountain with the remains of the Temple of Diana on it. One should also visit the medieval washing place built in the rock, and the Mandralisca Museum, which in its collections, in addition to archaeological items and ancient coins, has an important pinacotheca in which there is also "The Smile of the Unknown Sailor" by Antonello Da Messina.

**Castelbuono** - It is a medieval mountain village.

It is worthwhile going for a simple walk in its little streets and visiting the little churches, among which there stands out the old cathedral church. The history of the village is linked above all to the Ventimiglias and the castle, inside which there is a very fine chapel with stuccoes by an artist of the Serpotta school.

### Curiosity

**The Sicilian Apollo** - The natural environment of the Madonie has important entomological fauna. In these mountains there are no fewer than ninety species of butterflies that are worth observing, and among them there is certainly the Sicilian Apollo or Parnassius apollo. This butterfly, a subspecies that is exclusive to the Madonie, which reach the greatest heights, is characterised by light-coloured wings on which four red circular marks stand out.

### Other information

Palermo Tourist Board - p.zza Castelnuovo 35 - 90141 Palermo

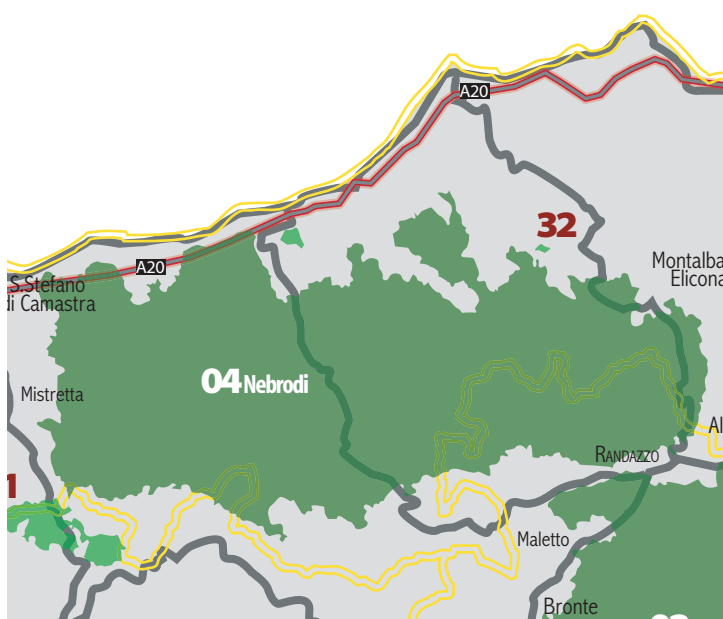
Tel. 091 6058111 - Fax 091 586338

Cefalù Tourist Board - via G. Amendola 2 - 90015 (Palermo province) - Tel. 0921 921990

Emergency: 118



**The variegated nature in the Park affords incomparable excursions for alpinists.**



### **Nebrodi Regional Nature Park**

#### **Nebrodi Regional Nature Park Body**

c/da Pietragrossa - SS 113-km 140,650) - 98072 Caronia (Messina province)

Tel. 0921 333015 - fax 0921 335794

Offices and services:

Via Ugo Foscolo 1 - 98070 Alcara LI Fusi (Messina province)

Tel. 0941 793904 - fax 0941 793240

[www.parcodeinebrodi.it](http://www.parcodeinebrodi.it)

[info@parcodeinebrodi.it](mailto:info@parcodeinebrodi.it)

**Total surface area:** 85.587,37 hectares **Zone A:** 24,546 hectares

**Year of institution:** 1993

**Communes:** Acquedolci, Alcara Li Fusi, Bronte, Capizzi, Caronia, Cerami, Cesarò, Floresta, Galati Mamertino, Longi, Maniace, Militello Rosmarino, Mistretta, Randazzo, Sant'Agata di Militello, Santa Domenica Vittoria, San Fratello, San Marco D'Alunzio, Santo Stefano di Camastra, San Teodoro, Tortorici, Troina and Ucria

**Province:** Messina, Catania and Enna



04

## The Nebrodi park



top

**The Nebrodi offer the visitor enchanting lacustrine landscapes.**

**Forest springs** - Speaking of the Nebrodi in general means speaking about majestic trees, dense forests and much lower temperatures than the ones the island is famous for.

Here you can visit the Mangalaviti wood, thanks to an educational itinerary worked out by the Park Body. Maple, ash, apple and holly trees, in addition to the typical beech trees, press against the sky with their foliage, making you feel, on the ground, as if you were in a place a thousand miles from the usual Sicily, meaning beaches and blue sea. You can go along the "spring path", recently inaugurated, which starts from the Petrosino area, near Maniace, 750 metres above sea level. Going up to 1568 metres, where there is the Arcarolo hostel, you can walk along the former royal track, taking in Nelson's Column and Maniace Castle. It is an easy path taking in some of the finest spots in the Nebrodi Park, starting precisely from Maniace and getting to the territory of Bronte, the famous pistachio capital. For anyone who is thirsty, along the path there is no shortage of water gushing out among impertinent ferns and maidenhair fern.

If you don't particularly like climbs, there is always the possibility of opting for the Biviere lake, 1800 square metres of water in the territory of Cesarò. We can say nothing in advance about Biviere, as its luxuriant flora, and consequently its fauna too, is always different, adapting to the level of the water that collects here. But if you really want to enjoy the best, it is a good idea to come in summer, when, due to the flowering of *Euglena sanguinea*, a very small alga that lives on the lake bottom, the waters of Biviere turn a truly unusual red colour.





## The Biviere lake in the territory of the commune of Cesarò.

### A visit

#### Presence of guides and/or signs:

The longest and most spectacular itinerary is the Nebrodi crest (duration 3 days). There are also signposted paths like Rocche di Crasto, Lake Spartà and Lake Pisciotto. For those who love riding a horse there are also plenty of excursions. For detailed information contact the managing body.

**How to get there:** From Palermo go along the A20 Palermo-Messina motorway as far as the Sant'Agata di Militello exit, and continue on state highway 185 towards Floresta. From Messina take the Falcone exit and then continue on state highway 116 towards Floresta and Cesarò. On the route there are signposts referring to the Park.

#### What to visit:

**Maniace abbey** - Also known as Nelson's Castle, it is a fine building inside which there is a garden which is very well looked after. It was founded in 1741, and Ferdinand III of Bourbon donated it to Admiral Nelson to thank him for his military intervention in Naples against the uprising.

**San Marco d'Alunzio** - This was the centre of the Hellenisation of the Nebrodi, and is a true museum-village with important archaeological sites referring to the Greek and Byzantine epochs. A very charming place is the Temple of Hercules, from the 4th century BC, later transformed into a Christian church, the remains of the old castle and, despite the size of the village, no fewer than twenty-four churches.

### Curiosity

**The San Fratello horse** - In the Park there are a lot of horses of pure Sicilian race (about 5000, some 1800 of them in the wild state). The San Fratello horse, created in Sicily, has been used by all populations that have lived on the island. It is considered the oldest equine race in Europe. It has a dark black coat, robust build, and a courageous but docile and patient character, and once it is tamed it is extremely resistant because it is used to moving around high up.

**Santo Stefano ceramics** - In the seventeenth century in the village of Santo Stefano Camastra terracotta processing, which had been begun many centuries before by the Greeks, got going again. At the start of production terracotta was produced for building purposes, but subsequently, thanks to the skill of the craftsmen, a lot of majolica and artistic ceramics were produced that are now famous around the world and are the pride and joy of the people in the village.

**Typical produce** - The deep link with the mountain and the old production techniques over the centuries have refined production of processed pork meats and quality cheeses. People produce *fellata*, a kind of salami made with meat from the native Nero dei Nebrodi breed of pigs, mixed with pepper and chilli peppers and seasoned for about three months.

The ricotta, which has an excellent smell and taste, is still produced with a grafting of fig latex. The cheese makers carefully choose the fig trees from which to extract the latex. Also, one should not miss the Nebrodi *provola* cheese, the outcome of a very old manipulation technique making it soft, though with seasoning it takes on a spicy flavour, and also canestrato cheese, placed in little reed baskets and sometimes flavoured with pepper and chilli pepper and completely covered with salt.

### Other information

Messina Tourist Board - via Calabria 301 bis - 98122

Tel. 090 6400221 - fax 090 6411047

Emergency: 118



## Lake Maulazzo, set in the superb Sollazzo Verde beech wood.

# 05/ Nature Reserves and Protected Areas

## Useful Numbers

**Sicilian Region - Regional Board  
for the Territory and the Environment**  
via Ugo La Malfa, 169 - 90146 Palermo  
tel. 091 7077395 - fax 091 7077877  
[www.arta.sicilia.it](http://www.arta.sicilia.it)

**Regional Forestry Board**  
via Libertà, 97 - 90143 Palermo  
tel. 091 79068111 - fax 091 7906801  
[www.regione.sicilia.it/agricolturaeforeste/azforeste](http://www.regione.sicilia.it/agricolturaeforeste/azforeste)  
[azforsi@regione.sicilia.it](mailto:azforsi@regione.sicilia.it)

**WWF Sicily section**  
via E. Albanese 98 - 90139 Palermo  
tel. 091 583040 - fax 091 333468  
[www.wwf.it/sicilia](http://www.wwf.it/sicilia)  
[sicilia@wwf.it](mailto:sicilia@wwf.it)

**Legambiente Sicilian Regional Committee**  
via Agrigento, 67 - 90133 Palermo  
tel. 091 301663 - fax 091 6264139  
[www.legambientesicilia.com](http://www.legambientesicilia.com)  
[info@legambientesicilia.com](mailto:info@legambientesicilia.com)

**LIPU Sicily section**  
via Houel 29 - 90141 Palermo  
tel. 091 320506 - fax 091 323804  
[www.lipusicilia.it](http://www.lipusicilia.it)  
[lipusicilia@oasi.net](mailto:lipusicilia@oasi.net)

**CAI Regional main office**  
via Roma 443 - 90139 Palermo  
tel. 091 322689 - fax 091 6092589  
[www.caisicilia.it](http://www.caisicilia.it)  
[caisicilia@tin.it](mailto:caisicilia@tin.it)

**Catania University - CUTGANA**  
via Androne 81 - 95124 Catania  
tel. 095 7306053 - fax 095 7306052  
[www.cutgana.it](http://www.cutgana.it)  
[cutgana@unict.it](mailto:cutgana@unict.it)

**Palermo Regional Province**  
Nature reserve management office  
via San Lorenzo 312/g - 90136 Palermo  
091 6628452 - fax 091 6628325  
numero verde 800 003 388  
[www.provincia.palermo.it](http://www.provincia.palermo.it)  
[riservenaturali@provincia.palermo.it](mailto:riservenaturali@provincia.palermo.it)

**Messina Regional Province**  
via XXIV Maggio is. 315 - Palazzo degli Uffici  
98124 Messina  
tel. 090 7761111 - fax 090 7761264  
[www.provincia.messina.it](http://www.provincia.messina.it)  
[riservetrasporti@provincia.messina.it](mailto:riservetrasporti@provincia.messina.it)

**Catania Regional Province**  
Nature reserve management office  
via Nuovaluce 67/a - 95100 Tremestieri Etneo (CT)  
tel. 095 4012485 - fax 095 4012815  
[www.provincia.catania.it](http://www.provincia.catania.it)  
[riserve.naturali@provincia.ct.it](mailto:riserve.naturali@provincia.ct.it)

**Caltanissetta Regional Province**  
v.le Regina Margherita, 28 - 93100 Caltanissetta  
tel. 0934 581757 - fax 0934 583556  
[www.provincia.cl.it](http://www.provincia.cl.it)  
[territorio.ambiente@provincia.cl.it](mailto:territorio.ambiente@provincia.cl.it)

**Ragusa Regional Province**  
Environment Office  
via G. Di Vittorio 175 - 97100 Ragusa  
tel. 0932 675526 - fax 0932 675519  
[www.provincia.ragusa.it](http://www.provincia.ragusa.it)  
[maria.dimaio@provincia.ragusa.it](mailto:maria.dimaio@provincia.ragusa.it)

**Trapani Regional Province**  
piazza Vitttorio Veneto 1 - 91100 Trapani  
tel. 0923 806111 / 806212  
[www.provincia.trapani.it](http://www.provincia.trapani.it)  
[smarino@provincia.trapani.it](mailto:smarino@provincia.trapani.it)

## 01/Island of Lampedusa

### Name of reserve:

Island of Lampedusa Special Nature Reserve

### Managing body:

Legambiente - Sicilian Regional Committee

### Person responsible locally:

Signora Giusi Nicolini  
via Vittorio Emanuele, 27 - 92010 Lampedusa (Agrigento province)  
The office is open every day for information, booking guided visits and consulting material on the reserve area and on nature preservation themes.

Tel. 0922 971611 - Fax 0922 971812

[lampedusanatura@iol.it](mailto:lampedusanatura@iol.it)

[www.parks.it](http://www.parks.it)

### Name of the marine area:

Marine Protected Area - Pelagean Islands

(Lampedusa, Linosa, Lampione)

### Managing body:

Comune di Lampedusa and Linosa

Via Roma, 36 - 92010 Lampedusa

Tel. 0922 975780 - Fax 0922 975780

[amp\\_pelagie@virgilio.it](mailto:amp_pelagie@virgilio.it)

Surface area: 3230 Hectares Zone A: 196,50 Hectares

Year of institution: 1996

Province: Agrigento Commune: Lampedusa

### The Reserve

It includes a vast part of the southern coast of the island between the Vallone dell'Acqua, to the west, and the Cala Greca to the east. The island lies on the African continental shelf and there are many elements typical of that continent in addition to the proximity (it is only 70 miles from the North African coast).

A lot of the existing plant species in the reserve are of African origin and they are not found in any other part of Italy. The original woodland covering was completely destroyed following the colonization effect beginning from 1843.

Of particular landscape beauty and natural interest is the enchanting island of Rabbits, adjacent to the beach of the same name. Because of the particular position in the Mediterranean, also of primary importance is the sea environment of the island, which is rich in benthonic species.

### Curiosity

The beach of the Island of Rabbits is famous because it is the only beach in Italy where a particular kind of sea turtle, *Caretta caretta*, regularly nests. These turtles reproduce in the summer period. The eggs laid at the beginning of summer hatch out after about two months. On that occasion, which is so important for the survival of the species, the habits of the turtle absolutely must be maintained. In the summer, the managing body organizes volunteer camps to find the nests, delimit them and protect them until the eggs hatch out. Every morning, a volunteer walks along the beach to look for traces of egg laying. Once a nest is found, it is fenced off and indicated with a sign warning swimmers of its presence.

Another natural phenomenon that only occurs on Lampedusa is so-called *marobbio*. It takes place in the April-May period and then in September-October, and it resembles a seaquake... but it is less scaring. At first the sky goes grey, and then the water withdraws as if it were sucked out, and boats are left in low water. After a few minutes, suddenly the sea goes up at least a metre and the waves can even flood the roads. There are no certain scientific explanations for this phenomenon.

**A visit** The stupendous, big and long beach of Rabbits can only be reached on foot, following a steep path around 750 metres long. Along the coast and in the gullies various itineraries are possible. The managing body organizes guided excursions inside the reserve. We recommend you make the excursions in the first and last hours of the day, always taking a big water supply with you.

**How to get there:** Lampedusa is connected daily by sea (ferry) with Porto Empedocle and by air with Palermo airport. In the summer it is connected with numerous other Italian airports. In the summer a hydrofoil service connects it to Linosa.

## Other information

At the beginning of the path leading to the beach of Rabbits, near the car park, the managing body has a place where visitors can deposit everything that they are not allowed to take inside the Reserve. To book the guided visits contact the office of the Reserve.

### Nearest emergency medical service:

c.da Grecale 2 - 92010 - Lampedusa - Tel. 0922 971395

### Tourist information:

Lampedusa tourist body - via Andrea Anfossi, 3 - 92010

Tel. 0922 971171 - fax 0922 970662

[www.enteturismolampedusa.it](http://www.enteturismolampedusa.it)

## 02/Islands of Linosa and Lampione

### Name of reserve:

Island of Linosa Special Nature Reserve

Island of Lampione Total Nature Reserve

### Managing body:

Demesnal Forestry Board

### Body locally responsible:

Agrigento Forestry Board - Tel. 0922 595911

Lampedusa Forestry Board - Tel 0922 971705

Surface area: 266,87 ha Zone A: 196,50 ha

Year of institution: 2000

Province: Agrigento Commune: Lampedusa

### The Reserve

Linosa is an island of volcanic origin made up of four eruptive centres: Monte Nero to the west, Monte Vulcano to the southeast, Monte Rosso to the northeast and Monte Bandiera, where the tiny and delightful village lies. Truly peculiar and spectacular is the volcanic landscape afforded by the island with its jagged and complex coasts. In certain areas they are indeed impressive, as at Cava Pozzolana di Ponente, with ochre and grey tufas that impend on the emerald waters, the Ponente rock-cliffs, the rock-stacks, the Count's bay, and the lavas of the so-called "Threads."

The islet of Lampione is a calcareous rock 700 metres long and 180 wide, which reaches a height of 40 metres above sea level. It goes back to the Jurassic period. It is an hour's sailing from Lampedusa and it is a paradise for the scuba diver: its seabeds and the shoals of fish afford remarkable sightings due to the richness of the fish fauna. It is uninhabited and the only manufactured object on it is a lighthouse. Numerous kinds of birds nest there and the colony of rare Malta lizards is very big.

**Curiosity** Along the Cava Pozzolana beach the *Caretta caretta* turtle lays its eggs.

In the ravines of the bluffs in the Mannarazze area, on the Ponente rock, in summer the greater shearwater nests. This bird lives all year round out at sea, only approaching dry land for reproduction. You can also observe a lot of other migratory and resident species. On the island of Lampione there also nest gulls, and cormorants, queen's hawks and storm birds call in there.

Quaint little lentils are grown on the island and there is also a certain production of capers.

**A visit** Linosa is still today an island to visit on foot, up and down volcanoes and through tiny fields. A walk round the island along the old paths is one of the most beautiful excursions to be made on all the smaller islands of Sicily.

**How to get there:** You can sail to Linosa from Porto Empedocle. In summer there are also hydrofoil services from Porto Empedocle and Lampedusa. You can only get to Lampione in private boats to be rented on Lampedusa.

## Other information

### Nearest emergency medical centre:

via Re Umberto 32 - Linosa - Tel. 0922 972115

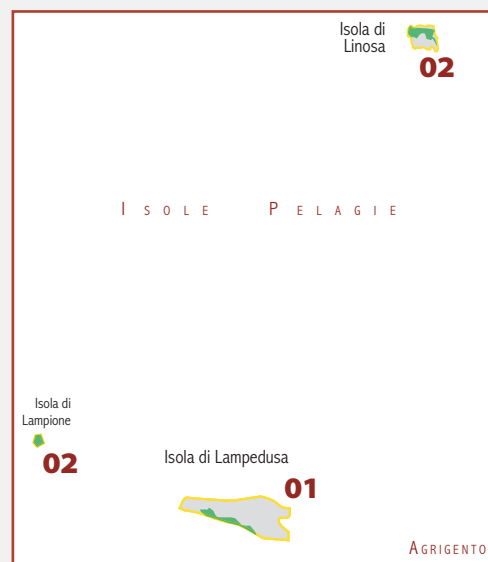
**Tourist information:** Lampedusa and Linosa Local Tourist Board  
via Vittorio Emanuele 89 - Lampedusa - Tel. 0922 971390



**Lampedusa, newborn *Caretta caretta* turtles head for the sea.**



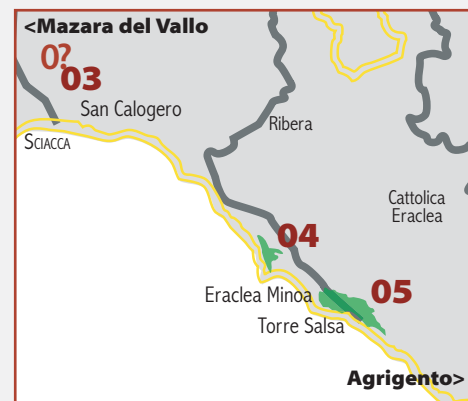
**Linosa, typical house.**





◀ left

From left. The beach of Torre Salsa. The river Platani.



## 03/Monte San Calogero (Kronio)



### Name of reserve:

Riserva Naturale Orientata Monte S. Calogero (Kronio)

**Managing body:** Demesnal Forestry Board

**Body locally responsible:** Provincial Forestry Board

via L. Sturzo 14 - Agrigento - Tel. 0922 27088

[www.regione.sicilia.it/agricolturaeforeste/azforeste](http://www.regione.sicilia.it/agricolturaeforeste/azforeste)

**Surface area:** 52,25 hectares **Zone A:** 31 hectares

**Year of institution:** 2000 **Province:** Agrigento **Commune:** Sciacca

**The Reserve** The mountain (386 metres above sea level) is of calcareous origin and is characterized by rupestrian vegetation; it is also known for its complex architecture. Inside, in the intricate tangle of the cavities, five principal caves are distinguished, among which the "Stufe di San Calogero", in which air and vapours linked to thermal phenomena circulate. It seems that they originate (secondary type volcanism) from a stratum of thermal water that flows at the base of the mountain and saturate the vapours with sulphurous salts, endowed with particular therapeutic effects. The thermal and hydro-mineral patrimony, though not fully exploited, is one of the most complete and richest in the world.

**Curiosity** The name of the mountain originates from Greek mythology: Kronos, the Greek god of time, the father of Zeus, the earth's child (Gea) killed the sky (Uranus), his father, to separate him from Gea.

The history of the "Stufe di San Calogero" is also linked to a legend: it is recounted that Daedalus, an expert on labyrinths, channelled the hot vapours that escaped from the fissures in the rock in order to be able to use them, giving rise to the steamy "stoves".

### A visit

**How to get there:** From the town of Sciacca, take Via Palermo and follow the signs leading to the road that winds up Monte San Calogero.

### Other information

**Nearest emergency medical service:** Az. Osp. Ospedali riuniti di Sciacca - via Pompei 1 - Tel. 0925 962111

**Tourist information:**

Sciacca Tourist Board - via Vitt. Emanuele 84 - Tel. 0925 21182

## 04/Mouth of the river Platani

**Name of reserve:** River Platani Estuary Special Nature Reserve

**Managing body:** Demesnal Forestry Board

**Body locally responsible:** Agrigento Provincial Tourist Board

via L. Sturzo 14 - Agrigento - Tel. 0922 27088

Ribera Forestry Commission - C.so Umberto I - Tel 0925 545951

**Surface area:** 206,44 hectares **Zone A:** 159 hectares

**Year of institution:** 1984

**Province:** Agrigento **Communes:** Ribera and Cattolica Eraclea

**The Reserve** The river Platani flows into the Channel of Sicily. It is alongside an absolutely peculiar rocky promontory, Capo Bianco, a high and spectacular cliff of white calcareous marl that rises over the sea and a beach of very fine sand. On the plateau of the promontory there are the remains of the Greek colony of Eraclea Minoa. The nature reserve and the nearby Archaeological Park allow the visitor to follow an extraordinary archaeological nature itinerary. The reserve includes various contiguous natural environments: the river with its typical riparian vegetation, the long beach with low sandy dunes, the hinterland with Mediterranean maquis and the reforestations operated by the Forestry. The reserve protects the terminal stretch of the river and the big loop that marks its mouth. On its shores there are reeds that afford shelter for numerous species of resident and migratory birds. The dune system created behind the long sandy beach has vegetation with showy flowerings and a big strip of dense Mediterranean maquis that gives the visitor an idea of what the south coast of Sicily was once like.

**Curiosity** After a long period of absence, thanks to the creation of the reserve, the *Caretta caretta* turtle has returned to lay its eggs in the sands of the beach. At the mouth there is a colony of river turtles and the collared snake.

### A visit

**How to get there:** You follow state highway 189, and then the Agrigento-Sciacca state highway SS 115. At the turning for Borgo Monsignore you leave the state highway and continue in the direction of the Eraclea Minoa archaeological area. From here you follow a track that goes along the edge of the Capo Bianco cliff and you come to a small path going down towards the beach and the Borgo Monsignore wood.

**Presence of guides and/or signs:** An "unofficial" path connects the nature reserve with the Archaeological Park. The best period to visit the reserve is in the spring months.

### Other information

**Nearest emergency medical service:**

Az. Osp. Ospedali riuniti di Sciacca - via Pompei 1 - Tel. 0925 962111

**Tourist information:** Agrigento Tourist Board

viale della Vittoria 255 - Tel. 0922 401352 - fax 0922 25185

## 05/Torre Salsa

**Name of reserve:**

Torre Salsa Special Nature Reserve

**Managing body:** WWF Sicilia

**Body locally responsible:** Torre Salsa Nature reserve

Via Roma 156 - 92010 Siculiana (AG) - Tel 0922 818220

[wwftorresalsa@tin.it](mailto:wwftorresalsa@tin.it)

[www.wwftorresalsa.it](http://www.wwftorresalsa.it)

**Surface area:** 761,62 hectares **Zone A:** 360 hectares

**Year of institution:** 2000

**Province:** Agrigento **Commune:** Siculiana

**The Reserve** The reserve is along the coast between Siculiana and Eraclea Minoa, in a wild and spectacular area in which chalk cliffs alternate with calcareous marls sometimes covered by dunes. The natural environment is characterised by a big marsh area, Fossa del Pantano, which has particular plant and animal species and a very well kept long beach with a dune system still in an excellent state, mixed with cliffs rising sheer over the sea. There is interesting bird fauna, with numerous species of migratory birds. The sea bed, with very clear water, also has important vegetation and fish fauna.

**Curiosity** The managing body carries out scientific research activity on the nesting of the marine turtle, counting of birds, and environmental recovery of inland quarries. The lookout tower which gives the name to the reserve was part of the coastal defence system against attacks by Saracen pirates. It exchanged optical signals with the towers in line of sight with it: at Capo Bianco, to the west, and Torre Felice, to the east.

### A visit

**How to get there:** Coming from Agrigento on state highway SS 115, after Siculiana take the exit for Siculiana Marina, then take provincial highway 75 for Montallegro and go along it for about 2 kilometres until you come to the visitor centre at the Omomorto entrance.

Coming from Sciacca on state highway SS 115, after Montallegro take the second exit, for Montallegro, and follow the "Riserva Torre Salsa" signs as far as the Omomorto entrance.

**Presence of guides and/or signs:** You go along an earth track which leads to Valle del Ginepro, a natural amphitheatre of crystalline chinks where there are the last exemplars of so-called Phoenician juniper. From here there are vast panoramas of the sea. When making a visit to the reserve a water supply and a hat are indispensable. The edges of the cliff are friable and hence dangerous.

### Other information

**Nearest emergency medical service:**

c.da Consolida (Ag) - Tel. 0922 492111

**Tourist information:** Agrigento Tourist Board

viale della Vittoria 255 - Tel. 0922 401352 - fax 0922 25185

## 06/ Aragona Macalube

### Name of reserve:

Aragona Macalube Total Nature Reserve

### Managing body:

Legambiente - Sicilian Regional Committee

### Person responsible locally:

Sig. Angelo Dimarca

Via Salvatore La Rosa 53 - 92021 Aragona (Agrigento province)

Tel. 0922 699210 - Fax 0922 690021

[macalube@oasi.it](mailto:macalube@oasi.it)

[www.parks.it/riserva.macalube.aragona](http://www.parks.it/riserva.macalube.aragona)

Surface area: 256,25 hectares Zone A: 93 hectares

Year of institution: 1995

Province: Agrigento Communes: Aragona - Joppolo Giancaxio

**The Reserve** In a landscape encompassing the characteristics typical of inland Sicily, made up of rounded hills essentially covered by herbaceous plants that in spring afford a multicoloured carpet of flowerings, there emerges a strange grey circular heath: this is the so-called "hill of little volcanoes" of the Aragona Macalube. It is made up of ashy marls with cracks running through it, and from it there emerge little volcanic cones from which streams of clayey mud gush out. This is one of the rare places where the geological phenomenon known as "sedimentary volcanism" is manifested.

**Curiosity** Probably the name Macalube derives from the Arabic *maqlub* meaning "overturning". These "explosions of mud" occur when in the subsoil big quantities of gas accumulate due to obstruction of the normal vents; when this gas manages to break through the soil it liberates its energy. In some cases there is even self-combustion of the gas, giving rise to rare and spectacular "burning fountains". The particular rarity of the phenomena protected inside the "hill of little volcanoes" make the reserve a unique and surprising place.

### A visit

**How to get there:** To get to Aragona you go along the SS 189 Agrigento-Palermo state highway. In the village there are signs for the reserve, which is about 4 kilometres away.

### Presence of guides and/or signs:

There are two itineraries inside the reserve, to be done in about two hours. One is a geological itinerary that leads to the "hill of little volcanoes". Here guides authorised by the managing body explain the geological phenomenon. The other is a nature itinerary involving a visit to some "temporary Mediterranean pools", which vary in size and humidity depending on the time of year.

Guided visits must be booked at the reserve offices.

We recommend visiting the reserve in winter, at the start of spring or in autumn. In summer the phenomenon of mud explosions is greatly reduced or wholly disappears.

### Other information

**Nearest emergency medical service:** Aragona - tel. 0922 36810

### Tourist information:

Aragona - Tourist Service Office tel. 0922 37170

## 07/ Lake Soprano

### Name of reserve:

Lake Soprano Special Nature Reserve

### Managing body:

Caltanissetta Regional Province

Territory and Environment Office

viale Regina Margherita, 28 - 93100 Caltanissetta

Tel. 0934 581757 - Fax 0934 583556

### Person responsible locally:

D.ssa Giulia Cortina - Sig Spilla

Surface area: 15 ha Year of institution: 2000

Province: Caltanissetta Commune: Caltanissetta

**The Reserve** The lake, also known as Cuba because of affinities of the scenery with the Caribbean landscapes, is a doline, i.e. a surface cavity characteristic of karstic terrains, produced by the action of waters on limestone, filled by waters coming from springs and rain.

The fauna of the reserve is made up of numerous birds including the small black-necked grebe, a solitary aquatic bird with webbed feet; the little bittern, a small wader with thin legs; the black-tailed godwit, a migratory bird with a slender body, long legs, short tail, and long and thin beak curved upward; the poehard, with a brown-red head and neck; and the coot, with a strong body, lobed feet and a slate black colour.

A lot of amphibians and reptiles live around and in the lake: the marsh tortoise, a small freshwater turtle, is surely one of the most beautiful exemplars.

### A visit

**How to get there:** From Caltanissetta drive along the Agrigento-Caltanissetta state highway SS 640 as far as the Serradifalco exit. Then take provincial highway 40 and lastly state highway SS 122 as far as Serradifalco.

### Other information

#### Nearest emergency medical service:

San Cataldo - via Forianini 1 - tel. 0934 571114

#### Tourist information:

Local Tourist Board - largo Calsiano 18 - tel. 0934 931848

## 08/ Monte Conca

### Name of reserve:

Monte Conca Total Nature Reserve



**Managing body:** Italian Alpine Club (C.A.I.)

**Body locally responsible:** Monte Conca Total Nature Reserve

Via Pietro Nenni, 4 - 93010 Milena (Caltanissetta province)

Tel/fax 0934 933254 - Cell 347 4322207

[riserva.monteconca@infoservizi.it](mailto:riserva.monteconca@infoservizi.it)

[www.riserva.m.conca.it](http://www.riserva.m.conca.it)

Surface area: 245 hectares Year of institution: 1995

Province: Caltanissetta Commune: Campofranco

**The reserve** Monte Conca constitutes a complete and still active surface and subterranean karst system, and in it you can observe the whole range of morphologies, the main ones of which are dolines, blind valleys, furrowed fields, potholes, resurgences and caves. The cave has the particularity, typical of calcareous caves, of developing through spectacular waterfall wells, with little pools at the bottom. A speleological visit to the cave is one of the most spectacular and satisfying underground excursions to be made in Sicily.

**Curiosity** The zone is locally called Zubbio, a recurrent dialect term to indicate karst depressions.

### A visit

**How to get there:** Take the fast Palermo-Agrigento road, SS 189, and turn onto provincial highway 24 for Milena-Bompensiere. From the village of Milena follow the signs leading to the reserve.

**Presence of guides and/or signs:** The cave can only be visited by expert speleologists. The managing body organises guided visits to be booked at the reserve offices.

### Other information

#### Nearest emergency medical service:

San Cataldo - via Forianini 1 - tel. 0934 571114

#### Tourist information:

*Pro loco* San Cataldo - via Vittorio Emanuele - Tel. 0934 959283



**Aragona Macalube, the hill of little volcanoes.**



**Lake Soprano (Serradifalco).**





## 09/Contrada Scaleri



### Name of reserve:

Contrada Scaleri Total Nature Reserve

### Managing body:

Caltanissetta Province Regional Territory and Environment Office  
v.le Regina Margherita 28  
93100 - Caltanissetta  
Tel. 0934 581757  
fax 0934 583556

[www.provincia.caltanissetta.it](http://www.provincia.caltanissetta.it)

### Person responsible locally:

D.ssa Giulia Cortina - Sig. Spilla

**Surface area:** 11,875 hectares **Zone A:** 3,13 hectares

**Year of institution:** 1997 **Province:** Caltanissetta

**Communes:** S. Caterina Villarmosa

**The reserve** The reserve is something unique from the geological point of view since, due to surface karst dissolution, very rare forms are present: "karstic microforms". The chalky rocks are characterised by thick stratifications that, because of their geomorphology, give rise to fragments of rock from landslides on which there are evident striations caused by the erosive effect of water.

**Curiosity** Although the flora of this area is fairly degraded and typical of uncultivated lands, the particular calcareous nature of the terrain creates and favours the life of species of great value like spontaneous orchids (on the photo).

### A visit

**How to get there:** Take the Palermo-Catania motorway, A19. After the Ponte Cinquearchi exit you take state highway SS 121 towards Santa Caterina, or exit at Caltanissetta and take state highway 122bis and continue in the direction of Santa Caterina Villarmosa. Two kilometres after the village you follow the signs to get to the reserve.

**Presence of guides and/or signs:** You can only book a visit by contacting the managing body.

### Other information

#### Nearest emergency medical service:

Azienda Ospedaliera S. Elia - Caltanissetta

via L. Russo 6 - Tel. 0934 559265/559111

First aid - 93010 Marianopoli - Via Mimiani Tel. 0934 674112

#### Tourist information:

Caltanissetta Tourist Board - Corso Vittorio Emanuele, 109

93100 Caltanissetta - Tel. 0934 21089

[www.aapit.cl.it](http://www.aapit.cl.it)

## 10/Monte Capodarso and Valley of the Southern Imera

### Name of reserve:

Monte Capodarso and Southern Imera Special Nature Reserve

**Managing body:** Italia Nostra Onlus - Caltanissetta section  
Monte Capodarso and Valley of the Southern Imera

v.le Conte Testasecca, 44 - Caltanissetta - Tel 0934 541722

[riservaimera@infoservizi.it](mailto:riservaimera@infoservizi.it)

[www.riservaimera.it](http://www.riservaimera.it)

**Surface area:** 1.485 hectares **Zone A:** 679 hectares

**Year of institution:** 1997 **Province:** Caltanissetta - Enna

**Communes:** Caltanissetta, Enna and Pietraperzia



**The reserve** Over the valley in which the southern river Imera flows there loom up Monte Capodarso and Monte Sabucina. It is an environment rich in landscapes, nature, history, archaeology and traditions, as well as numerous and ancient human activities linked to agriculture and mining which went on there. The rocks in the area have been eroded by river action on the exposed sides of the mountains and by atmospheric agents, creating a particular landscape, dramatically characterised by big chins.

### A visit

**How to get there:** Take the Palermo-Catania motorway, A19, as far as the Caltanissetta exit. You follow the signs for Agrigento on state highway SS 126. After the Ponte Capodarso bridge, on the right there is the entrance to the reserve, signposted.

**Presence of guides and/or signs:** The six nature itineraries follow the existing paths, so as not to modify the territory. They are signposted, and there are halting places and displays explaining the various environments you go through. Some of the paths have also been rendered usable by motorised people with handicaps. There are panels to be read in Braille. The managing body organises guided visits. You must book them at least a week in advance at the reserve offices.

### Other information

**Nearest emergency medical service:** Azienda Ospedaliera S. Elia Caltanissetta - via L. Russo 6 - Tel. 0934 559265/559111

◀ left

### Lake Sfondato.



### Tourist information:

Enna Tourist Board - via Roma 411 - 94100 - Tel. 0935.500544

Caltanissetta Tourist Board - Corso Vittorio Emanuele, 109

93100 - Tel. 0934.21089

[www.aapit.cl.it](http://www.aapit.cl.it)

## 11/Lake Sfondato

### Name of reserve:

Lake Sfondato Total Nature Reserve

### Managing body:

Legambiente - Sicilian Regional Committee

### Person responsible locally:

Signor Angelo Dimarca

Via Rosso di San Secondo, 14/A - 93100 Caltanissetta

Tel 0934 564038

[lagosfondato@tiscali.it](mailto:lagosfondato@tiscali.it)

[www.parks.it/riserva.lago.sfondato](http://www.parks.it/riserva.lago.sfondato)

**Surface area:** 13,13 hectares **Zone A:** 4 hectares

**Year of institution:** 1997

**Province:** Caltanissetta **Commune:** Caltanissetta

**The reserve** It came into being to protect a natural environment of major geological interest and for study of the morphology and karst hydrology of the lake. The name tells the whole story. In November 1907, in this area a large stretch of land subsided, creating a very big depression which filled with water, forming a closed basin with a surface area of about 3,400 square metres due to both the accumulation of rainwater and the probable presence of permanent springs under the lake.

### A visit

**How to get there:** Take the Palermo-Catania motorway, A19, and turn off on state highway SS 121. At the village of Marianopoli take provincial highway 42. The entrance to the reserve is on the left after 1.5 kilometres. To get to the lake you have to go along a track of 2.5 kilometres.

**Presence of guides and/or signs:** The managing body organises guided visits which can be booked. A visit lasts about two hours and can only be made from the end of March to the end of September exploiting, in the summer, the first hours of the morning to avoid excessive heat. During the visit, the authorised guides illustrate the geological, floristic and faunistic aspects of the area. The excursion involves little difficulty and can also be made by school parties, with groups of not over thirty people. Guided visits must be booked by contacting the reserve offices at least a week in advance for visits on holidays.

### Other information

**Nearest emergency medical service:** Azienda Ospedaliera S. Elia

Caltanissetta - via L. Russo 6 - Tel. 0934 559265/559111

**Tourist information:** Caltanissetta Tourist Board

Corso Vittorio Emanuele, 109 - 93100 - Tel. 0934 21089

[www.aapit.cl.it](http://www.aapit.cl.it)

## 12/Biviere di Gela



### Name of reserve:

Biviere di Gela Special Nature Reserve

### Managing body:

Lipu - Sicilian regional office

### Person responsible locally:

Emilio Giudice

Via Venezia 91 - 93012 Gela (CL) - Tel e Fax 0933 926051

[www.ntv.it/lipu.gela](http://www.ntv.it/lipu.gela)

[lipu.gela@ntv.it](mailto:lipu.gela@ntv.it)

Surface area: 331,88 ha Zone A: 122 ha Year of institution: 1997  
Province: Caltanissetta Commune: Gela

**The reserve** It is one of the most important areas for halting, wintering and nesting of birds. Thousands of birds inhabit it in various seasons. The marsh areas are among the environments richest in biodiversity and constitute a safe refuge where birds can halt, feed and reproduce without being disturbed, threatened and killed by man, so the Biviere di Gela is a birdwatcher's paradise.

### A visit

**How to get there:** Take the Catania-Gela road. Then take state highway SS 115 for Ragusa until you see the signs for Scoglitti. Continue along this road until you see the entrance to the reserve on the right.

### Presence of guides and/or signs:

After the entrance to the reserve, you soon reach the car park and the visitor centre/guest quarters. The best observation points around the lake are half a dozen, reachable by following the paths that go around the lake among the reeds and the crops. The southern part of the lake is reached by following the path that opens up to the east along the asphalted road that crosses the Dirillo Canal. The managing body organizes guided visits that must be booked in advance. Guided visits can also be booked by going to the reserve's site.

The reserve is open every day from 8.30 to 1.30 and from 2.30 to 5.30.

### Other information

#### Nearest emergency medical service:

Ospedale V. Emanuele III

via Palazzi 99 - 93012 Gela (CL) Tel. 0933 930030/831111

#### Tourist information:

Gela Tourist Board - Via Pisa 72 - Tel. 0933 913788

## 13/Niscemi Cork Oak Forest

### Name of reserve:

Niscemi Cork Oak Forest Special Nature Reserve

### Managing body:

Regional Forestry Board

Niscemi branch - via M. Gori 20 - 93015 Niscemi - Tel 0933 954308

### Body locally responsible:

Fondo Siciliano per la Natura  
Tel 368 3784202 - 368 7879167 - Tel/Fax 0933 951961

[www.naturasicilia.org](http://www.naturasicilia.org)

[fondosicilianooperlanatura@tin.it](mailto:fondosicilianooperlanatura@tin.it)

Surface area: 2939,37 hectares Zone A: 1179,36 hectares

Year of institution: 1997 Province: Caltanissetta Commune: Niscemi

**The reserve** In addition to the cork oak wood, you can see expanses of other oaks and maquis-Mediterranean forest, with fauna typical of Sicilian woods.

**Curiosity** In this reserve there are most imposing exemplars of oak in Sicily, some of them with circumferences of over five metres.

### A visit

**How to get there:** From Caltanissetta you go along the Caltanissetta-Gela bypass as far as the Judica exit. You take the fast road for Gela as far as Ponte Olivo. You then take the Ragusa-Vittoria state highway as far as the second exit for Niscemi, and get on provincial highway 11. Then follow the signs for Feudo Nobile on provincial highway 31 for Contrada Pisciotto to get to the entrance to the reserve, which comes after 5 kilometres. From Catania take the Catania-Gela state highway, SS 147, leaving it at the Niscemi exit and following the same signs.

**Presence of guides and/or signs:** The Regional Demesnal Forestry Board, together with the Sicilian Nature Fund, has set up a nature path taking in the most interesting areas in the cork oak wood. On the way there are five showcases illustrating the environmental values of the area. Other tables indicated the endemic plant species.

The reserve is open every day from 1 March to 11 June and from 19 September to 30 November, 8.30 to 1 and 2.30 to 6 pm. Entrance and guided visits free.

### Other information

#### Nearest emergency medical service:

Azienda Asl 2 Ospedale di Niscemi

piazza Europa - Tel. 0933 951024

#### Tourist information:

Niscemi *Pro loco* - via Cordova 9 - Tel. 0933 955592

## 14/Santo Pietro Wood

### Name of reserve:

Santo Pietro Wood Special Nature Reserve

### Managing body:

Regional Forestry Board

### Body locally responsible:

Caltagirone forestry board - Tel. 0933 447084

Surface area: 6.559,376 hectares Zone A: 2.582,5 hectares

Year of institution: 1999

Province: Catania Communes: Caltagirone and Mazzarone

**The reserve** Big centuries-old exemplars of cork oak, splendid ilexes and rich undergrowth constitute a nature environment allowing particular fauna to be present, in particular the land turtle, well safeguarded thanks to a recovery centre.

### A visit

**How to get there:** You go along the Catania bypass and take the San Giorgio-Caltagirone exit, and get onto the Catania-Gela fast road. You exit at Caltagirone and soon find the signs for the reserve.

**Presence of guides and/or signs:** Two itineraries have been created. However, seeing the big number of tracks that go through the reserve, it is best to get a brochure from the managing body, in which there is a detailed description of the paths: you can get it at the forestry hostel in the village of Santo Pietro, a few metres from the start of the paths. There are also guided visits. They must be booked at least a week in advance.

The reserve is open all year round.

### Other information

#### Nearest emergency medical service:

General provincial hospital

via Porto Salvo - Caltagirone - Tel. 0933 24380

#### Tourist information:

Caltagirone Tourist Board  
Volta Libertini 3 - 95041 Caltagirone (CT)

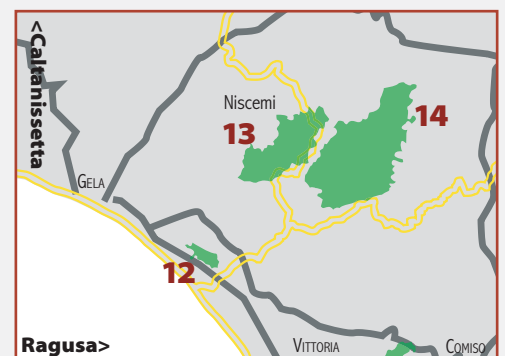
Tel. 0933 53809 - Fax 0933 54610



Niscemi Cork Oak Forest, secular cork.



Santo Pietro Wood.





## 15/Lachea Island and Ciclopi Rock-stacks

**Name of reserve:** Lachea Island Marine Protected Area and Ciclopi rock-stacks Total Nature Reserve

**Managing body:** Isole Ciclopi Consortium formed by Acicastello Council and C.U.T.G.A.N.A.

[amp@isoleciclopi.it](mailto:amp@isoleciclopi.it)

**Body locally responsible:** Isole Ciclopi Consortium c/o Town Hall Acì Castello - via Dante 28 - Tel 095 7111738

**Visitor centre:** via Provinciale 226 - Acì Trezza - Tel 095 7117322

[www.cutganambiente.it](http://www.cutganambiente.it)

[cutgana@unict.it](mailto:cutgana@unict.it)

**Surface area:** 626,41 hectares **Riserva marina:** 623 hectares

**Year of institution:** 1989

**Province:** Catania **Communes:** Acì Castello e Acì Trezza

**The reserve** The little volcanic archipelago made up of the Lachea island and the nearby Faraglione Grande and Faraglione Piccolo rock-stacks and four other emerging basalt rocks, known as Ciclopi, is the result of an "attempt at of submarine eruption". The magma, of a basaltic nature, and hence very fluid, coming into contact with the water gave rise to pillows and columnar basalts, i.e. the particular vulcanites characterising this area.

Ever since the remotest times this place has been linked to the myth of Ulysses: the main island was called Lachea because it is considered the island reached by the Homeric hero in the land of Cyclopes.

**Curiosity** Ever since the remotest times the particular morphological characteristics of the islands and rock-stacks have inspired man's fantasy, giving rise to myths like that of the Cyclopes, mythological one-eyed giants, the protagonists of legends like the ones about Acì and Galatea and Ulysses and Polyphemus. Legend and the local collective imagination have it that the Ciclopi islands are boulders that Polyphemus hurled into the sea at the fleeing Ulysses.

### A visit

The reserve is a total one, but inside it snorkelling and scuba diving are allowed, following underwater nature and archaeology itineraries. By contrast, landing from boats is not allowed.

There are guided visits with special tourist boats that set out from the little Acì Trezza harbour.

**How to get there:** You can get to Acì Trezza by going along the A18 Messina-Catania motorway. You take the Acireale exit and continue along state highway SS 114 towards Catania.

### Other information

**Nearest emergency medical service:** Acì Castello - Tel. 095 274220

**Tourist information:**

Catania and Acì Castello Tourist Board - Tel. 095 7470254

## 16/Timpa

**Name of reserve:**

Timpa di Acireale Special Nature Reserve

**Managing body:** Regional Forestry Board

**Surface area:** 225,34 hectares **Zone A:** 140,20 hectares

**Year of institution:** 1999 **Province:** Catania **Communes:** Acireale



**The reserve** This volcanic coast of particular geological and botanical interest called *timpa* (in dialect it means a height created by lava) is a lavic wall rising almost sheer over the sea and extending lengthwise. The reserve goes along the coast as far as the village of Acireale, and then veers slightly inland, sloping down slowly until it connects in the other low volcanic hills produced by old flows. The lavic shore presents basaltic remains in the "doves' cave" and numerous natural springs like the Acqua del Ferro one, at Santa Maria la Scala, which tinges red the lava of the *timpa* from which it gushes out.

### A visit

A sea excursion, starting from the village of Capo Mulini or that of Santa Maria la Scala, is the best way to observe the lavic spectacle of this stretch of coast.

**How to get there:** Starting out from Catania you take the SS 114 Catania-Messina state highway. The reserve starts at Acireale, extending along the SS 114 road from Capo Mulini to Santa Maria Ammalati, which is at the south Acireale entrance.

### Other information

**Nearest emergency medical service:**

Acireale Hospital - via Martinez 6 - 95024 Acireale - Tel. 095 894415

**Tourist information:**

Acireale Tourist Board - Tel. 095 604508 - Fax 095 606468

◀ left

**Ciclopi Rock-stacks.**



## 17/Immacolatelle and Micio-Conti Complex



**Name of reserve:**

Immacolatelle and Micio Conti Complex Total Nature Reserve

**Managing body:** C.U.T.G.A.N.A.

University Centre for the Tutelage and Management of Natural Environments and Agricultural Systems

**Surface area:** about 70 hectares **Year of institution:** 1998

**Province:** Catania **Communes:** Acì Castello e San Gregorio

**The reserve** It is made up of a complex of lava flow caves of major geological importance and protects a series of cavities of volcanic origin that originated inside lava flows emitted in the course of ancient eruptions that affected the low south-eastern slope of Etna. Specifically the Immacolatelle complex is made up of four cavities inside which there are stalactites created by dripping of incandescent lava. In addition to such stalactites, Micio Conti also presents striations due to viscous flow.

### A visit

**How to get there:** You go along the A18 Catania-Messina motorway and take the Catania-San Gregorio exit. Having reached San Gregorio, you follow the signs as far as the sports field, near which there is the reserve.

**Presence of guides and/or signs:** A nature path makes it possible to observe all the peculiarities of the reserve, which comprises various hypogean environments. The guided visits organised by the managing body make it possible to explore the most interesting and visitable spots in the complex.

To book guided visits, contact the managing body at the nature reserve centre by fax or email at least one week in advance.

### Other information

In the commune of San Gregorio soon an environment and nature laboratory will open, promoted and created by the managing body. This will also serve as the visitor centre of the reserve.

**Nearest emergency medical service:** 95021 Acì Castello (CT)

Via Antonello Da Messina 62 - Tel. 095 274220

**Tourist information:**

San Gregorio *Pro loco* - Via Colonna 5 - 95027 - Tel. 095 7215795

right ►

**Fiumefreddo, the Castello degli Schiavi  
(Castle of Slaves).**



## 18/River Fiumefreddo

**Name of reserve:**

River Fiumefreddo Special Nature Reserve

**Managing body:**

Catania Regional Province - Office for Environmental Policies

Nature reserve management office

Via Nuovaluce 67 - 95030 - Tremestieri Etneo (Catania province)

Tel 095 4012485 - Fax 095 4012815

[riserve.naturali@provincia.ct.it](mailto:riserve.naturali@provincia.ct.it)

[www.provincia.ct.it/prmenu/ambiente/riservenaturali/homepage.htm](http://www.provincia.ct.it/prmenu/ambiente/riservenaturali/homepage.htm)

**Surface area:** 80,50 hectares **Zone A:** 10,38 hectares

**Year of institution:** 1984

**Province:** Catania **Communes:** Fiumefreddo e Calatabiano

**The reserve** At one time the shore from Riposto to Fiumefreddo was largely a vast wet area in which there was also the Mascali lake, long vanished. All that is left today is the marsh area called Gurna, at Fondachello, and the river Fiumefreddo, whose name (meaning "cold river") derives from its gelid waters (a temperature of 12-13° in the summer period) which gush out of a copious spring fed solely by the melting of snows from Etna. Along the course of the river and in the vicinity an important habitat has arisen in which there is a rare association of plants from northern climes and others typical of tropical climates.

### A visit

**How to get there:** You go along the A18 Catania-Messina motorway and take the Fiumefreddo exit. Then you get on state highway 114 and take the road on the left for Marina di Cottone, where there are signs for the nature reserve.

**Presence of guides and/or signs:**

The existing nature path is a little over 1 km long. It is a flat track, easy to get along. On the way you see the truly surprising and peculiar natural environment of this little river which has pure and crystalline water and a welter of aquatic species. You can also see a lot of birds, and at the end of the visit a very long gravel beach allows you to enter a wholly respectable coastal environment.

The reserve is open every day. Spring-summer: 9 to 6. Winter and autumn 8.30 to 4.30. Admission free.

The managing body organises guided visits run by the Fiumefreddo WWF.

WWF - Fiumefreddo section

Via Diana, 40 - Tel. 095 646277 - Fax 095 649534

### Other information

**Nearest emergency medical service:**

via La Farina 1 - Fiumefreddo - Tel. 095 642311.

**Tourist information:**

Fiumefreddo *Pro loco* - via La Farina 2 - 95013 - Tel./fax 0957762033

## 19/Cosentini Urban Park

**Name of reserve:**

Cosentini Urban Park Protected Nature Area

**Managing body:**

Santa Venerina Council

GRE - Parks and reserves sector

Viale Benedetto Croce, 53

95123 Catania

Tel. 095 7143904 - cell. 328 7148032 - fax 095 391048

[www.gruppiricecaecologica.it](http://www.gruppiricecaecologica.it)

[grect@virgilio.it](mailto:grect@virgilio.it)

**Person responsible locally:**

Sig. Riccardo Tomasello

[www.bioscatania.it](http://www.bioscatania.it)

[bioscatania@libero.it](mailto:bioscatania@libero.it)

**Surface area:** 5 hectares **Year of institution:** 1986

**Province:** Catania **Communes:** Santa Venerina

**The protected area** The urban park is in the hamlet of Cosentini, just outside the village of Santa Venerina. This is the first urban park created in Sicily and in it there is a wood of broadleaved trees with various plant species inside it and a lot of fauna species typical of Mediterranean maquis.

### A visit

**How to get there:** You go along the A18 Catania-Messina motorway and then follow the signs for Santa Venerina.

**Presence of guides and/or signs:**

Visits are possible until sunset, and nature guides are present.

### Other information

**Nearest emergency medical service:** Azienda Unità Sanitaria Locale N.3

95010 Santa Venerina - Via Umberto I, 18/C - Tel. 095 953869

**Tourist information:**

Santa Venerina *Pro loco* - via Vittorio Emanuele 144

95010 Santa Venerina - Tel. 095 954742

right ►

**The *rasole* in Cosentini Park.**





▲ top  
Monte Altesina.

## 20/ Monte Altesina

### Name of reserve:

Monte Altesina Special Nature Reserve

### Managing body:

Demersal Forestry Board

**Body locally responsible:** Provincial Board (UPA)

Enna - via Leonardo Da Vinci 7 - 0935 535026

Nicosia Forestry Tel. 0935 646637

Leonforte Forestry Tel. 0935 535026

**Total surface area:** 744 hectares **Zone A:** 593,25 hectares

**Year of institution:** 1997

**Province:** Enna **Communes:** Leonforte e Nicosia

**The reserve** Monte Altesina is 1,192 metres high, and the highest peak in the Erei. Atop it there is a relict of a holm oak wood. The managing body has taken a series of actions to make the reserve fully available to the public. The big old Masseria Altesinella farm has undergone major restoration work and is the starting point for all excursions. The main path winds up the side of the mountain cutting through the holm oak wood. From the peak there is a splendid panorama.

### A visit

**How to get there:** You go along the Palermo-Catania motorway and take the Enna exit. You continue along state highway SS 121 towards Leonforte, and here you take the road for Villadoro. After 14 kilometres, following the signs, you get to the south part of the reserve.

### Other information

#### Nearest emergency medical service:

Azienda Ospedaliera Umberto I - c.da Ferrante - Tel. 0935 516111 - Enna

#### Tourist information:

Nicosia Town Hall - p.zza Garibaldi - Tel. 0935 638139

Leonforte *Pro loco* - corso Umberto I, 312 - Tel. 0935 904035

## 21/ Sambughetti-Campanito



### Name of reserve:

Sambughetti-Campanito Special Nature Reserve

### Managing body:

Demersal Forestry Board

Nicosia Forestry - Tel. 0935 646637

Enna Provincial Board (UPA) - Tel. 0935 565411

**Surface area:** 2.358 hectares **Zone A:** 1.716 hectares

**Year of institution:** 2000 **Province:** Enna **Commune:** Nicosia e Cerami

**The reserve** On the top of Monte Sambughetti (1,559 metres) there is a rich beech wood. With Monte Campanito (1,514 metres) it forms a ridge rising almost parallel to the Nebrodi, with which it has various geological affinities.

The most interesting environments from a botanical point of view are the Giumenta wood, the Suvarita wood, and the flora formations around the damp areas at the foot of Monte Campanito.

## A visit

**How to get there:** You go along the Palermo-Catania motorway and take the Enna exit. You continue along state highway SS 117 towards Nicosia. You continue on the state highway in the direction of Mistretta as far as the Contrasto saddle, where on the left there is the signposted entrance to the reserve.

**Presence of guides and/or signs:** At present there are two itineraries. One goes to the top of Monte Campanito, but in the final part there are various difficulties about making out the path which goes up to the top. The other itinerary goes all round the mountain.

### Other information

**Nearest emergency medical service:** Azienda Ospedaliera Umberto I - 94100 Enna - Contrada Ferrante - Tel. 0935 516111

#### Tourist information:

Nicosia Town Hall - p.zza Garibaldi - Tel. 0935 638139

Sperlinga Town Hall - via Umberto I, 1 - Tel. 0935 643025

## 22/ Vallone di Piano della Corte



### Name of reserve:

Vallone Piano della Corte Special Nature Reserve

### Managing body:

C.U.T.G.A.N.A.

**Total surface area:** 194,38 hectares **Zone A:** 66,25 hectares

**Year of institution:** 2000 **Province:** Enna **Commune:** Agira

**The reserve** Situated in central Sicily, the long and narrow Piano della Corte valley belongs to the hydrographic basin of the river Dittaino, which flows into the river Simeto. The watercourse has cut out a gully 7 kilometres long.

### A visit

**How to get there:** You go along the Palermo-Catania motorway and take the Agira exit. You continue along state highway SS 121 towards Enna. At the junction with the provincial highway for Nicosia you continue for another 150 metres, taking a fork on the left. After another 250 metres there is another fork. You continue on the left for 1.6 kilometres until you reach the gully.

**Presence of guides and/or signs:** There is a nature path through the middle stretch of the reserve, which presents no difficulties. The managing body organises guided visits with reserve operators. Booking is compulsory, to be made by contacting the offices by fax or email.

### Other information

At Agira there is an environment and nature laboratory promoted and created by the managing body. In it there is also a small museum regarding local geology, flora and fauna.

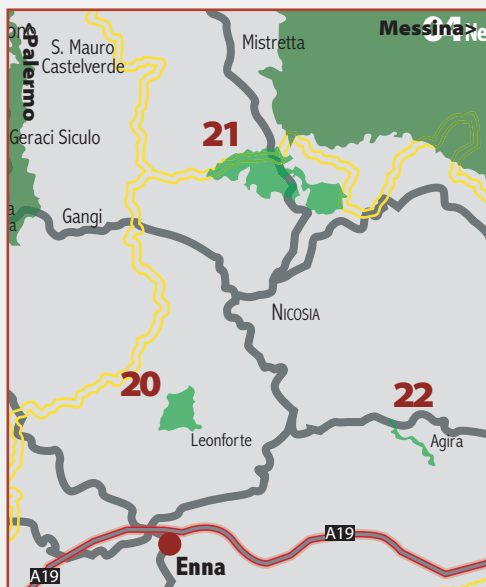
#### Nearest emergency medical service:

Azienda Unità Sanitaria Locale N. 4

94011 Agira - Via Vittorio Emanuele - Tel. 0935 697011

**Tourist information:** Associazione Turistica Pro loco

94011 Agira - Piazza Garibaldi 13 - Tel. 0935 692793





## 23/Lake Pergusa

### Name of reserve:

Lake Pergusa Special Nature Reserve

### Managing body:

Enna Regional Province  
Piazza Garibaldi 2 - 94100- Enna - Tel 0935 521111  
[www.provincia.enna.it](http://www.provincia.enna.it)  
[ptp@provincia.enna.it](mailto:ptp@provincia.enna.it)

Surface area: 402,5 hectares Zone A: 151,25 hectares  
Year of institution: 1995 Province: Enna Commune: Enna

**The reserve** One of the few natural lakes in Sicily, it is of tectonic origin, that is to say created by the sinking of a vast portion of high ground in the Erei mountains that constitute the area, in our own geological area. It houses numerous varieties of avifauna and it is the only lake in the centre of Sicily where the migratory species call in.

Although there is no connection with the sea and the lake has neither tributaries nor emissaries it has a high concentration of salinity.

A very peculiar feature, perhaps unique in the world, is that toward the end of the summer the waters of Lake Pergusa turn wine red, because of a high concentration of bacteria.

**Curiosity** Of the tectonic event that caused the formation of Lake Pergusa no trace remains in historical memory, if not as legendary myth. The mythological memory of the catastrophic event is contained in the famous myth of Proserpina or Persephone, narrated by various Greek and Latin authors including Callimachus, Strabo, Ovid, Diodorus Siculus, Cicero and above all Claudian, with his *De Raptu Proserpinae*. The daughter of the goddess of harvests, Ceres, Proserpina was abducted by Pluto, king of the netherworld, while with her handmaids she gathered flowers in the meadows around Enna and she went down into the chthonic kingdom, through a deep and dreadful abyss. In antiquity this myth made the town of Enna rich, raising it to the rank of a true holy city, a place of pilgrimages and flourishing markets.

### A visit

**How to get there:** You go along the Palermo-Catania motorway, take state highway SS 561 and follow the signs for Pergusa and the racetrack.

**Presence of guides and/or signs:** The pleasant backdrop to the lake is the Pergusa Wood, which dominates the valley with its very rich vegetation and a big pine forest, inside which you can get to and enter prehistoric caves.

Paths have been created, and there are drinking water taps and rustic fireplaces; there are also wooden tables and benches, bowling facilities, and swings and roundabouts for children.

In fenced-off areas there are exemplars of local fauna like the hedgehog and the deer, and other fauna like the coypu and the Andes lama.

## Other information

### Nearest emergency medical service:

Azienda Ospedaliera Umberto I  
c.da Ferrante - Tel. 0935 516111 - Enna

### Tourist information:

Enna Tourist Board - Information Office - 94100 Enna  
Via Roma 411 - Tel. 0935 500544

## 24/Rossomanno, Grottascura-Bellia



### Name of reserve:

Rossomanno Grottascura-Bellia Special Nature Reserve

### Managing body:

Demesnal Forestry Board  
**Body locally responsible:** Provincial Board (UPA)  
Enna - Tel 0935 565411  
Enna Forestry (Sant'Anna)  
Tel 0935 535026

Total surface area: 2011,45 hectares Zone A: 1543,7 hectares

Year of institution: 2000

Province: Enna Communes: Enna, Aidone and Piazza Armerina

**The reserve** It protects a very big reforestation area and is one of the green lungs of the area. It is formed by a series of mountains comprising a vast area of the Erei territory.

Probably the most important aspect of this area is the great historical stratification of human settlements in the area. Indeed, there are the remains of a settlement that in the Middle Ages and until its bloody destruction and almost total abandonment was called Rossomanno or Rossimanno. The ruins, visible in the summital areas, belong to a period going from the 7th century BC to the fourteenth century, when the destruction of the village took place. The wood, dominated by the

domestic pine, shows many signs of human intervention. It was implemented starting from the fifties with eucalyptus plantations and constitutes the biggest demesnal forest in the centre of Sicily. In this area you can also find oaks, ilexes, service trees, chestnut trees and wild pear trees.

**Curiosity** The sandy nature of the environment makes it spectacular in its peculiarity, produced by the easy erosion exerted by atmospheric agents and small river courses. In this area, you can admire the unbelievable forms of "enchanted stones" or "dancing dolls" (on the photo), a sort of magic circle that popular imagination has chosen to attribute to sorcery that petrified a Sabbath dance, but which in reality is the fruit of the geology of the place.

### A visit

**How to get there:** You go along the Palermo-Catania motorway and take the Enna exit. You get on state highway SS 561 heading for Pergusa. After the lake you continue on SS 117bis. Then you turn right towards Piazza Armerina, take provincial highway 4 that goes round Monte Rossomanno and you come to the entrance to the reserve, which is signposted.

**Presence of guides and/or signs:** The reserve is a sort of archaeological park immersed in the greenery of a very big wood. It has one of the biggest picnic areas in Sicily (Ronza), where there is room for hundreds of visitors.

The reserve is easy to visit and is open all year round. There are two signposted paths that it is easy to follow.

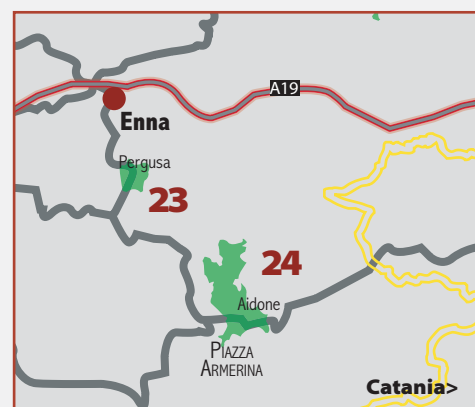
## Other information

### Nearest emergency medical service:

ASL 4 - 94015 Piazza Armerina - Contrada Bellia - Tel. 0935 981111

### Tourist information:

Piazza Armerina Tourist Board  
viale Muscarà Generale - Tel. 0935 680201



## 25/ Aeolian Islands (or Lipari Islands)

### Nomi delle Riserve:

Island of Alicudi Special Nature Reserve

Surface area: 371,25 hectares Zone A: 278,45 hectares

Island of Filicudi and Canna and Montenassari rocks Special Nature Reserve

Surface area: 635,93 hectares Zone A: 562,5 hectares

Island of Panarea Special Nature Reserve

Surface area: 283,05 hectares Zone A: 154,3 hectares

Island of Stromboli and Strombolicchio Special Nature Reserve

Surface area: 1049,375 hectares Zone A: 717,5 hectares

Island of Vulcano Special Nature Reserve

Surface area: 1361,85 hectares Zone A: 1010,61 hectares

### Managing body:

Demensal Forestry Board Regione Sicilia

### Body locally responsible:

Lipari forestry - Tel. 090 9880547

**Le Riserve** The Aeolian archipelago is made up of seven islands on a sea radius of about 50 sea miles along the north-eastern coast of Sicily and a series of islets and rocks. The islands are of volcanic origin and are the product of a long and complex genesis whose protagonists were volcanoes, stagnation domes and craters of a complex submerged volcanic structure. Today there is no post-volcanic activity on the islands of any kind except on **Vulcano** and **Stromboli**. The latter volcano is the only one in Europe, and one of only five in the world, in a permanent state of explosive activity. At irregular but relatively frequent intervals, on its summits volcanic explosions happen with the issue of lapilli and fountains of lava. The behaviour of the volcano is so symbolic that vulcanologists all over the world use the term "Strombolian activity", to refer to all volcanic explosive manifestations. The Aeolian Islands, also called Lipari Islands, represent a geological reality, but also a very particular botanical and faunistic one.

Many excursions can be made on the different islands, all interesting, though different from one another. On **Lipari**, for instance, there are the Porticello pumice quarries and the Quattrocchi belvedere, from which there is one of the most enchanting panoramas in Sicily; on **Salina**, a must is the Pollara beach, at the foot of a sheer Cyclopic wall. And while **Filicudi** and **Alicudi** are more remote and secluded, and therefore ideal for those who only want to rest, the more fashionable will choose **Panarea**, with a little bay, Cala Junco, that is perhaps the most beautiful in the whole archipelago.

The best way to know the archipelago, having some time available, is to rent a boat, with or without a skipper, to circumnavigate the island chosen, to move from one to the other and also to reach the most beautiful points from the point of view of seabeds: the fact is that all the islands are surrounded by clean and very rich sea, and you don't

need to go down very far. It is often enough to equip yourself with a nozzle, mask and fins to admire the wealth and variety of the seabeds just under the water's surface.

**Curiosity** The first island that you meet setting out from the Sicilian coast is **Vulcano**, known for the presence of curative mud in which it is possible to bathe, possibly before venturing up the fuming sides of the volcano that gives the name to the island. To know more about the volcanic phenomena affecting the islands, you can visit the vulcanological section of the Lipari museum (which also includes an interesting archaeological section).

### A visit

**How to get there:** By sea on a ship or hydrofoil from Milazzo and from the ports of Naples and Palermo (summer).

**Presence of guides and/or signs:** Lipari and Salina are the only two islands with roads on them. You can only visit the other islands on foot or on a donkey's back. On Stromboli there are guides that go up the volcano with visitors.

### Other information

#### Nearest emergency medical service:

Ospedale Civile - via Sant'Anna - Lipari 98055 - Tel. 090 9811010

#### Tourist information:

Aeolian Islands Tourist Board

corso Vittorio Emanuele 202 - 98055 Lipari - Tel. 090 9880095

## 26/ Felci and Porri Mountains

### Name of reserve:

Felci and Porri Mountains Special Nature Reserve

### Managing body:

Messina Regional Province - Territory and Environment Office

c.so Cavour 87 - 98100 Messina - Tel 090 77611

Surface area: 1.079 hectares Year of institution: 1984

Province: Messina - Arcipelago delle Eolie

Communes: Malfa, Santa Marina and Leni

**The reserve** The island of Salina is the highest one in the whole archipelago. The two now extinct volcanoes of Monte Porri (860 metres) and Fossa delle Felci (962 metres) are the principal elements from which the reserve takes its name. The island, referred to as the "green one", is the only one in the archipelago to have maintained at least a part of its ancient vegetation and it has species of great interest including colonies of ferns.

Because it is so green, Salina is also a place called in at by migratory birds.

**Curiosity** Much of the territory of Salina is covered in vineyards, from which there comes Malvasia (malmsey), a liqueur with a golden colour and a sweet and persistent aroma. It is recounted that its name is due to the prayer of a farmer (under the Arab domination), who, so that the drink that he was taking as a gift to his father would not be taken away from him by the guards of the prince of the place, pronounced the formula *malva sia* ("let it be mallow!") so that the guards tasted an insipid mash that they returned to the man. It is not the only product typical of this island, which is also famous for its capers, used in Aeolian cuisine in a lot of preparations, including numerous sauces to season pasta.

### A visit

**How to get there:** Salina is connected to Lipari and Milazzo by ships and hydrofoils running several times a day.

**Presence of guides and/or signs:** The island offers the excursionist different itineraries. To visit the reserve there are two: one very simple, the other for trained excursionists.

The reserve is open the whole year. From May to September, you have to face both paths for the Fossa in the early hours of the morning, taking an adequate water supply with you.

### Other information

#### Nearest emergency medical service:

Ospedale Civile - via Sant'Anna - Lipari 98055 - Tel. 090 9811010

#### Tourist information:

Aeolian Islands Tourist Board

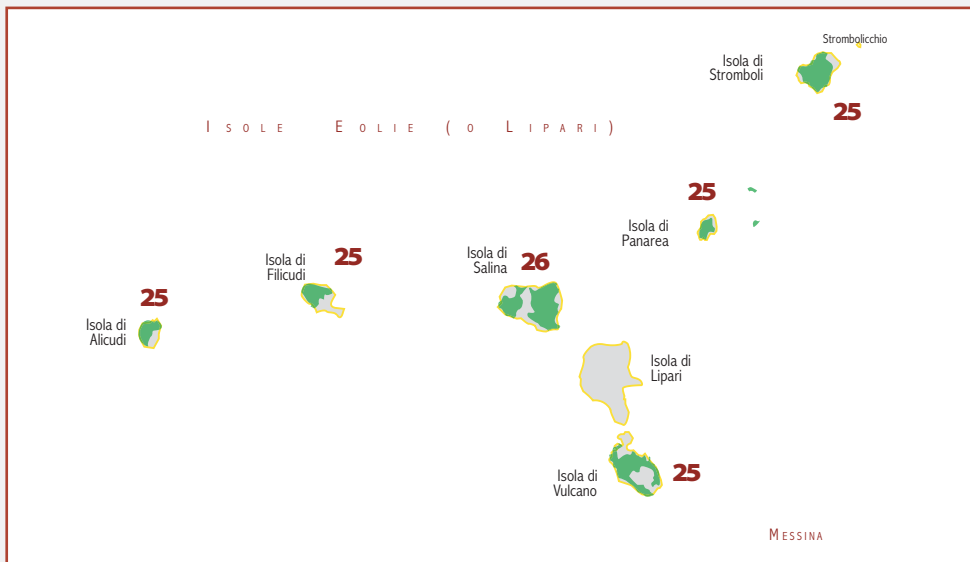
corso Vittorio Emanuele 202 - 98055 Lipari - Tel. 090 9880095

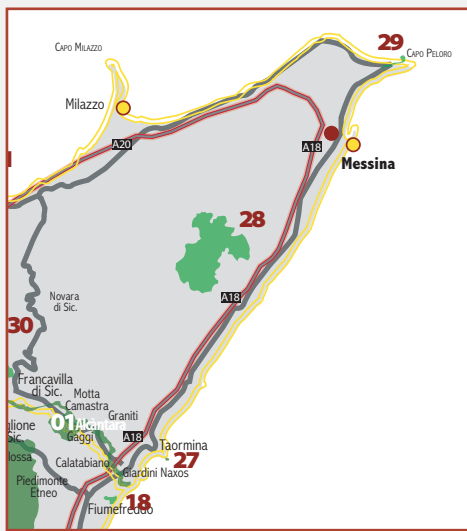


Salina, Malfa.



From left. Stromboli, typical house. Lipari and Vulcano.





right ►  
Isola Bella.

## 27/ Isola Bella

### Name of reserve:

Isola Bella Special Nature Reserve

### Managing body:

WWF Italia  
viale S. Pancrazio 25 - 98039 Taormina (ME)  
Tel./fax 0942 628388

[www.comune.taormina.me.it/wwf\\_riservaisolabella@tao.it](http://www.comune.taormina.me.it/wwf_riservaisolabella@tao.it)

**Surface area:** 10.49 hectares **Zone A:** 1.12 hectares  
**Year of institution:** 1998 **Province:** Messina **Commune:** Taormina

**The reserve** This charming island has the splendid Taormina, the "Pearl of the Ionian," as its backdrop, and it is connected to the terra firma by a small and short isthmus of sand that plays with the tides and the wind, appearing and disappearing, a dynamism that fascinates those who stop to observe it from the road that races along one of the sides of the reserve or from the high Belvedere of Taormina. The reserve also extends to the terra firma, comprising, to the north, the promontory of Capo Sant'Andrea, in which there is the famous Blue Cave and which shelters the bay from the Gregale and east winds, and to the south to Capo Taormina, which, with its fascinating rock-stacks, partly shelters it from west winds.

**Curiosity** In the early years of the twentieth century the island was sold by the commune of Taormina to Miss Trevelyan for 15,000 liras. The woman had a small house built on it and introduced some varieties of exotic plants that still today constitute part of the greenery of the island.

### A visit

**How to get there:** from Messina or Catania take the A19 motorway as far as the Taormina exit. Follow the signs for Taormina Mare. Then take state highway SS 114 for Mazzarò. At km 47.2 on the sea side there is the entrance to the reserve.

From Taormina take the municipal funicular in Via Pirandello, as far as Mazzarò. From there continue on the right along the state highway. You find the entrance after about 200 metres.

**Presence of guides and/or signs:** The reserve is open all year round. However, the best periods are spring, when there is an explosion of colours, and the end of summer, when, after the first rains, the temperature makes it pleasant to be in the sun. You can make a visit on foot, swimming or in a boat. The guides of the managing body are present.

### Other information

#### Nearest emergency medical service:

San Vincenzo Hospital - Taormina - c/da Sirina - Tel. 0942 579297

#### Tourist information:

Taormina Tourist Board  
Palazzo Corvaja, 1 - 98039 - Tel. 0942 23243

## 28/ Fiumedinisi and Monte Scuderi



### Name of reserve:

Fiumedinisi and Monte Scuderi Special Nature Reserve

### Managing body:

Demesnal Forestry Board  
Provincial Board (UPA) - Messina - Tel. 090 2985011  
Furci Siculo Forestry - Tel. 0942 793703

**Surface area:** 4.609,45 hectares **Zone A:** 3.543,45 hectares

**Year of institution:** 1998 **Province:** Messina  
**Communes:** Santa Lucia del Mela, Nizza di Sicilia, Fiumedinisi, Itàla, Ali, San Pier Niceto and Monforte San Giorgio

**The reserve** It is in the Peloritani mountains. In the protected area there are a lot of minerals, and there are gullies and plateaus covered in woods and shrub vegetation. Of particular interest are the streams coming down from the mountains, full in winter but almost dry in summer.

### A visit

**How to get there:** Take the A19 Catania-Messina motorway as far as the Nizza di Sicilia exit. Then follow the signs for Fiumedinisi along the road that goes up northwards beside the river, as far as the village, and soon after you find the entrance.

### Presence of guides and/or signs:

The itineraries indicated have not yet been signposted but the managing body plans to do so in the year 2005. However, the existing paths in the reserve are easy to get along.

### Other information

**Nearest emergency medical service:** Regina Margherita Hospital  
viale della Libertà - 98122 Messina - Tel. 090 39912453

#### Tourist information:

Messina Tourist Board - via Calabria 301/bis  
98122 Messina - Tel. 090 6411047

## 29/ Capo Peloro

### Name of reserve:

Capo Peloro Lagoon Special Nature Reserve

### Managing body:

Messina Regional Province  
Territory and Environment Office

c.so Cavour 87 - 98100 Messina - Tel 090 77611

[www.provincia.messina.it](http://www.provincia.messina.it)



**Surface area:** 68,12 hectares **Zone A:** 33,5 hectares

**Year of institution:** 2001 **Province:** Messina **Commune:** Messina

**The reserve** The area between Ganzirri (on the photo) and Punta Faro is set in one of the most beautiful scenarios in the Mediterranean. It looks out on the Straits of Messina, behind the area that was the country of the mythical monsters Scylla and Charybdis. The lagoon is constituted by brackish coastal ponds and includes the marsh slush and the big marsh, respectively the Punta Faro and Ganzirri lakes, in which there are particular species of sea fauna. It is also an ideal calling place along the north-south migratory route and vice versa of avifauna.

**Curiosity** Capo Peloro is one of the three promontories that form Trinacria, the oldest symbol of Sicily (a woman with three legs), Triskelè for the Greeks, who with it represented Sicily as seen in the vase paintings kept at the Archaeological Museum in Agrigento.

The Straits are the theatre of a legend known as that of "Morgan Le Fay" or if we like a very unusual optical phenomenon that occurs among the two banks on days when the sea is calm with a thermal inversion in the lower layers of the air in contact with the water. Because of the difference in air density, especially in the first hours of the morning, there is the optical illusion of seeing suspended, as if in a big mirror, a fantastic city that continually changes shape and colour. The phenomenon, which also occurs in many other places in the world, on the Straits is very fascinating and is visible from both shores.

People have not hesitated to impute this apparition to Morgan Le Fay, who, on the occasion of her arrival on the Straits, causes the marvellous castle that she built there to emerge from the water.

### A visit

**How to get there:** From Messina take the Bocchetta exit and then the coast road in the direction of Torre Faro.

### Other information

**Nearest emergency medical service:** Piemonte Hospital  
via R. Spadafora is. 43 - Tel. 090 2221

**Tourist information:** Messina Tourist Board  
via Calabria 301/bis - 98122 Messina - Tel. 090 6411047



**The Marinello pools.**



**Malabotta wood.**

## 30/ Malabotta Wood

### Name of reserve:

Malabotta Wood Special Nature Reserve

**Managing body:** Demesnal Forestry Board

**Body locally responsible:**

Messina Provincial Board (UPA) - Tel. 090 2985011

Francavilla di Sicilia Forestry - Tel 0942 982188

**Total surface area:** 3.221,95 hectares **Zone A:** 1.526 hectares

**Year of institution:** 1997 **Province:** Messina

**Communes:** Montalbano Elicona, Roccella Valdemone, Malvagna, Francavilla di Sicilia and Tripi

**The reserve** Between the Peloritani chain to the east and the Nebrodi to the west there is the Sicilian reserve that best represents the forests that once covered the Nebrodi mountains. The Malabotta Wood extends for around 5 square kilometres and is made up of areas of exceptional ecological value because of the differences in height metres above sea level.

The surrounding landscape takes us back to the Middle Ages: little villages perching on mountains and castles built in strategic positions for control of the territory and the inland roads.

**Curiosity** In the commune of Montalbano Elicona, on the highland called "Argimusco", traces have been found of human settlements in the prehistoric epoch which are still being studied: big boulders (megaliths) with shapes and sizes such as to arouse the folk imagination. Some scholars have found strong similarity with the famous dolmens and menhirs around which the Celtic peoples were accustomed to celebrate religious rites.

### A visit

Four paths are available, but at the time of going to press they had not yet been signposted.

**How to get there:** Palermo-Catania A19 motorway, Falcone exit. Follow the signs for Montalbano Elicona and after the village head for Tripi. At the Portella Cerasa junction turn right towards Contrada Argimusco. After about a hundred metres, a track starts on the left that goes to the entrance to the wood.

If instead you take the A20 Catania-Messina motorway, take the Giardini Naxos exit, and stay on the provincial highway as far as the junction for Roccella Valdemone. At Portella take the road on the right for Pianoro Argimusco. On the right you will find a track that goes to the entrance to the wood.

### Other information

**Nearest emergency medical service:**

Montalbano Elicona - via Giardino, 34 - Tel. 0941 679362

**Tourist information:** Messina Tourist Board

via Calabria 301/bis - 98122 - Tel. 090 6411047

## 31/ Marinello pools

### Name of reserve:

Marinello Pools Special Nature Reserve

**Managing body:**

Messina Regional Province

Environment Office

c.so Cavour - 98100 - Messina

Tel 090 77611

**Total surface area:** 401,25 hectares **Zone A:** 248 hectares

**Year of institution:** 1998 **Province:** Messina **Commune:** Patti

**The reserve** At the foot of the Capo Tindari promontory, there is a big peninsula created by accumulations of sand and gravel, produced by human pressure determining an increase in sediments which has formed the tongue of sand in the lagoon. Inside the reserve we must mention the interesting archaeological remains of the acropolis of the ancient Tyndaris, founded in 396 BC during the period of Greek colonization. Today Tindari is a destination of pilgrimages because of the presence of the sanctuary of the Black Madonna rising on the promontory. The latter is a natural terrace from which it is possible to observe the boundless expanse of the Tyrrhenian sea in which there rise up the Aeolian Islands.

**Curiosity** A curious event regarding the little ponds occurred in the spring of 1982: following a series of strong waves, the biggest of the pools took on a particular form that showed, to the surprised eyes of all those who had the fortune to observe it, a clear-cut and well delineated profile of a woman that seemed to cradle a child in her lap.

The inhabitants of the place identified that profile with the miraculous Black Madonna whose statue, which has mysterious and distant origins, is at the Tindari Sanctuary.

### A visit

The reserve can be visited by sea, in a boat or canoe, and on foot. You reach the outskirts of the village of Falcone by going all along the coast road. At the end of the road a path begins that goes past the different pools.

**How to get there:** You take the A20 Messina-Palermo motorway, Falcone exit. You go westwards along the Falcone coastal road to the end.

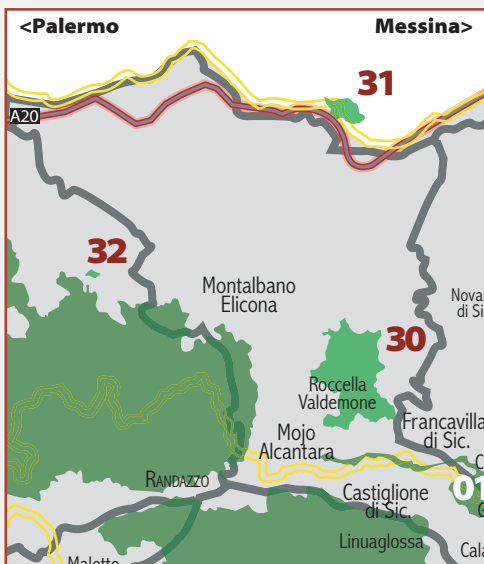
### Other information

**Nearest emergency medical service:**

Ospedale Barone Romeo di Patti - via Mazzini - Tel. 0941 244111

**Tourist information:**

Patti Tourist Board - piazza Marconi, 11 - Tel. 0941 241136



## 32/ Vallone Calagna

### Name of reserve:

Vallone Calagna sopra Tortorici Special Nature Reserve

**Managing body:** Demesnal Forestry Board

**Body locally responsible:**

Messina Provincial Board (UPA) - Tel. 090 2985011

Tortorici Forestry - Tel. 0941 421466

**Total surface area:** 37,24 hectares **Zone A:** 24,12 hectares

**Year of institution:** 2000 **Province:** Messina **Commune:** Tortorici

**The reserve** It is a narrow and steep gully that goes down from the Nebrodi and through it there runs a watercourse which nurtures a very rare plant called *falsanicola*. The presence of water is one of the essential conditions for this plant to grow. Only present in a few places, this plant has been placed on the Red List of Sicilian species threatened with extinction.

### A visit

**How to get there:** To get to Tortorici you take the A20 Messina-Palermo motorway, leaving it at Brolo. You take state highway SS 114 and then provincial highway 143, and state highway SS 116 towards Castell'Umberto. Then you get on provincial highway 157, which takes you to the village of Tortorici. The Vallone Calagna is just outside the village.

**Presence of guides and/or signs:** The area is very closely protected, and so you can only visit it accompanied by staff of the managing body. It is advisable to book a visit in advance. The best time to visit the reserve is in spring, when *petagnaea* is in flower.

### Other information

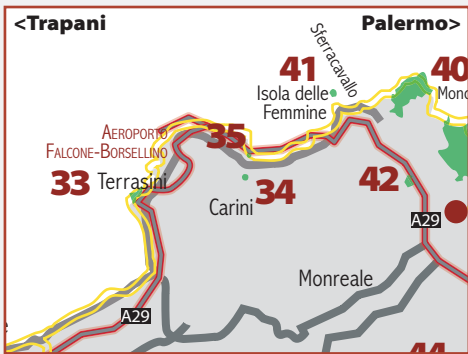
**Nearest emergency medical service:**

Tortorici - Via V. Emanuele - Tel. 0941 421435

**Tourist information:**

Tortorici Town Hall - Via V. Emanuele - Tel. 0941 421966

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**Carburangeli cave.**



### 33/Capo Rama



**Name of reserve:**

Capo Rama Special Nature Reserve

**Managing body:** WWF Sicilia

**Body locally responsible:**

Capo Rama Special Nature Reserve  
 Via delle Rimembranze 16 - 90049 Terrasini (Palermo province)  
 Tel 091 8685187

[www.fcaporama@libero.it](http://www.fcaporama@libero.it)  
[www.riservawwf Sicilia.it](http://www.riservawwf Sicilia.it)

**Total surface area:** 21,25 hectares **Year of institution:** 2000  
**Province:** Palermo **Commune:** Terrasini

**The reserve** The promontory is a verdant terrace reaching out over the sea. Along the coastal cliff the sea has produced numerous caves like the Grande one and the Colombi one.

In the reserve there are the remains of one of the numerous lookout towers along the coast, which were part of an "alarm system" against Saracen raids.

**A visit**

**How to get there:** Go along the A29 Palermo-Mazara del Vallo motorway and take the Terrasini exit. You go through the village and to Cala Rossa, where there are signs for the entrance to the reserve.

**Presence of guides and/or signs:** There is a very easy path for visiting the whole reserve. The managing body organises guided visits. You can book them at the reserve offices.

**Other information**

**Nearest emergency medical service:**

Terrasini - via Pozzo Vallone 1 - Tel. 091 8684744

**Tourist information:** Terrasini Town Hall

Piazza Falcone Borsellino - 90049 - tel/fax 091 8682402

### 34/Carburangeli Cave

**Name of reserve:**

Carburangeli Cave Special Nature Reserve

**Managing body:**

Legambiente - Sicilian Regional Committee

**Body locally responsible:**

Carburangeli Cave Nature Reserve  
 Via Umberto I° 64 - 90044 Carini (PA)  
 Tel 091 8669797 - Fax 091 8662063

[carburangeli@neomedia.it](mailto:carburangeli@neomedia.it)

[www.parks.it/riserva.grotta.carburangeli](http://www.parks.it/riserva.grotta.carburangeli)

**Surface area:** 4,91 hectares **Zone A:** 0,75 mt

**Year of institution:** 1996 **Province:** Palermo **Commune:** Carini

**The reserve** The reserve is of major hypogean, speleological, palaeontological and biological interest. The total nature reserve, Zone A, includes the whole underground development of the cave and an external portion of the area above ground around the entrance, equal to about 400 square metres. Zone B includes the supply basin of the cave and the rest of the area in front of the entrance to the cave. This area is characterized by carbonate and clay rocks creating a series of underground tunnels and passages, originating from variations in the sea level in various geological eras. Inside the cave, erosion and water percolations have created a spectacular environment in which there are stalactites, stalagmites, calcite flows, narrow ducts and columns.

**Curiosity** In this fascinating environment there lives a colony of greater vespertilionids, better known as bats. Also, in excavation campaigns in the cave, numerous fossils of animals now extinct in Sicily have been entirely recovered, like the dwarf elephant, the bison, the buck and the bear.

**A visit**

**How to get there:** A29 Palermo-Mazara del Vallo motorway, Carini exit. You take state highway SS 113 towards Villagrazia di Carini as far as the Via Carbolangi junction, where you find the entrance to the reserve. On the motorway as you approach the reserve there are signs.

**Presence of guides and/or signs:**

Legambiente organises guided visits; booking required. Visits are made with small groups and last about 90 minutes. In order to safeguard the very delicate underground environment, only the first chambers of the cave can be visited.

**Other information**

**Nearest emergency medical service:**

Villagrazia di Carini - via Ponticello - Tel. 091 8676820/34

**Tourist information:**

Carini Town Hall - via Umberto I - Tel. 091 8661459

[www.comune.carini.pa.it](http://www.comune.carini.pa.it)

### 35/Puntali Cave



**Name of reserve:** Puntali Cave Special Nature Reserve

**Managing body:** Ecological Research Groups

Via M. Stabile 250 - 90141 Palermo - Tel 091 322079

[www.gruppircercaecologica.it](http://www.gruppircercaecologica.it)

[gruppircercaecologica@libero.it](mailto:gruppircercaecologica@libero.it)

**Body locally responsible:** Puntali reserve

via Castello 3/7 - 90044 Carini - Tel 091 8660163

[www.grottadeipuntali.it](http://www.grottadeipuntali.it)

[info@grottadeipuntali.it](mailto:info@grottadeipuntali.it)

**Surface area:** 15 hectares; the interior of the cave is in Zone A

**Year of institution:** 2001 **Province:** Palermo **Commune:** Carini

**The reserve** It owes its name to the spectacular stalactitic concretions inside it. Here a great many fossil remains have been found of animals that lived on the island during the Pleistocene, as well as a vast range of prehistoric items used by man from the Upper Palaeolithic down to the Bronze Age.

**Curiosity** The finding of enormous skulls and a great many animal jaws no longer present in Sicily created in the popular imagination legends about "giants" in Sicily, including Polyphemus.

**A visit** The cave cannot be visited.

At the visitor centre of the reserve, which is up the flight of steps that leads to the castle, there is an interesting exhibition of fossils from caves in the area and fossils of Pleistocene bison from other European and American sites and a reproduction of the cave is currently being constructed.

**How to get there:** A29 Palermo-Mazara del Vallo motorway, Carini exit. You take state highway SS 113 towards Villagrazia di Carini, Contrada Armetta area.

**Other information**

**Nearest emergency medical service:**

Villagrazia di Carini - via Ponticello - Tel. 091 8676820/34

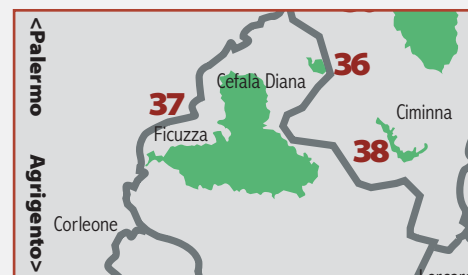
**Tourist information:** Carini Town Hall - via Umberto I - Tel. 091 8661459

[www.comune.carini.pa.it](http://www.comune.carini.pa.it)



◀ left

The "Hunting house" in the Ficuzza Wood.



## 36/ Bagni di Cefalà Diana and Chiarastella



### Name of reserve:

Cefalà Diana and Pizzo Chiarastella Special Nature Reserve

### Managing body:

Palermo Regional Province, Environment Office  
c/o Nuova Provincia - via San Lorenzo 312g - Palermo  
Tel. 091 6628303 Fax 091 6628325  
direttore Amelia Giordano

[www.provincia.palermo.it](http://www.provincia.palermo.it)

[tgpc@provincia.palermo.it](mailto:tgpc@provincia.palermo.it)

**Surface area:** 137,88 hectares **Zone A:** 46 hectares

**Year of institution:** 1997 **Province:** Palermo

**Communes:** Cefalà Diana and Villafrati

**The reserve** It is between Rocca Busambra on one side and Pizzo Cane and Pizzo Trigna on the other. In the area there is the carbonated limestone Pizzo Chiarastella mountain, at the foot of which there are the springs of the Cefalà Diana Baths, much frequented in antiquity. Normal rainwater collected by the Pizzo Chiarastella hydrographic basin and the nearby Cozzo Cavallo penetrate deeply into the ground warming up because of the geothermic gradient (about 1°C every 33 metres' depth). A warm water spring of an intermittent type (currently it is not active), it gushes out at a height of 380 metres and at a temperature of 36°C on the surface, reaching about 70°C on the bottom of the basin. On the east slope of the Pizzo there are stretches of maquis with ilex, euphorbia, rue, black bryony and thorny asparagus in addition to a particular type of clover (*Psoralea bituminosa*) that gives off a strange odour as of oil.

### A visit

**How to get there:** Take the fast Palermo-Agrigento road, Bolognetta exit. Then continue for Cefalà Diana and, after 3 kilometres, to the left you see the massive structure of the Baths and Pizzo Chiarastella.

### Presence of guides and/or signs:

The baths can be visited and you can enter the big area of the inner tubs. Nearby Pizzo Chiarastella rises up; a track leads to the base. The reserve and the Arab baths can be visited all year round from 9 to 12 and 4 to 6. Closed on Mondays. Guided visits available. Admission free.

## Other information

### Nearest emergency medical service:

Cefalà Diana - viale Reg. Siciliana 6 - Tel. 091 8201696

### Tourist information:

Cefalà Diana Town Hall  
piazza Umberto I - Tel. 091 8201184 / 8201603

## 37/ Ficuzza Wood and Rocca Busambra

### Name of reserve:

Special Nature Reserve Ficuzza Wood, Rocca Busambra, Cappelliere Wood and Gorgo del Drago Special Nature Reserve

### Managing body:

Demesnal Forestry Board - UPA

Via G. del Duca 23 - 90138 Palermo - Tel 091 7041711

### Body locally responsible:

Ficuzza Forestry - Tel 091 8464062

Wildlife Recovery Centre - Tel 091 8460107

**Surface area:** 7.396 hectares **Zone A:** 5.333 hectares

**Year of institution:** 2000 **Province:** Palermo

**Communes:** Corleone, Godrano, Marineo, Mezzojuso and Monreale

**The reserve** It protects what is left of some woods of the "Royal Ficuzza Estate", created as a hunting reserve by Ferdinand III of Bourbon. Once it extended for about ten thousand hectares, but today it is smaller and includes the Ficuzza and Cappelliere woods that lie north of the sharp rocky formation of Rocca Busambra, a calcareous ridge that emerges like a blade up to 1600 metres from the surrounding hills.

**Curiosity** Near the Royal Palace the managing body, in cooperation with LIPU, has created the first Regional Wildlife Recovery Centre (C.R.R.F.S.) at which injured animals are treated.

Ahead of possible reintroduction of the griffon vulture in the reserve, special aviaries are being completed to be able to welcome and also treat these big birds of prey.

### A visit

**How to get there:** You go along the Palermo-Agrigento state highway, SS 121, as far as Bolognetta. Then you take state highway SS 118 for Corleone. Well before the town you see the turning for Ficuzza. You can also get to the reserve from Godrano or Mezzojuso.

**Presence of guides and/or signs:** There are seven paths and you can also go along some of them on a mountain bike or on horseback. The traditional starting point is Ficuzza village, but there are also halting and entrance points constituted by the various hostels: "Val dei Conti", at the start of the Cappelliere wood, "Gorgo del Drago", which you can get to via Godrano, and "Alpe Cucco", in the heart of the Ficuzza wood. The most panoramic and spectacular is the one that follows Rocca Busambra but, seeing the difficulties involved, it is only advisable to go along it accompanied by a guide (apply to the Wildlife Recovery Centre).

## Other information

### Nearest emergency medical service:

Corleone - via Don Giovanni Colletto Tel. 091 8450120

### Tourist information:

Palermo Tourist Board  
p.zza Castelnuovo, 35 - 90141 Palermo - Tel. 091 6058111 - fax 091 586338

## 38/ Ciminna Sierras



### Name of reserve:

Ciminna Sierras Special Nature Reserve

### Managing body:

Palermo Regional Province, Environment Office  
via San Lorenzo 312, Palermo,  
Tel. 091 6628303 - Fax 091 6628498  
director Amelia Giordano

[www.provincia.palermo.it](http://www.provincia.palermo.it)

[tgpc@provincia.palermo.it](mailto:tgpc@provincia.palermo.it)

**Surface area:** 310,63 hectares **Zone A:** 108 hectares

**Year of institution:** 1997 **Province:** Palermo **Commune:** Ciminna

**The reserve** This group of mountains, which do not rise above 770 metres, is made up of macro-crystalline chalks with strongly sloping walls and is characterized by major karst phenomena both on the surface and underground: dolines and caves. The tableland on the summit to the north is softly joined to the plateaus and sloping hills. From its top you can see big panoramas reaching Rocca Busambra to the west and the Ventimiglia mountains to the north. On the slopes of the south walls there are enormous accumulations of collapsed blocks in which there are caves also by rock fracture lines. There are also superficial karst microforms like furrows, holes and channels that have contributed to the morphological evolution of the territory.

### A visit

**How to get there:** You go along the Palermo-Agrigento fast highway, SS 121, as far as the Baucina and Ciminna exit. When you reach the village of Ciminna you go along the main street through it, which takes you to the upper part of the Sierras. The start of the path is along the Bagni di Cefalà-Ciminna provincial road at km 11.

**Presence of guides and/or signs:** At the moment there are no signposted paths. You can easily visit the reserve following the path that goes along the base of the south-facing walls, but due to the friability of the chalky soils it is necessary to be very careful along the upper edge of the rock wall.

## Other information

### Nearest emergency medical service:

Ciminna - via G. Falcone 2 - Tel. 091 8204581

### Tourist information:

Ciminna Town Hall - Tel. 091 8204220

## 39/Ustica

### Name of reserve:

Island of Ustica Special Nature Reserve

### Managing body:

Palermo Regional Province - Environment Office

via San Lorenzo 312 - Palermo - Tel. 091 6628303

[www.provincia.palermo.it](http://www.provincia.palermo.it)

[tqpc@provincia.it](mailto:tqpc@provincia.it)

**Surface area:** 205,625 hectares **Zone A:** 121,87 hectares

**Year of institution:** 1997 **Province:** Palermo **Commune:** Ustica

**Name of the marine area:** Ustica Marine Reserve

**Managing Body (provisional):** Harbour authority

via F. Crispi 135 - 90139 PA - Tel. 091 6043111/091 325519

Office: p.zza Umberto I - 90010 Ustica - Tel. 091 8449456

**Surface area:** 15.951 hectares **Year of institution:** 1987

**Province:** Palermo **Commune:** Ustica

**The reserve** This island lies thirty-six miles north of the Sicilian coast. Its surface area is just 8.5 square kilometres. It is the tip of an enormous submerged volcanic edifice which is part of a line of submarine craters in a fault 1000 metres deep. There are three peaks on the part above water: Monte Guardia dei Turchi, Costa del Fallo and Falconiera. The reserve protects the terrestrial natural environment on the island, completing the safeguarding work begun with the creation of the marine reserve. The rocky coasts conceal some semi-submerged caves of major interest.

The marine reserve of the Island of Ustica was the first one to be created in Italy. Desired by the inhabitants too, it is a true paradise for scuba divers, who go there from all over Italy.

### A visit

**How to get there:** Ustica is connected to Palermo harbour by ferries and hydrofoils, and in the summer period with Naples too.

### Presence of guides and/or signs:

At the moment there are two signposted itineraries. One starts from the sports ground in the village and goes west flanking the southern part of the island. The other climbs up towards Falconiera, which involves a breathtaking panorama, and starts from the main square in the village of Cala Santa Maria.

It is possible to take part in the guided excursions organised in the total reserve area. The underwater archaeological excursion is extremely satisfying.

### Other information

**Nearest emergency medical service:** Ustica - Tel. 091 8449248

**Tourist information:** Ustica Town Hall - Tel. 091 8448113

## 40/Capo Gallo

### Name of reserve:

Capo Gallo Special Nature Reserve

**Managing body:** Demesnal Forestry Board

**Body locally responsible:** Palermo Provincial Board

Via G. del Duca, 23 - 90138 Palermo - Tel. 091 7041711

**Surface area:** 585 hectares **Zone A:** 484 hectares

**Year of institution:** 2004 **Province:** Palermo **Commune:** Palermo

**Name of the marine area:**

Capo Gallo and Isola delle Femmine Marine Protected Area

**Managing Body (provisional):** Harbour authority

Via F. Crispi 153 Palermo - Tel. 091 6043111 - Fax 091 325519

**Surface area:** 2.173 ha **Zone A:** 77 ha **Year of institution:** 2002

**Province:** Palermo **Communes:** Palermo and Isola delle Femmine

**The reserve** The Monte Gallo rocky promontory dominates the spectacular bays of Mondello and Sferracavallo. In the area there are about twenty caves at the foot of or atop the mountain. The most important, from the nature point of view, is the Regina Cave that was used as a Punic sanctuary and contains inscriptions that go from the 6th century BC to the 2nd century AD, the Perciata Cave and the Impisù Cave with palaeontological and archaeological finds, the Olio Cave,

which can only be visited by sea, the Malpasso Cave and the Pizzo Sella Pothole for their speleological interest.

### A visit

**How to get there:** On the Mondello side you go past the La Torre Hotel. You go along the side of the village as far as a turning on the right where there is a gate that is always open; here the track begins that follows the coast. On the other side you get to the village of Sferracavallo following the signs. Before the centre you take Via Manderino on the right and come to the Punta Barcarello boat garage, where the coastal path starts.

You get to and recognise the gate to the path that leads to the mountain peak following the road that flanks Pizzo Sella.

**Presence of guides and/or signs:** There are three paths to visit the reserve. The first, on the Mondello side, at the base of Monte Gallo, follows the coastline as far as the abandoned lighthouse. Instead, to get to the summit, you have to follow the forestry road that from the gate into the reserve (Via Tolomea) goes up the south slope. The route has not yet been signposted, but is quite easy to follow, as far as the highest parts of the mountain and the Semaphore (military observatory). You can get to the third itinerary from Barcarello (Sferracavallo).

### Other information

In order to be certain you will find the gate on the south slope open, it is best to contact the managing body beforehand.

### Nearest emergency medical service:

Summer: Mondello viale Regina Elena Tel. 091 6841264

Tourist: via Sferracavallo 146 - Tel. 091 532798

**Tourist information:** Palermo Tourist Board

p.zza Castelnuovo 35 - 90141 Pa - Tel. 091 6058111

## 41/Isola delle Femmine

**Name of reserve:** Isola delle Femmine Special Nature Reserve

**Managing body:** L.I.P.U.

Isola delle Femmine LIPU Oasis, via A. Vespucci 72

Isola delle Femmine (PA), Tel. 091 8616167

**Person responsible locally:** Vincenzo Di Dio

**Surface area:** 13 hectares **Year of institution:** 1997

**Province:** Palermo **Commune:** Isola delle Femmine

**Name of the marine area:**

Capo Gallo and Isola delle Femmine Marine Protected Area

**Managing Body (provisional):** Harbour authority

Via F. Crispi 153 Palermo - Tel. 091 6043111 - Fax 091 325519

**Surface area:** 2.173 ha **Zone A:** 77 ha **Year of institution:** 2002

**Province:** Palermo **Communes:** Palermo and Isola delle Femmine

**The reserve** Cliffs rising sheer over the sea afford a breathtaking scenario surrounded by marine caves of great natural interest. The seabeds have the typical Mediterranean flora and fauna and above all in the area off the Isola delle Femmine islet conceal archaeological items dating from past epochs and ancient maritime deeds.

**Curiosity** Women may have nothing to do with the name of the islet, or the exact opposite. Indeed, it is thought that the name derives from *Insula Fimi* (from the Latin for island of Eufemio), afterwards distorted in Sicilian dialect to become *fimmini* (women). Or it derives from the fact that a legend indicates the island as the place of deportation of a group of Turkish women.

### A visit

The reserve is open every day all year round.

Guided visits can be booked (times 8.30-1 and 2.30-5.30). Guided visits for school and other parties must be booked at the visitors centre.

**How to get there:** From Palermo, get on the A29 motorway (Palermo-Trapani), leave it after about 5 Km, and at the Isola delle Femmine exit follow the signs for "Torre in terra".

### Other information

**Nearest emergency medical service:**

Isola delle Femmine - via Mattarella - Tel. 091 8677042

**Tourist information:** Isola delle Femmine Town Hall

via Palermo 51 - 90040 - Tel. 091 8677693



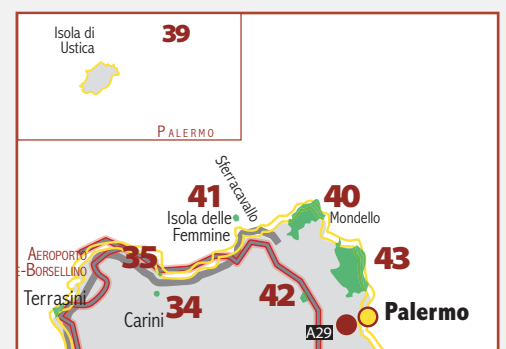
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Ustica.



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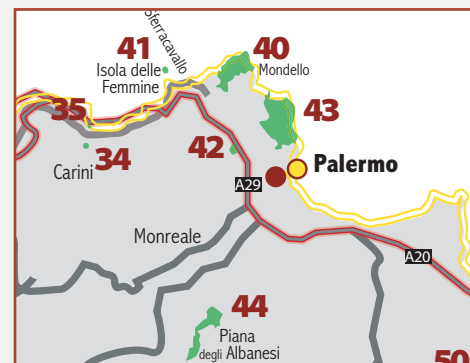
Capo Gallo and Isola delle Femmine.





◀ left

From left. Conza cave and iris in the Pizzuta Sierras.



## 42/Conza Cave

**Name of reserve:**

Grotta Conza Total Nature Reserve

**Managing body:**

Italian Alpine Club Sicily

**Body locally responsible:**

Grotta Conza Total Nature Reserve

Via Roma 443 - 90139 Palermo

Tel/fax 091 322689

[gconza@neomedia.it](mailto:gconza@neomedia.it)

**Total surface area:** 4,37 hectares **Year of institution:** 1995

**Province:** Palermo **Communes:** Palermo

**The reserve** The cave is at the base of the north-eastern slope of Pizzo Manolfo, near the village of Tommaso Natale. The reserve is set in the rugged but fascinating landscape of the calcareous mountains that surround the Sicilian capital. The vast entrance to the cave affords flora and fauna typical of calcareous environments. The cave consists in a single very big environment, about 90 metres long and 30 wide, which opens up into a cavern with a truly spectacular semi-elliptical shape at the foot of a vertical wall. Inside the cave there were once water resurgences that are no longer active. Unfortunately, long use by shepherds and unauthorized excavations have impoverished the archaeological deposits, but nonetheless numerous finds have been made.

### A visit

A visit does not present particular difficulties and does not require speleological experience.

The cave can be visited all year round after authorization by the managing body, which organizes guided visits. Authorization must be requested from the reserve office at least one week before the date of the visit. Groups of 5 to 20 excursionists are admitted. The duration of the visit is one hour.

**How to get there:** From Palermo you go along Viale Regione Siciliana in the direction of Trapani as far as the turning for Tommaso Natale. At this point you go along Via Luoghicelli (near Via Socrate, 150 metres from the motorway underpass), and after a climb of about 400 metres you come to a path on the left that in a few minutes takes you to the cave entrance.

From Trapani or Mazzara you take the A28 Palermo-Mazara motorway and leave it at Capaci-Isola delle Femmine. You then take state highway SS 113 in the direction of Palermo passing through Sferracavallo to get to Tommaso Natale.

### Other information

**Nearest emergency medical service:**

via Sferracavallo 146 Tel.091 532798

**Tourist information:** Palermo Tourist Board

p.zza Castelnuovo 35 - 90141 Pa - Tel.091 6058111

## 43/Monte Pellegrino



**Name of reserve:**

Monte Pellegrino Special Nature Reserve

**Managing body:** National Association of Italian Rangers

Viale Diana, Giusino, Favorita - 90100 Palermo - Tel.091 6716066

[www.riservamontepellegrino.palermo.it](http://www.riservamontepellegrino.palermo.it)

**Surface area:** 1.016,87 hectares **Zone A:** 783hectares

**Year of institution:** 1995 **Province:** Palermo **Commune:** Palermo

**The reserve** Its proximity to the city of Palermo makes it easy to get to the reserve. The mountain at its highest point reaches 600 metres and it rises like a monolith of carbonated limestone, about 6 kilometres long, sheer over the sea on the east slope and to the north, while the western and southern slopes dominate the Sicilian capital. It is primarily constituted by calcareous layers referring to a period of time that goes from the upper Trias to the Eocene. Numerous and of great scientific value are the fossils found in the area. The 134 caves and cavities in its walls are of major speleological and palaeontological importance for the important prehistoric finds made inside them.

There is a lot of Mediterranean maquis and rock vegetation, also including various endemic species which are rare and of plant geography interest.

There are remarkable panoramas from the mountain.

A path leads up to the Sanctuary of Santa Rosalia, the beloved patron saint of the city.

### A visit

**How to get there:** The reserve is in the Favorita Park along Viale Diana, which crosses the Park in the northern areas of Palermo. Follow the signs for "Stadio".

**Presence of guides and/or signs:** There are 4 marked itineraries and they start from the reserve office.

Guided visits must be booked in good time. You can do it online going to the site of the managing body or by phone. The maximum number in a group is 15.

### Other information

**Nearest emergency medical service:**

Ospedale Villa Sofia - p.zza Salerno - Tel.091 7804031

**Tourist information:** Palermo Tourist Board

p.zza Castelnuovo,35 - 90141 Pa - Tel.091 6058111

## 44/Pizzuta Sierras

**Name of reserve:** Pizzuta Sierras Special Nature Reserve

**Managing body:** Demesnal Forestry Board

Palermo Provincial Board - via Del Duca, 23 - 90138 - Tel.091 7041711

**Body locally responsible:**

Piana degli Albanesi Forestry - Tel.091 8571010

**Surface area:** 414,37 hectares **Zone A:** 388,75 hectares

**Year of institution:** 1998 **Province:** Palermo **Commune:** Piana degli Albanesi

**The reserve** The Serre della Pizzuta mountainous system goes from the so-called Portella del Pozzillo as far as Monte Maja and Pelavet (1279 metres above sea level). The reserve area owes its name to the highest peak, "La Pizzuta" (1333 metres above sea level). It is characterized by a rocky system in which karst phenomena are very marked, both above ground and underground. In the reserve there is the Zubbione cave and the Garrone cave. In the latter the peculiar microclimate has favoured the survival of ferns that are very rare for the island: *lingua cervina* and *Scolopendrium emiontide*. In addition to these plants, of particular importance are the natural and reforestation woods and the rock flora. There are fascinating panoramas that encompass Piana degli Albanesi, the artificial lake on the Belice, the neighbouring peaks of the Sicani mountains and, on clear days, even the Madonie and Etna. Among the typical Sicilian fauna there stands out the porcupine. Its conspicuous presence is testified by the prickles that are easily found along the paths. In both the caves a rare bat is present, the greater horseshoe bat. But it is the sky that affords the sightings of greatest interest: in the Sierras it is easy to observe the flights of various birds, from the golden eagle to the peregrine falcon, from the buzzard to the rare Bonelli's eagle.

**Curiosity** Many places in the reserve have particular names, since beginning from the 15th century groups of Albanians reached western Sicily fleeing the Turkish invasion. The biggest colony was granted the uninhabited "Plain of the archpriest of Monreale", later called Piana degli Albanesi. Today in the village a lot of people speak Albanian and also local place names are in this language.

### A visit

**How to get there:** You go along the Palermo-Sciaccia road as far as the exit for Piana degli Albanesi. From the outskirts of the village of Altofonte, where you can get on the path for Portella di Pozzillo, you follow the signs until you get to Piana degli Albanesi, over which there loom up the mountains in the reserve.

**Presence of guides and/or signs:**

There are 6 signposted paths you can go along.

### Other information

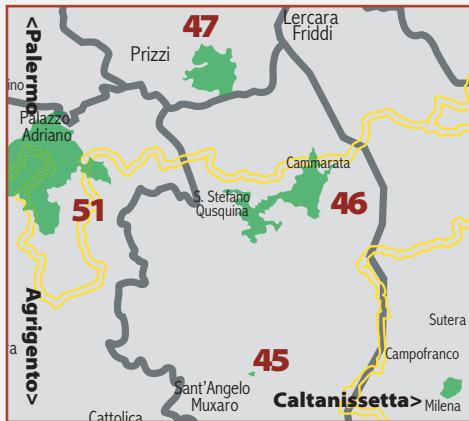
**Nearest emergency medical service:** Piana degli Albanesi

via Martiri Portella Delle Ginestre - Tel.091 8571081

**Tourist information:** Piana degli Albanesi Town Hall

via G. Matteotti - Tel.091 8574144

From left. Monte Cammarata, horses to pasture. Sant'Angelo Muxaro, Water Cave.



## 45/Sant'Angelo Muxaro Cave

### Name of reserve:

Sant'Angelo Muxaro Cave Total Nature Reserve

**Managing body:** Legambiente - Sicilian Regional Committee

### Body locally responsible:

Grotta di Sant'Angelo Muxaro nature reserve - Via Messina 2  
92020 Sant'Angelo Muxaro (Agrigento province) - Tel. 0922 919669  
[grottaciavuli@virgilio.it](mailto:grottaciavuli@virgilio.it)

**Surface area:** 20,41 hectares **Zone A:** 19 hectares **Year of institution:** 2000  
**Province:** Agrigento **Commune:** Sant'Angelo Muxaro

**The reserve** The area is made up of a karst passage with dolines and caves, including the Ciavuli cave. This is an underground cave with two arms, one active and the other inactive, with collapse chambers, meanders and chalk concretions. In the reserve the waters go into the cave at a height of 173 metres and come back out onto the surface at a height of 126 metres, after travelling 1000 metres underground. The entrance to the cave is illuminated by light penetrating from a lateral collapse, while not far away there is the pothole that supplies the cave. The resurgence of the water presumably occurs in the cavity to the northwest of the village of Sant'Angelo Muxaro, whence they flow into the Vallone del Ponte, a tributary of the river Platani. The flow of the waters along the bed, into which there also flow those from the cave resurgence, occurs because the water continually goes underground and re-emerges, giving rise to the karst complex called "Water Cave".

**Curiosity** In the resurgence in the cave and along the Vallone del Ponte, due to the constant presence of water there are some species of amphibians and river crabs, the latter being a very positive ecological indicator as they can only survive in watercourses that maintain good water quality.

### A visit

**How to get there:** You go along state highway SS 118 from Agrigento as far as Raffadali. Then you follow the signs for the village. The reserve is at the foot of the hill on which the village stands. From Palermo you take the fast Palermo-Agrigento road and leave it at the Sant'Angelo Muxaro exit.

**Presence of guides and/or signs:** The managing body contemplates two types of guided visits depending on visitors' speleological experience.

Guided visits are to be booked at the reserve office.

### Other information

**Nearest emergency medical service:**

Agrigento - c.da Consolida - Tel. 0922 492111

**Tourist information:** Agrigento Tourist Board - viale della Vittoria, 255  
Tel. 0922 401352 - fax 0922 25185

## 46/Monte Cammarata

### Name of reserve:

Monte Cammarata Special Nature Reserve

**Managing body:** Demesnal Forestry Board - Agrigento Forestry via La Malfa 1 - Tel. 0922 595911

### Body locally responsible:

Cammarata Forestry - Tel. 0922 909152  
Santo Stefano Quisquina Forestry - Tel. 0922 982065

**Surface area:** 2.049 hectares **Zone A:** 1.175 hectares

**Year of institution:** 2000 **Province:** Agrigento

**Communes:** Cammarata, San Giovanni Gemini and Santo Stefano di Quisquina

**The reserve** The Monte Cammarata (1.578 metres) is the highest peak in the Sicani Mountains and its morphology, rich in cliffs and gullies with plateaus in between allows the development of flora of major value and the installation of endemic and migratory avifauna. The protected area also includes Monte Gemini (1350 metres), Pizzo Rondine (1246 metres) and Serra della Moneta (1188 metres). These mountains, called Sicani, take their name from the ancient inhabitants of Sicily and they are essentially constituted by calcareous rocks. Here beside the typical avifauna population, certainly present, though not common, is the great spotted woodpecker.

**Curiosity** Near Santo Stefano there is the Quisquina hermitage built in 1760 around the cavern where, according to the tradition, there lived Rosalia, who was the daughter of Count Sinibaldo, seignior of those lands, and in the 12th century became a saint.

### A visit

**How to get there:** You go along state highway SS 189 from Palermo to Agrigento as far as the San Giovanni Gemini-Cammarata exit. You head for Santo Stefano di Quisquina, and after the village of San Giovanni Gemini you find a sign indicating the entrance. Here a road starts that leads to the top of the mountain.

**Presence of guides and/or signs:** The main paths in the reserve are signposted. Various paths are indicated: the two simplest itineraries are the "Rondine" and "Marcati" ones.

### Other information

**Nearest emergency medical service:**

Cammarata, via S. Lucia, Tel. 0922 900280

**Tourist information:** Agrigento Tourist Board  
viale della Vittoria, 255 - Tel. 0922 401352 - fax 0922 25185

## 47/Monte Carcaci

**Name of reserve:** Monte Carcaci Special Nature Reserve

**Managing body:** Demesnal Forestry Board

**Body locally responsible:** Palermo Forestry

Via G. del Duca 23 - 90138 Palermo - Tel. 091 7041711

Castronovo Forestry - Tel. 091 8217037

**Surface area:** 1.437 hectares **Zone A:** 863 hectares

**Year of institution:** 1997 **Province:** Palermo

**Communes:** Prizzi and Castronovo di Sicilia



**The reserve** This interesting nature area protects the calcareous heights of the Monte Carcaci (1196 metres above sea level) and of nearby Pizzo Colobria (900 metres above sea level), in which there is a various and composite natural environment, characterized by a rich and varied plant landscape marked by damp areas, woods and natural brushwood, grasslands, clusters of shrubs and rocky environments. From the peaks of the hills there descends a dense network of surface waters giving life to the Rumena and Carcaci streams and to the little seasonal Marcato delle Lavanche pond. The latter is created after winter rains at a height of 900 metres, near the Colobria-Carcaci forest shelter and especially in spring, when the flowerings are most splendid, the pool affords rich aquatic vegetation of major interest.

### A visit

**How to get there:** You go along state highway SS 121 from Palermo to Agrigento, take the Lercara Friddi exit and get on state highway SS 188 for Prizzi. After Portella San Francesco, on the right, you follow provincial highway 36 bis which goes to Borgo Riena and on the left a track - recognisable by the words "Demanio Colobria" - leads to the entrance to the reserve.

**Presence of guides and/or signs:** A few hundred metres after the entrance to the reserve there is a car park, and nearby there is the visitor centre. Six itineraries start here. Excursions can be guided by operators of the Orchidea cooperative, who give information about nature.

### Other information

**Nearest emergency medical service:**

Castronovo di Sicilia - v.lo Martorana 5 - Tel. 091 8217234

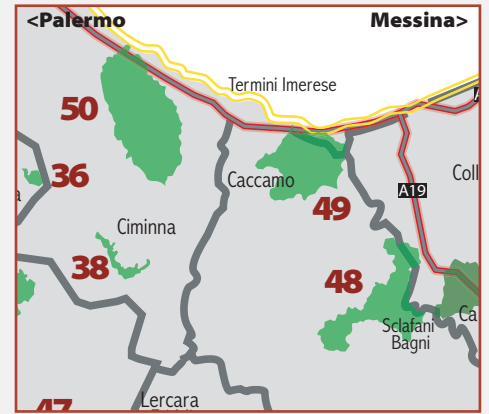
Prizzi - piazza IV Novembre - Tel. 091 8346352

**Tourist information:** Town Hall Castronovo di Sicilia  
p.zza Municipio - 90030 Castronovo - Tel. 091 8217584

Prizzi Hippiana Local Tourist Board - p.zza F. Crispi 5  
90038 Prizzi - Tel. 091 8346901



Favara Wood, secular oak.



## 48/ Favara Wood and Granza Wood

### Name of reserve:

Favara Wood and Granza Wood Special Nature Reserve

**Managing body:** Demesnal Forestry Board

### Body locally responsible:

Montemaggiore Belsito Forestry - Tel. 091 8993483

**Surface area:** 2.977,50 hectares **Zone A:** 1.884 hectares

**Year of institution:** 1997 **Province:** Palermo

**Communes:** Aliminusa, Cerda, Sclafani Bagni e Montemaggiore Belsito

**The reserve** The mountain complex covered by the Favara and Granza woods is made up of the following peaks: Pizzo Conca (1002 metres), Cozzo Bomes (1073 metres) and Monte Roccellito (1145 metres). The area has an important hydrographic system since, because of the not very permeable soil, the rains are channelled into numerous small watercourses that flow into the river Imera and the river Torto. But the peculiar characteristic of this reserve is the state of preservation of the woodland that covers these mountains. The fact is that the human impact has been minimum since man has succeeded in using and exploiting the wood without damaging it. Local people have also used the wood for grazing and getting cork, but they have left the general physiognomy intact. Hence the Favara and Granza woods can today be considered among the best woods in Sicily, with a good and fairly homogeneous distribution of the wooded surfaces, with very numerous old exemplars that have developed to the point of attaining monumental sizes. The species mostly present are cork oak and holly oak together with downy oak and flowering ash in the Granza wood while the downy oak is dominant in the Favara wood. Among the animal species present, of particular importance is the endemic avifauna.

### A visit

**How to get there:** You go along the A29 Palermo-Catania motorway and take the Buonformello exit. You go along state highway SS 113 towards Palermo and after about 3 kilometres on the left you take state highway SS 120 as far as Montemaggiore Belsito. Or, after getting on the SS 120, after the centre of Cerda follow the signs for Sclafani Bagni and Caltavuturo. On the left you find the reserve entrance on the Granza area.

### Presence of guides and/or signs:

The managing body has not yet signposted the possible itineraries inside the reserve. To visit it you can follow the long forestry track starting from Granza.

### Other information

#### Nearest emergency medical service:

p.tta Bolzano 4 - Termini Imerese - 90018 - Tel. 091 8143809

#### Tourist information:

Montemaggiore Belsito Town Hall - piazza Roma - Tel. 091 8993680

## 49/ Monte San Calogero



**Name of reserve:** Monte San Calogero Special Nature Reserve

**Managing body:** Demesnal Forestry Board - Palermo Provincial Office

**Surface area:** 2.818 hectares **Zone A:** 2.086 hectares

**Year of institution:** 1998

**Province:** Palermo **Communes:** Termini Imerese, Caccamo and Sciarra

**The reserve** The mighty San Calogero mountain complex rises steeply to the north on the Tyrrhenian coast while on the inland side it has two big ridges to the east and to the west that are cut through by the big Piano Santa Maria depression. The environment is characterized by gullies, gorges and ravines deeply engraved in the western sector that have laid bare stratifications that have allowed geologists to understand the complex genesis of the mountain. Particularly spectacular are the Tre Pietre and Pernice gullies. The major landscape values of the area derive essentially from the strong and sudden contrast between the imposing masses of the calcareous and dolomitic structures and the soft morphologies of the hilly zones below the mountain complex. This contrast is particularly marked on the eastern slope.

In the walls of the Monte San Calogero there nest the peregrine falcon, the buzzard and the windhover. Sighting the golden eagle, which finds a big hunting grounds in this area, is not rare.

**Curiosity** In the Poggio Balate area there are some cracks in which there rise up hydrothermal fluids rich in calcium fluoride and barium at a temperature of around 43°. On the surface they form crystals of fluorite and barites. The former are of a showy size, are square and octagonal shapes and are various colours.

### A visit

**How to get there:** Palermo-Catania A19 motorway, Termini Imerese exit. Then head for Caccamo on provincial highway 285 and after the village get onto a track that winds up the mountain and leads to the reserve entrance.

**Presence of guides and/or signs:** The managing body has not yet signposted the possible itineraries inside the reserve. To visit it you can follow the various forestry tracks through it.

### Other information

#### Nearest emergency medical service:

p.tta Bolzano 4 - Termini Imerese - 90018 - Tel. 091 8143809

**Tourist information:** Town Hall Termini Imerese

via Garibaldi 1 - 90018 - Tel. 091 8141254

[www.comune.termini-imerese.pa.it](http://www.comune.termini-imerese.pa.it)

## 50/ Pizzo Cane, Pizzo Trigna and Grotta Mazzamuto

### Name of reserve:

Pizzo Cane, Pizzo Trigna and Grotta Mazzamuto Special Nature Reserve

**Managing body:** Demesnal Forestry Board

**Surface area:** 4.663,74 hectares **Zone A:** 2.471,87 hectares

**Year of institution:** 2000 **Province:** Palermo

**Communes:** Altavilla Milicia, Baucina and Caccamo



**The reserve** It is one of the biggest protected areas in the province of Palermo. It is between the Madonie Park and Rocca Busambra. Pizzo Cane goes up to a height of 1243 metres above sea level, while Pizzo Trigna, which is on the same ridge, goes up to 1257 metres above sea level. They are constituted by calcareous and flinty rocks, but on Pizzo Cane Dog there are also intrusions of rocks of volcanic origin. In the reserve there are various karst cavities, the most remarkable of which are the Mazzamuto Cave, in which some prehistoric rock communities lived, the Brigli Cave, of major speleological interest for the concretions in its chambers, and the Leone Cave, where an endemic type of candytuft lives. At the foot of this massif there is a valley into which there flow waters that go into the Corvo stream and then into the river San Michele. Various birds of prey nest on the rock walls that are on the Red List of species heading for extinction and a rare or endemic rock vegetation species. The principal species of fauna typical of Sicilian mountains are present, including the Apennine hare.

### A visit

**How to get there:** Palermo-Catania A19 motorway, Casteldaccia exit. You follow provincial highway 16 for Baucina-Ventimiglia di Sicilia. After about 25 kilometres you come to the west slope of the reserve and the base of Pizzo Trigna, in which there is the Mazzamuto Cave.

**Presence of guides and/or signs:** The managing body has not yet signposted the possible itineraries inside the reserve. To visit it you can follow the various forestry tracks through it.

The mountain areas here are rather impervious and hence more suited to climbing than excursions.

### Other information

#### Nearest emergency medical service:

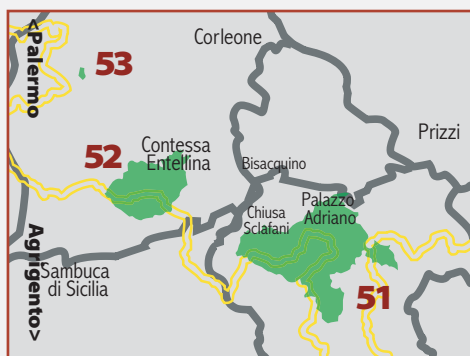
Altavilla Milicia via Oberdan 23 Tel. 091 991338

**Tourist information:** Palermo Tourist Board

p.zza Castelnuovo, 35 - 90141 Pa - Tel. 091 6058111

right ►

From left. Entella Cave.  
Monte Genuardo, Santa Maria del Bosco Abbey



## 51/Palazzo Adriano and Sosio Valley

### Name of reserve:

Palazzo Adriano Mountains and Sosio Valley Special Nature Reserve

**Managing body:** Demesnal Forestry Board

**Body locally responsible:**

Burgio Forestry Tel. 0925 64350

Palazzo Adriano Forestry Tel. 091 8348506

**Total surface area:** 5.862,07 hectares **Zone A:** 3.803,12 hectares

**Year of institution:** 1997 **Provinces:** Palermo and Agrigento

**Communes:** Palazzo Adriano, Chiusa Sclafani, Burgio and Bivona



**The reserve** It protects a calcareous mountainous area crossed by the clear waters of the river Sosio, a watercourse which flows well all year round. It crosses impervious territories, characterized by absolute wildness, on high calcareous hills with complex and rugged morphology, characterized by steep and sheer rock walls, often in the form of precipices, or densely covered with woods. Along it you can see rich and varied riparian vegetation, meanders, pools and little waterfalls, the looming walls of the Sant'Antonino and Serre heights, with numerous and surprising rock pinnacles, and the ruins of Gristia castle perched on the buttresses of Portella Rossa. In one stretch the river flows between narrow and high rock walls that form fascinating gorges. The white limestones in the reserve, in addition to being spectacular, are also of very great palaeontological interest: among them there are the oldest and most precious Sicilian fossils, such as the so-called Solomon's Stone.

**Curiosity** Ammonites, named after the Egyptian divinity Ammon, were cephalopod molluscs with spiral-shaped shells that very probably became extinct about 65 million years ago. They vary in size and can reach 2 metres.

### A visit

**How to get there:** Palermo-Catania A19 motorway, Villabate exit. Then follow the fast Palermo-Agrigento road (SS 121). Take the Bolognetta exit following the signs for Marineo and Corleone (SS 118). Continue towards Chiusa Sclafani. From Piazza Castello in the village you follow Via Roma for 2 kilometres on the white road as far as the entrance to the reserve.

You can get to the Monte Lucerto entrance by continuing after the village along provincial highway 386 for about 1600 metres as far as a turning on the left, signposted, leading into the white road to the reserve.

**Presence of guides and/or signs:** The managing body has created two itineraries to Monte Lucerto and in the Valle Vite. Instead, the river Sosio itinerary is not signposted. To go along it, you just have to follow the paths along the banks.

### Other information

**Nearest emergency medical service:**

Palazzo Adriano via Messina Tel. 091 8348256

**Tourist information:** Town Hall Palazzo Adriano

p.zza Umberto I, 46 - 90030 Palazzo Adriano - Tel. 091 8349911

## 52/Monte Genuardo and Santa Maria del Bosco

### Name of reserve:

Monte Genuardo and Santa Maria del Bosco Special Nature Reserve

**Managing body:**

Agrigento Provincial Forestry Board Tel. 0922 23841

Palermo Provincial Forestry Board Tel. 091 7041711

Sambuca di Sicilia Forestry Tel. 0925 941194

**Surface area:** 2.552,91 hectares **Zone A:** 1.683,33 hectares

**Year of institution:** 1997 **Provinces:** Palermo and Agrigento

**Communes:** Contessa Entellina, Sambuca di Sicilia and Giuliana

**The reserve** The reserve protects a big area in which various environments particularly rich in geological, faunistic and botanical features are found, as well as historical-archaeological ones. Indeed, in the reserve area there is the big Santa Maria del Bosco Abbey and the ancient Punic city of Adranone. Monte Genuardo (1175 metres), one of the highest peaks in the Sicani mountains, is covered by big natural wooded areas with oaks and reforestation areas with conifers containing rich fauna and, above all, composite avifauna including the Egyptian vulture, the only vulture left in Sicily. Along the road for Santa Maria del Bosco and near the peak of the mountain so-called *pillow lavas* are found, deposits of submarine lavas due to eruptive activity in remote epochs.

**Curiosity** In open areas the hobby is found, a hawk that is quite rare in Sicily but has found a nesting area here.

### A visit

**How to get there:** Take the Palermo-Sciaccia state highway, SS 624, as far as the turning for Sambuca di Sicilia, and get on provincial highway 69. Then take provincial highway 70 towards Adragna following the signs as far as the Località Pomo entrance.

You can get to the Santa Maria del Bosco Abbey by going along provincial highway 70 and then taking provincial highway 35 for Bisacchino.

**Presence of guides and/or signs:**

Near the big car park there is a picnic area, and signposted itineraries start from here.

### Other information

**Nearest emergency medical service:**

Giuliana - via salita Castello - Tel. 091 8356278

**Tourist information:** Palermo Tourist Board

p.zza Castelnuovo, 35 - 90141 Pa - Tel. 091 6058111

## 53/Entella Cave

### Name of reserve:

Grotta di Entella Total Nature Reserve

**Managing body:** Italian Alpine Club

**Body locally responsible:**

R.N.I. Grotta di Entella - 90030 Contessa Entellina

Tel. 347 4322207

[grottaentella@neomedia.it](mailto:grottaentella@neomedia.it)

**Total surface area:** 11 ha **Year of institution:** 1995

**Province:** Palermo **Commune:** Contessa Entellina

**The reserve** The cave is in the Rocca di Entella, a mountain between the left river Belice and the right river Belice, affected by faults and fractures and constituted by stratiform chalky rocks. Rainwater has infiltrated into the subsoil heaving out the meanders in the cave, which today is inactive. It is about 1 km long. The opening is the old resurgence of the flowing waters. The initial part is a meander-shaped tunnel about 10 metres long and 1 metre high. Then the cave develops on four levels of tunnels. Along the speleological route you can observe chalk crystals, stalactites and stalagmites and the striations that water has drawn on the cave walls with its downward flow. Moreover, the underground river that in the past filled the cave has left deposits of alluvial material among which numerous anthropological finds have emerged.

**Curiosity** Atop the Rocca di Entella there are the remains of the ancient town of Entella, which like Erice and Segesta was founded by an ancient population from the Near East.

### A visit

**How to get there:** Take the Palermo-Sciaccia state highway, SS 624, as far as the turning for Alcamo-Diga Garcia. Continue towards Contessa Entellina following the signs for "Diga" as far as the Rocca.

On the A29 Palermo-Mazara del Vallo motorway take the Gallitello exit. Go along provincial highway 119 for about 15 kilometres following the signs for the fast Palermo-Sciaccia road. Then follow the Diga Garcia signs.

**Presence of guides and/or signs:** The managing body organises guided visits and provides speleological helmets. You have to book in time at the reserve office.

### Other information

**Nearest emergency medical service:** Contessa Entellina

via Roma, 20 - Tel. 091 8355375

**Tourist information:** Contessa Entellina Town Hall

cortile Municipio, 6 - 90030 - Tel. 091 8302228



## 54/River Irmínio

### Name of reserve:

River Irmínio Forest Maquis Special Biological Reserve

**Managing body:** Ragusa Regional Province

Environment Office - Nature Reserve Management Group

Via G. Di Vittorio, 275 - 97100 Ragusa - Tel. 0932 675526

[ptpragusa@teamonline.it](mailto:ptpragusa@teamonline.it)

[www.provincia.ragusa.it](http://www.provincia.ragusa.it)

**Total surface area:** 134,70 hectares **Year of institution:** 1985

**Province:** Ragusa **Commune:** Ragusa

**The reserve** Protects one of the last areas of dune forest maquis in Sicily and the final stretch of the course of the river Irmínio. This is a rather long watercourse that starts on the top of Monte Lauro. Along the banks of the river and in the valleys it flows in there are amphibians, reptiles, shellfish and freshwater fish. Reflecting the good quality of its clear waters there some insects that are environmental indicators. The Irmínio flows cutting through the deep coastal dune stretch, constituted by sandy dunes well consolidated by a true tangle of vegetation typical of the old dune forest maquis. Once these dune systems characterized the coasts of southern Sicily and here they have miraculously escaped the disasters that have occurred in other areas on the island.

**Curiosity** Typical of Sicilian dune environments is the sea lily (*Pancratium maritimum*, on the photo). This flower colonizes the sands of dunes, and from the latter there emerge its thick leaves, which in summer wither, giving way to big white flowers that appear on the surface of the sand.

### A visit

**How to get there:** From Catania, take state highway SS 514 as far as Ragusa, and then go along provincial highway 25 for Marina di Ragusa, and then provincial highway 63 for Donnalucata. After 2 kilometres you find the entrance to the reserve.

From Syracuse, take state highway SS 115 as far as Ispica, then continue for Pozzallo and go along the coast road as far as Marina di Ragusa.

From Agrigento, take state highway SS 115 as far as Ragusa, then take provincial highway 25 and provincial highway 63.

**Presence of guides and/or signs:** A nature path starts from the car park. It is easy to get to thanks to the signs. The path goes along the edge of the dune system as far as the course of the river Irmínio near the estuary.

### Other information

**Nearest emergency medical service:** Ospedale Civile di Ragusa p.zza Ospedale Civile, 1 - 97100 - Tel. 0932 600111

**Tourist information:** Ragusa Tourist Board - via cap. Bocchieri, 33 97100 Ragusa Ibla - Tel. 0932 221511 - fax 0932 627464

[www.ragusaturismo.it](http://www.ragusaturismo.it)

[informazioni@ragusaturismo.it](mailto:informazioni@ragusaturismo.it)

## 55/Aleppo Pine

**Name of reserve:** Aleppo Pine Special Nature Reserve

**Managing body:** Ragusa Regional Province

Environment Office - Nature Reserve Management Group

Via G. Di Vittorio, 275 - 97100 Ragusa - Tel. 0932 675526

[ptpragusa@teamonline.it](mailto:ptpragusa@teamonline.it)

[www.provincia.ragusa.it](http://www.provincia.ragusa.it)

**Total surface area:** 3.632 hectares **Year of institution:** 1990

**Province:** Ragusa **Communes:** Comiso, Vittoria e Ragusa

**The reserve** From Vittoria, along the valley of the Ippari, the river sung of by Pindar, you can admire the nature reserve, the pine growing luxuriantly here. The Aleppo Pine is a plant that is typical of warm and arid areas in the Mediterranean basin. The tree is only found in the natural state in very few areas on the island. Native areas of Aleppo Pine are still found on the islands of Marettimo and Pantelleria, but at one time, as on other Mediterranean islands, it must have been one of the commonest species along shores and on hills in Sicily. The only really big though fragmentary area left is along the river Ippari.

**Curiosity** Near the estuary of the river Ippari there stood the ancient city of Camarina founded by the Corinthians in the 6th century BC. Recent archaeological diggings have brought to light magnificent archaeological remains, and in the museum there are numerous items and an interesting explanation of the historical vicissitudes of the city.

### A visit

**How to get there:** Take state highway SS 115 for Vittoria. After the town head for the southern extremity, where you get on a municipal road going through the valley of the Ippari, with various forks making it possible to reach the coast and a little coastal road going to the Kamarina archaeological park. Unfortunately the signposting is not too good.

**Presence of guides and/or signs:** There are five itineraries in the reserve and they are all fairly short. To book guided visits contact the managing body. A form can be found at the site of Ragusa Province in the nature reserves link. Info: Tel 0932 675526

### Other information

**Nearest emergency medical service:**

Vittoria Hospital- via Giovanni XXIII - Tel. 0932 981111

**Tourist information:** Ragusa Tourist Board - via cap. Bocchieri, 33 97100 Ragusa Ibla - Tel. 0932 221511 - fax 0932 627464

[www.ragusaturismo.it](http://www.ragusaturismo.it)

[informazioni@ragusaturismo.it](mailto:informazioni@ragusaturismo.it)

## 56/Il Plemmirio (map on page 41)

**Name of reserve:** Plemmirio Marina Protected Area

**Managing body:**

Plemmirio Consortium - c/o Provincia Regionale di Siracusa

Via Necropoli del Fusco, 7 - 96100 - Siracusa

Tel. 0931 709734 - 0931 709733

[info@plemmirio.it](mailto:info@plemmirio.it)

[www.plemmirio.it](http://www.plemmirio.it)

**Total surface area:** 700 hectares **Zone A:** 140 hectares

**Year of institution:** 2005 **Province:** Siracusa **Commune:** Siracusa

**The reserve** The Maddalena peninsula is a very interesting area. It is entirely constituted by a calcareous "block" raised by tectonic movements of the earth's crust in which the sea is wedged below a sheer cliff. From Capo Castelluccio to Punta Tavernara, the seabed is low and uniform for several hundred meters, then it suddenly goes down to greater depths. From Punta Tavernara to Capo Murro di Porco, instead, immediately below the coast there are depths of over 30-40 metres. The peculiar characteristic of the area is the presence of a lot of submerged caves rich in corals, sponges, bryozoa, sea crickets, nudibranchs and a varied multitude of fish fauna, passing through or resident. In the surface bathymetry it is easy to come across the "bio-constructions" of the "vermetid platform", which is a kind of miniature coral reef indicating an excellent state of the waters. Diving into the waters of Capo Murro di Porco, it is not difficult to observe common big pelagic fish: tunas, amberjack and carangids, but also sea mammals like dolphins, whales and cachalots.

### A visit

**How to get there:** From Syracuse take state highway SS 115, then continue along the coastal road for Villa Bosco-Capo Murro di Porco as far as the lighthouse on the cape.

**Presence of guides and/or signs:** The managing body organises underwater and snorkelling guided visits. There are also programmes for children and above all for differently abled people. There are no fewer than 13 "recommended" dives. But in optimal meteorological and marine conditions it is particularly satisfying to sail round the cape in a kayak or boat to get a close view of the spectacular caves in the rock walls. On the peninsula, on land, a short path connects the Pellegrino bay to Punta Tavernara and the lighthouse, making it possible to visit the variegated coast in the reserve.

### Other information

**Nearest emergency medical service:** Ospedale Umberto I

via Testaferrata - 96100 Siracusa - Tel. 0931 68555

**Tourist information:** Syracuse Tourist Board

via San Sebastiano, 43 - Tel. 0931 481200 - Fax 0931 67803

[www.ap-siracusa.it](http://www.ap-siracusa.it)

▲ top  
**River Irmínio, sea lily.**

below ▼  
**Aleppo Pine;  
Plemmirio, Capo Cave.**



## 57/Cavagrande del Cassibile

### Name of reserve:

Cavagrande del Cassibile Special Nature Reserve

### Managing body:

Demesnal Forestry Board Siracusa - Siracusa Provincial Board

Via S. Giovanni alle Catacombe, 7 - Tel. 0931 468879/62373

### Body locally responsible:

Noto Forestry - Tel. 0931 571457

**Total surface area:** 1.059,62 hectares **Zone A:** 307,93 hectares

**Year of institution:** 1984 **Province:** Siracusa

**Communes:** Noto, Avola e Siracusa

**The reserve** It is a river environment of exceptional beauty. In the deep and long canyon hewn out by the waters of the river Cassibile oriental planes are confused with willows and white poplars. Here the water courses have dug out their beds in the calcareous rock forming gorges and cavities with wild beauty, and different populations found a refuge here. In addition to resident and migratory avifauna in the Canyon there are various terrestrial and river species: the river crab, the marsh turtle and the macrostigma trout, the latter only being present in some rivers in Sicily and Sardinia.

**Curiosity** Remains of a monastery can be made out along the left bank of the river above the pools. In an immense natural niche that opens up in the north wall, one is struck by the remains of a town hewn out in the rock, inhabited in the remotest times by the Siculi, and later by brigands, counterfeiters, tanners and shepherds. Opposite there is a much bigger rupestrian town, formed by fortified balconies dug out in the rock on superimposed levels and connected to one another by pits and stairways. In the final part of the canyon there is also a necropolis with over 2,000 cave-type graves which are not yet open to the public.

### A visit

**How to get there:** From Syracuse take state highway SS 115 in the direction of Noto and Avola. From Avola there are signs for Cavagrande. It is about 15 minutes to the car park, where the path starts that leads to the river Cassibile and its pools.

### Presence of guides and/or signs:

At the entrance to the reserve there is a sentry box at which the staff give information about a visit. In the summer it is best to go there in the early hours of the morning and leave in the afternoon, when the path is in the shade. It takes a little over half an hour to get down. The climb up is quite hard and takes at least an hour.

### Other information

**Nearest emergency medical service:** Ospedale G. Di Maria C/da Chiusa Di Carlo - 96012 Avola - Tel. 0931 582289

**Tourist information:** Avola Local Tourist Board via San Francesco d'Assisi 48 - Tel. 0931 834270

## 58/Vendicari

### Name of reserve:

Vendicari Fauna Oasis Special Nature Reserve

### Managing body:

Syracuse Demesnal Forestry Board - Ufficio Provinciale Azienda Tel 0931 468879/62373.

### Body locally responsible:

Noto Forestry Tel. 0931 571457

**Total surface area:** 1512,18 hectares **Zone A:** 521,25 hectares

**Year of institution:** 1984 **Province:** Siracusa **Commune:** Noto

**The reserve** Its particularity is given by the different biotypes making it up: from the pools that form the marshes to the rocky and sandy coast or the typical Mediterranean maquis. This habitat gives refreshment and nourishment to the most multiform avifauna of all Sicily. The complexity of the natural environments and the variation in seasons cause the species present in the reserve to change from month to month. December is the most interesting month, rich in coots, royal swans, wild geese, widgeons, teals, mallards, pintails, spoonbill ducks, widgeons, poehards, kingfishers and tufted ducks. In the summer period it is possible to see grey herons, little egrets, terns,

gulls, black-winged stilts, pink gulls and towards the end of the summer the spoonbill. At the beginning of autumn there come flamingos, whose number is gradually increasing. The black-winged stilt, the stone curlew, the Kentish plover, the pope and the turtle dove nest here. The mammals present are the hedgehog, the porcupine, the wild rabbit, the fox, the weasel, the vole; there are numerous chiropterans (no fewer than six different species). Among the reptiles you can see the snake, the coluber, the leopard rat snake and the marsh turtle. In the sandy zones the big cicada, the sand grasshopper and some coleopterans are reported.

### A visit

**How to get there:** To get to the reserve you go along the Catania-Syracuse road as far as the Cassibile exit. You continue for Avola, and when you reach the Noto turning you head for Pachino. After about 9 kilometres you find the signs announcing the Cala Mosche and Vendicari reserves.

### Presence of guides and/or signs:

From the main entrance to the reserve there is a nature path that takes you through the vegetation to the banks of the Roveto marsh. Some reed huts have been built along the banks for birdwatching. During guided visits, organised by the Fauna Body and LIPU, the vegetation species and birds met on the way are identified.

### Other information

**Nearest emergency medical service:** Trigona Hospital via dei Mille - 96017 Noto (SR) - Tel. 0931 890235

### Tourist information:

Noto Tourist Board - Piazza XVI Maggio, 12 - Tel. 0931 836744

## 59/Monello Cave

### Name of reserve:

Monello Cave Total Nature Reserve

### Managing body:

C.U.T.G.A.N.A.A.

### Body locally responsible:

Nature Reserve Centre - c.da Grotta Perciata strada Spinagallo, 79 - Siracusa - Tel/fax 0931 717813

**Total surface area:** 59 hectares **Zone A:** 59 metres

**Year of institution:** 1998 **Province:** Siracusa **Commune:** Siracusa

**The reserve** The cave is of major geological, speleological and biological importance.

It is in the eastern area of the Iblei mountains, in the district of the Perciata cave (in the local dialect the latter name means "punctured"). It has a general development of 540 metres and in it there is rich and important cavern fauna with some species characteristic of this type of environment. Inside it there is a series of chambers with spectacular concretion morphologies in various shapes.

On the surface and outside, the reserve area affords the type of natural environment typical of the "Quarries" in the Iblei.

**Curiosity** In 1948, Sebastiano Monello, the owner of the property, discovered the cave entirely by chance because of the collapse of the ground that obstructed the entrance pit.

### A visit

**How to get there:** Go along the motorway from Syracuse to Gela. Exit at Cassibile following the signs for Floridaia and then the ones for the Grotta Perciata area. From Syracuse you go 11 kilometres along the road for Canicattini Bagni as far as the turning on the left for Cassibile. After 300 metres, there is a road to the right leading to the Grotta Perciata area.

**Presence of guides and/or signs:** The managing body organises guided visits inside the cave. The visit involves medium difficulty, and takes about two hours.

### Other information

**Nearest emergency medical service:** Umberto I Hospital via Testaferata - 96100 Siracusa - Tel. 0931 68555

**Tourist information:** Syracuse Tourist Board - via S. Sebastiano, 43 96100 Siracusa - Tel. 0931 481200 - Fax 0931 67803

[www.apt-siracusa.it](http://www.apt-siracusa.it)

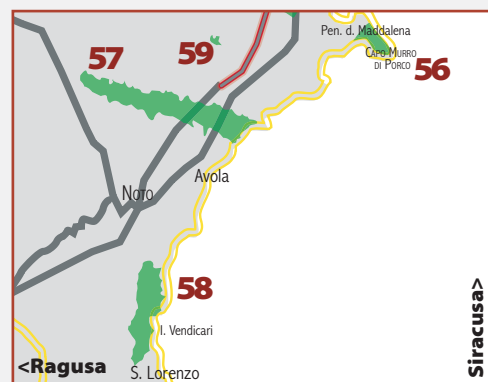


**Cavagrande del Cassibile.**



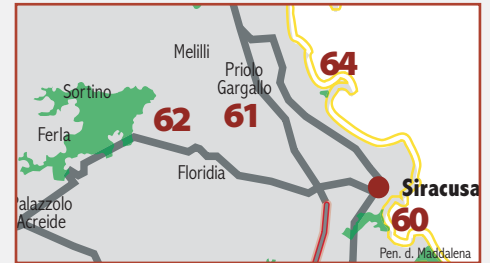
**Vendicari.**

**Monello Cave.**





From left. Pantalica.  
River Ciane.



## 60/River Ciane and Syracuse Salt pans

### Name of reserve:

River Ciane and Syracuse Salt pans Special Nature Reserve

### Managing body:

Syracuse Regional Province  
Provincial Parks and Reserves Office  
Via Necropoli del Fusco, 7 - 96100 Siracusa  
Tel. 0931 709111 - Fax 0931 709301

[www.provincia.siracusa.it](http://www.provincia.siracusa.it)

Total surface area: 316 hectares Year of institution: 1984

Province: Syracuse Commune: Syracuse

**The reserve** The river Ciane arises from the Pisima and Pisimotta springs, in a fairly flat area surrounded by calcareous hills just 20-30 metres high. Its waters are very limpid and fresh, which accounts for the name, deriving from "Cyanos", azure. The creation of the reserve ended residual activities of salt extraction in the Syracuse salt pans. This place is now an important halting point for migratory birds, and also a wintering and nesting place.

**Curiosity** The banks of the river Ciane are covered by thick papyrus vegetation that sometimes reaches a height of 4 metres. Botanists have long sought to solve the mystery of its origin, wondering whether it was a native species or was imported by the Arabs and then became wild, and how come it has disappeared from other neighbouring zones in the south of Italy. Although the Syracuse papyrus seems so similar to what grows spontaneously today in Africa (Angola and Zaire) more recent studies affirm it is a native species, characterized by peculiar floral organs such as to make it an endemic Sicilian species.

### A visit

**How to get there:** From Syracuse take state highway SS 115 for Ragusa, then the road for Canicattini Bagni and follow the signs for "Fonte Ciano" as far as the spring. To get to the landing stage from which boat excursions start, at km 1 on state highway SS 115 follow the signs. The entrance is immediately after the bridge over the river Ciane.

**Presence of guides and/or signs:** You can visit the course of the river on foot or in a canoe or kayak. Some private people run guided motorboat excursions starting at the river estuary and going about two-thirds of the way up the river.

### Other information

#### Nearest emergency medical service:

Ospedale Umberto I  
via Testaferrata - 96100 Siracusa - Tel. 0931 68555

**Tourist information:** Syracuse Tourist Board  
via S. Sebastiano 43 96100 Sr - Tel. 0931 481200

[www.apr-siracusa.it](http://www.apr-siracusa.it)

## 61/Palombara cave

### Name of reserve:

Palombara Cave Total Nature Reserve

### Managing body:

C.U.T.G.A.N.A.

### Body locally responsible:

Nature Reserve Centre  
p.zza F. Crescimanno, 1 - 96010 Melilli - Tel. 095 312104  
Total surface area: 11,25 hectares Zone A: interior of cave  
Year of institution: 1998 Province: Syracuse Commune: Melilli



**The reserve** The cave is in the karstic area of the Climiti Mountains, an area with various Iblei caves, some of them protected by nature reserves. The Palombara Cave is a fossilised karstic cavity and hence is no longer affected by circulation of water inside, but it has an articulated development and a multiform complex of cavity systems that still arouses a lot of geological interest among researchers, above all regarding its origin. Inside there is a lot of fauna of major scientific interest made up of troglophile species (i.e. ones which do not only live in caves), like the common toad and troglobia (which only live in caves), like the pseudo-scorpion *Roncus siculus*. Among the cave-dwelling animals there are various kinds of bats. In addition to being of geological and faunistic interest, Palombara has palaeontological and historical importance since various bone fossil remains have been recovered and since human presence is certain there since prehistory.

### A visit

**How to get there:** Take the SS 114 Catania-Syracuse state highway. Take the Florida exit and follow the Florida-Solarino signs. After the AGIP petrol station there are signs for the reserve.

**Presence of guides and/or signs:** The cave may be only visited for scientific purposes. However, the managing body organises guided visits which you can book by contacting the nature reserve centre at least a week beforehand.

The CUTGAN nature reserve centre is open 9 to 1 Monday to Friday.

### Other information

**Nearest emergency medical service:** Ospedale Muscatello  
c.da Granatello - 96011 Augusta (Syracuse) - Tel. 0931 983644

**Tourist information:** Town Hall Melilli - p.zza F. Crescimanno 1  
96010 Melilli - Tel. 0931 552111 - fax 0931 552160

## 62/Pantalica

### Name of reserve:

Pantalica, Anapo Valley and Cavagrande Stream Special Nature Reserve

### Managing body:

Demesnal Forestry Board Siracusa

### Body locally responsible:

Sortino Forestry - Tel. 0931 953994

Syracuse Provincial Board (UPA) - Tel. 0931 62373/468879

Total surface area: 3.712 hectares Zone A: 1.743 hectares

Year of institution: 1997 Province: Syracuse

Communes: Ferla, Cassaro, Buscemi e Palazzolo Acreide

**The reserve** Near the Pantalica archaeological area there is the reserve of the Anapo valley, which is one of the areas richest in history and landscape and natural values in eastern Sicily. Here there flow the rivers Anapo and Calcinara and the Cavagrande stream. The watercourses have hewn out the rock, creating an exceptionally splendid karstic gully. The clear waters of the rivers flow enwrapped in very varied and peculiar vegetation and form a series of small transparent lakes around which the oleander and the oriental plane find their ideal environment. The quality of the waters is such that a big number of fish and shellfish live there that were on the way to extinction. It is really thanks to the abundance of water and the multiform vegetation that a big number of animals find their habitat along the whole valley. There are a lot of species of birds making the reserve a true paradise for birdwatchers.

**Curiosity** There is an unbelievable number of graves hewn out in the steep calcareous walls that form the Pantalica necropolis. People probably used bronze or stone axes, considering that iron had not yet been discovered, and so who knows at the cost of what labours!

### A visit

**How to get there:** Take the SS 114 Catania-Syracuse state highway. Take the Solarino exit. After the village follow the signs for the reserve. On the right there is a little signposted road that leads to the Fusco entrance. You get to the second entrance to the reserve by heading for Ferla from Sortino. You find it at the bottom of the valley after the village, to the left of the road. If you come from the south you can take the Florida-Solarino road and head for Ferla.

**Presence of guides and/or signs:** There is only one itinerary and it follows the old railway line that goes all along the bottom of the valley. The distance from one entrance to the other is 13 kilometres. It is useful to have a torch to get through the dark tunnels of the old railway line. For organised parties on request the managing body provides nature guides.

### Other information

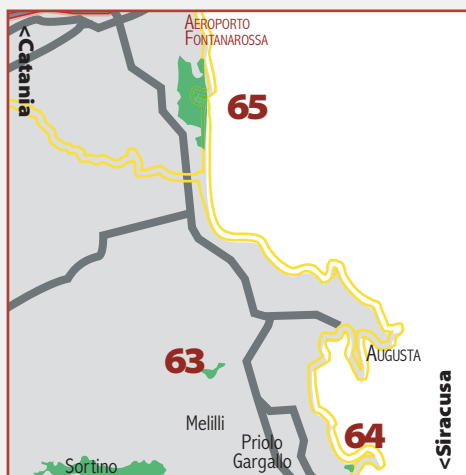
#### Nearest emergency medical service:

Asl 8 - via Nazionale - Tel. 0931 875633 - Palazzolo Acreide  
via Libertà - Tel. 0931 952663 - Sortino

**Tourist information:** Syracuse Tourist Board  
viale Mario Giordano - Tel. 0931 917433

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### Simeto Oasis, Saraceno bridge.



## 63/Villasmundo-S. Alfio Speleological Complex

### Name of reserve:

Total Nature Reserve

Villasmundo - Sant'Alfio Speleological Complex

**Managing body:** C.U.T.G.A.N.A

**Body locally responsible:**

Nature Reserve Centre

p.zza F. Crescimanno 1 - 96010 Melilli - Tel. 095 312104

**Total surface area:** 71,66 hectares **Year of institution:** 1998

**Province:** Syracuse **Commune:** Melilli



**The reserve** On the bank of the Cugno del Rio stream, the only one still active in the Iblei area, there are the entrances to two caves of exceptional importance: the Villasmundo Cave and the Alfio Cave. The former is about 2 kilometres long and inside it there is a very articulated system of burrows, chambers and tunnels created by the erosive effect of waters that flow free or under pressure. In this peculiar environment there are morphologically varied concretions like stalactites, stalagmites and flows with concretions of great geological value. The entrance to the Alfio Cave is a little downstream and goes into a much smaller underground system which has a total surface area of around 400 square metres. All the area outside the cave is characterized by thick Mediterranean maquis, rock walls and stone plateaus that represent the ideal habitat for the typical Sicilian fauna.

### A visit

**How to get there:** Take the SS 114 Catania-Syracuse state highway as far as the Sortino-Pantalica exit. Then head for Villasmundo along provincial highway as far as the bridge over the Belluzza stream.

### Presence of guides and/or signs:

The reserve is a total one, but the managing body organised guided visit. A visit requires good speleological experience and fitness. Visits must be booked by fax or email to the reserve offices.

### Other information

**Nearest emergency medical service:** via Libertà - Tel. 0931 952663 - Sortino

**Tourist information:** Melilli Town Hall - p.zza F. Crescimanno, 1 96010 Melilli - Tel. 0931 552111 - fax 0931 552160

## 64/Priolo Salt pans



### Name of reserve:

Priolo Salt pans Special Nature Reserve

**Managing body:** LIPU

**Body locally responsible:** Priolo Salt pans Special Nature Reserve

Via dei Castel Lentini, 113 - Priolo Gargallo - Tel. 0931 735026

[salinepriolo@virgilio.it](mailto:salinepriolo@virgilio.it)

**Total surface area:** 54,50 hectares **Year of institution:** 2000

**Province:** Syracuse **Commune:** Melilli

**The reserve** The Priolo Salt pans reserve is on the slopes of the imposing Monte Climiti in the big coastal area that goes from Priolo to Marina di Melilli. In the middle of the structures of the Priolo Gargallo chemical industries, the small but important marsh area of the Salt pans and the Magnisi Peninsula opposite have succeeded in surviving. This is a site of extraordinary archaeological value, since the remains of the city of Thapsos are present there.

In the area no fewer than 216 species of birds have been counted, amounting to about 40% of all those present today in Italy. Among these the species that are most interesting because they are not common are the greater tern, chosen as the logo of the reserve considering that in its autumn migration the biggest contingents in Italy are observed here, with 150-350 individuals; Leschenault's plover; the snipe; and the buff-breasted sandpiper.

**Curiosity** The purple gallinule is one of the most beautiful and showy species in Mediterranean marsh areas because of its blue plumage and coral red legs and beak. Having become extinct in Sicily in the 1950s, in the last few years it has been reintroduced thanks to LIPU and the INFS (National Wild Fauna Institute) in the river Ciane and in the Simeto oasis. The exceptional fact, which had never before occurred in an area external to that of repopulation, is that it has spontaneously nested in the Priolo Salt pans nature reserve and this arouses great hopes.

### A visit

**How to get there:** Take the SS 114 Catania-Syracuse state highway and then get on the secondary road following the "Thapsos" signs (opposite the main entrance to the ERG refinery). After the Enel power station, you find the reserve entrance.

**Presence of guides and/or signs:** The reserve is open to the public all year round. Guided visits for school and other parties must be booked by contacting the reserve offices. Nature paths are being prepared.

### Other information

**Nearest emergency medical service:** Moscatello Hospital c.da Granatello - 96011 Augusta (Syracuse) - Tel. 0931 983644

**Tourist information:** Melilli Town Hall - p.zza F. Crescimanno 1 96010 Melilli - Tel. 0931 552111

## 65/Simeto Oasis

### Name of reserve:

Simeto Oasis Special Nature Reserve

**Managing body:**

Catania Regional Province - Office for environmental Policies

Nature reserve management office - Via Nuovaluce, 67

95030 - Tremestieri Etneo - Tel. 095 4012485 - Fax 095 4012815

[riserve.naturali@provincia.ct.it](mailto:riserve.naturali@provincia.ct.it)

[www.provincia.ct.it/prmenu/ambiente/riservenaturali/homepage.htm](http://www.provincia.ct.it/prmenu/ambiente/riservenaturali/homepage.htm)

**Total surface area:** 1.859,16 hectares **Zone A:** 379,88 hectares

**Year of institution:** 1984 **Province:** Catania **Commune:** Catania

**The reserve** In the plain of Catania, dominated by Etna, there flows the biggest river in Sicily: the Simeto. In remote epochs, it was a tiny watercourse that flowed from the Nebrodi into the sea. The birth of the volcano modified the river bed and the river was forced to go round it at the base. Before the area was finally reclaimed for agricultural purposes, because of the winter rains it turned into a swamp, crossed by a maze of channels, basins and marshes, forming one of the biggest and most important damp areas in southern Italy.

The reserve today protects the terminal part of the river, its sometime mouth, the neighbouring sandy dunes of the Plaja beach and the immediate hinterland, the riparian vegetation and the Gornalunga, Gurnazza and Salatelle pools, and the remains of the ancient marshy area.

**Curiosity** At the mouth, on the foreshore, above all after strong heavy seas from the south, it is not difficult to come across amber, a fossil resin, already known in prehistoric epochs. Many believed it was exclusive to this area and so it was called simetite.

### A visit

**How to get there:** Take the SS 114 Catania-Syracuse state highway as far as the Primosole bridge. Turn towards the sea and you come to the reserve car park.

**Presence of guides and/or signs:** There is a signposted path running along the left bank of the Simeto as far as the estuary. The managing body organises guided visits.

### Other information

**Nearest emergency medical service:**

Ospedale "V. Emanuele II" via Plebiscito 6280 - Catania - Tel. 095 7431111

**Tourist information:** Catania Tourist Board - via Cimarosa, 10 - Tel. 095 7306211

[www.apr.catania.it](http://www.apr.catania.it)



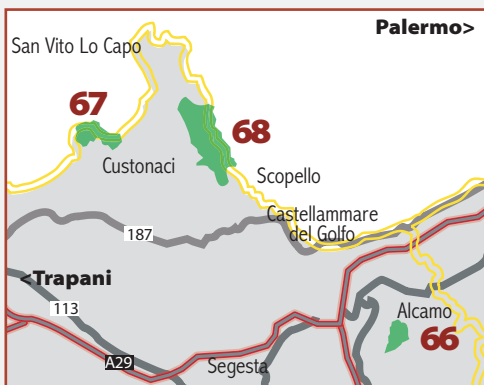
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Zingaro, one of coves.

below ▼

Monte Cofano.

Alcamo Wood, Castello Ventimiglia Castle on Monte Bonifato.



## 66/Alcamo Wood

**Name of reserve:**

Alcamo Wood Special Nature Reserve

**Managing body:**

Trapani Regional Province - Territory and Environment Office

p.zza Vittorio Veneto 2 - 91100 Trapani - Tel. 0923 806111

**Total surface area:** 199 hectares **Zone A:** 120 hectares

**Year of institution:** 1984 **Province:** Trapani **Commune:** Alcamo

**The reserve** The calcareous Monte Bonifato (825 metres above sea level) looms over the town of Alcamo. In remote epochs it was entirely covered by a dense wood of broadleaved trees but now there are just a few stretches left due to various human activities and fires in the past few centuries. The present-day wood is due to reforestation and is constituted by Aleppo pine, cypresses and domestic pine. On the northwest slope conifers are mixed with holly oak and spontaneous downy oak, relicts of the old broadleaved wood. There is important avifauna that nests on the summit of the mountain, above all various species of birds of prey. The site is rich in water sources. Today the former Funtanazza hotel houses CELT, the Centre for Environmental Education of Trapani Province created together with LIPU.

**A visit**

**How to get there:** You take the A29 Palermo-Mazara del Vallo motorway and leave it at the Alcamo junction, following the signs for the town. After it follow the signs and the road that winds up Monte Bonifato.

**Presence of guides and/or signs:** There are two itineraries to visit the reserve: the track called "East Panoramic", and the "Archaeological path". The two form a ring and come together at the departure point.

**Other information**

**Nearest emergency medical service:** San Vito e S. Spirito Hospital via Crispi, 116 - 91016 Alcamo (Trapani province) - Tel. 0924 599111

**Tourist information:** Touristic Office - Alcamo Town Hall via G. Martina, 25 - 91016 Alcamo - Tel. 0924 22301

## 67/Monte Cofano

**Name of reserve:**

Monte Cofano Special Nature Reserve

**Managing body:**

Demersal Forestry Board - Trapani Provinciale Board

Via Virgilio, 121 - 91100 Trapani - Tel. 0923 807111

**Total surface area:** 537,5 hectares **Zone A:** 352,5 hectares

**Year of institution:** 1997 **Province:** Trapani **Commune:** Custonaci

**The reserve** Monte Cofano is a slender and solitary mountain rising over the sea and reaching a height of 650 metres. The reserve is one of the biotopes of greatest natural-environmental interest in Western Sicily, formed by karstic carbonate rocks with the presence of dolomite limestones, in which the waters have hewn out various cavities like the Gorge Abyss, the Purgatory Abyss and the Monte Cofano cave Chest. The former is in the fascinating Cipollazzo Gorge and it is the pothole that receives the flood rainwater collected in the gorge. Its wells reach a depth of 120 metres. The second one is a karst system whose wells are vertical and reach a depth of 200 metres. The third one is 140 metres deep and has complex morphology. There are no fewer than 19 endemic plant species. Of particular interest is the presence of birds of prey like the red kite, Bonelli's eagle and the griffon vulture.

**Curiosity** The Mangiapane or Scurati Cave is highly fascinating since inside it there is a small, old rural agglomeration, made up of one-floor houses set against the inside walls of the cave, which is crossed by a pebbled road. Also of major interest are the incisions on the walls of the cave, which can be dated to the Upper Palaeolithic. In some periods of the year it is possible to savour Sicilian daily rural life in the early years of the 20th century through an initiative called Living Museum of Trades that is inside the cave and brings the village back to life as it once was (info Living Museum: Tel. 0923 971029).

**A visit**

**How to get there:** You take the A29 Palermo-Mazara del Vallo motorway and leave it at the Castellammare del Golfo junction. You continue on state highway SS 187 towards Trapani as far as the turning for Custonaci. To get to the Cofano Gulf go past Purgatorio in the direction of San Vito Lo Capo continuing towards the Castelluzzo area, where you pick up the coastal road that goes as far as the fishermen's village and the tower.

**Presence of guides and/or signs:** No itinerary has yet been signposted that makes it easy to visit the reserve. However, from the various access points you can easily follow the tracks left by cattle that grazed in the area.

**Other information**

**Nearest emergency medical service:**

via Foscolo 1 - Custonaci - Tel. 0923 971355

**Tourist information:**

Trapani Tourist Board - 91100 Trapani - Tel. 0923 545511

[www.apr.trapani.it](http://www.apr.trapani.it)

## 68/Lo Zingaro

**Name of reserve:** Zingaro Special Nature Reserve

**Managing body:**

Demersal Forestry Board - Trapani Provincial Board

Via Virgilio 121 - 91100 Trapani - Tel. 0923 807111

**Body locally responsible:** Reserve management

Via Segesta 197 - 91014 Castellammare del Golfo

Tel. 0924 35108 - Fax 0924 35752 - n. verde 800 116 616

[www.riservazingaro.it](http://www.riservazingaro.it)

[info@riservazingaro.it](mailto:info@riservazingaro.it)

**Total surface area:** 1.600 hectares, all in Zone A

**Year of institution:** 1981 **Province:** Trapani

**Communes:** San Vito lo Capo and Castellammare del Golfo

**The reserve** This was the first nature reserve created in Sicily and is certainly one of the best Sicilian reserves not only in terms of natural environment but also organisation, type of management and services offered. The landscape, made up of coastal and mountain environments, shows rugged and wild beauty. From the crystalline sea there rise the calcareous Monte Speziale (913 metres above sea level) and Pizzo Passo del Lupo, interrupted by cliffs and sheer drops with caves of major archaeological interest: the Uzzo and Sughero caves. The little bays and beaches have nonpareil beauty (only reachable on foot). They are set amid rocks dotted with dwarf palms and euphorbias.

**A visit**

**How to get there:** There are two entrances, one from Scopello and one from San Vito lo Capo. You take the A29 Palermo-Mazara del Vallo motorway and leave it at the Castellammare del Golfo junction. You continue on state highway SS 187 towards Trapani and take the road on the right for Scopello, following the signs. After the tuna station you get to the reserve car park.

You get to the San Vito lo Capo entrance by going along state highway SS 187 for San Vito. After the village you find the signs for the reserve.

**Presence of guides and/or signs:** All over the reserve there are old paths that nowadays, thanks to the work done by the managing body, make it possible to enjoy all the reserve. There are two main itineraries: a short coastal one and a long mountain one, both amply signposted. There are big car parks at both entrances. At the entrance you pay 3 euros for admission. Visitors receive a map with all paths marked on it. In summer it is very hot and you must have a good water supply with you.

**Other information**

**Nearest emergency medical service:**

Scopello (summer) Tel. 0924 541145

San Vito lo Capo - via Mulino - Tel. 0923 972091

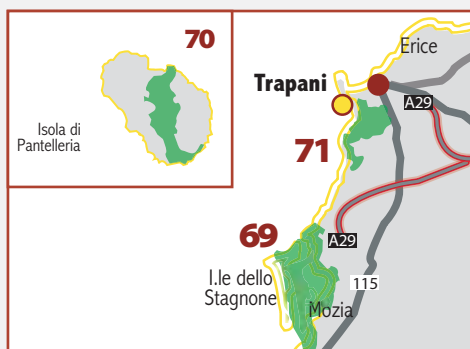
**Tourist information:** Tourist Board

p.tta Saturno - 91100 Trapani - Tel. 0923 545511

[www.apr.trapani.it](http://www.apr.trapani.it)

right ►

From left. Stagnone Island, Mozia, mosaics. Salt pans of Trapani.



## 69/Stagnone Islands

### Name of reserve:

Marsala Stagnone Islands Special Nature Reserve

**Managing body:** Trapani Regional Province - Environment Office

p.zza Vittorio Veneto - 91100 Trapani - Tel. 0923 806111/806212

[www.provincia.trapani.it](http://www.provincia.trapani.it)

### Body locally responsible:

Whitaker Foundation Visitors Centre: Tel. 0923 712598

<http://web.tiscali.it/fondazionewhitaker>

**Total surface area:** 2012,15 hectares **Zone A:** 632,65 hectares

**Year of institution:** 1984 **Province:** Trapani **Commune:** Marsala

**The reserve** In a not very deep lagoon north of Marsala there is the Stagnone archipelago, formed by the Grande or Lunga Island, San Pantaleo or Motya, Santa Maria and Piccola Schola. This extreme piece of western Sicily is one of the most fascinating places on the Sicilian coasts for all its landscape, natural and historical-archaeological components. The shallow waters of the lagoon are almost entirely covered by Posidonia that still conceals Phoenician and Roman finds. Of exceptional archaeological interest are the remains of the Phoenician city of Motyia, recovered on the island of San Pantaleo.

**Curiosity** Motya was founded by the Phoenicians in the 8th century BC. The fortifications and the submerged road that connected it with the terra firma date from the 6th century BC. The town was destroyed and ransacked by the Syracusans in 397 BC. The population took refuge at the nearby Capo Libeio, founding what is now Marsala. Of particular interest is the Tophet, a cemetery and place of sacrifices, where the remains of hundreds of children killed and preserved in vases have been recovered. Very probably the children were immolated in honour of the goddess Tanit and of the god Baal Hammon.

### A visit

**How to get there:** Take the A28 Palermo-Trapani motorway, continue for Marsala-Birgi, then follow the signs for Motya and the reserve.

**Presence of guides and/or signs:** The island of Motya is connected to the terra firma by motorboats running continuously (not free). When the tide is low the water is just 50 cm deep and so you could walk out there. For the "boldest" people the best way to visit the whole lagoon would be using a kayak. You land at the jetty and pay the admission charge (3 euros), which also covers the museum.

The paths on the island and its classical itinerary are signposted.

There are guided visits to the Ettore Inversa saltpan.

You can rent canoes at Club Mozia Time, near the landing stage (Tel 0923 996720/745755).

### Other information

**Nearest emergency medical service:** Ospedale S. Biagio

p.zza S. Francesco, 1 - 91025 Marsala - Tel. 0923 782111

**Tourist information:** Marsala Tourist Board

via XI Maggio, 100 Tel. 0923 714097

## 70/Island of Pantelleria

**Name of reserve:** Island of Pantelleria Special Nature Reserve

**Managing body:** Demesnal Forestry Board - Trapani Provincial Board

Via Virgilio, 121 - 91100 Trapani - Tel. 0923 807111

**Total surface area:** 2.626 hectares **Zone A:** 2.145 hectares

**Year of institution:** 1998 **Province:** Trapani **Commune:** Pantelleria



**The reserve** Pantelleria is in the Channel of Sicily 70 kilometres from Tunisia and 120 kilometres from the Sicilian coast. The area in which the island rose was a place of very intense volcanic activity, which gave rise to a complex submarine mountainous chain from which today's peaks emerged. The oldest part is the one where there rose the volcano of the Great Mountain which reaches a considerable height, 836 metres. Instead, on the southeast slopes of the island the big crater of Monte Gibele developed (700 metres above sea level) and various "Cuddie", which are the result of volcanic activity of an explosive type. The Arabs gave it the appropriate name "Benth el-Rhia", island of the wind. Indeed the winds blow all the time for much of the year.

On the island there are also phenomena of secondary volcanism with thermal springs, fumaroles and warm waters whose liveliest expression is the Lake of Venus, a lake endowed with a hydrothermal spring whose mud is used for therapeutic purposes.

Of particular interest are the construction and forms of the island residences, directly deriving from Arab ones, with "dammuso" roofs (from the Latin "domus"), with gaps to allow the circulation of air. The wind that blows on the island has forced the local populations to take various measures to cultivate fertile grounds. Vines are planted in small trenches, olive trees are pruned so that they almost crawl on the ground, and citrus fruit plants have to be protected by high circular walls made of lava stone.

**Curiosity** The Lake of Venus is the only natural lake on the island and is an oval depression set in the surrounding mountains, which are of rare and unique beauty. Here legend has it that Venus, the goddess of beauty, looked at herself in the mirror before her amorous meetings with Bacchus, who resided on the island because of the intoxicating wine produced there (today too).

### A visit

**How to get there:** All year round there are daily ferries to the island from Trapani harbour. In summer there are also hydrofoils and a fast ferry from Mazara del Vallo. You can also fly there from Palermo and Trapani and in summer from Milan too.

**Presence of guides and/or signs:** There are no fewer than 11 itineraries linking the numerous paths signposted by the Forestry. They all make it possible to visit the places of greatest natural and historic interest.

### Other information

**Nearest emergency medical service:** Ospedale Civile p.zza V. Almanza - Pantelleria - Tel. 0923 911844

### Tourist information:

Pantelleria Local Tourist Board - p.zza Cavour, 1 - Tel. 0923 911838

[www.pantelleria.it/proloco](http://www.pantelleria.it/proloco)  
prolo-co@pantelleria.it

## 71/Trapani and Paceco Salt pans

**Name of reserve:** Trapani and Paceco Salt pans Special Nature Reserve

**Managing body:** WWF Sicily

### Body locally responsible:

Trapani and Paceco Salt pans Special Nature Reserve - WWF Italia

Via Garibaldi, 138 - 91027 Paceco (TP) - Tel. 0923 867700

**Surface area:** 911 hectares **Zone A:** 698 hectares

**Year of institution:** 1995 **Province:** Trapani

**Communes:** Trapani and Paceco

**The reserve** South of Trapani on the coastal road, there extend big expanses of low water created by man in shallow parts of the sea, the salt pans, of remarkable ornithological importance (176 species of birds have been counted). The salt pans are constituted by three levels of big tubs into which seawater is channelled to evaporate, depositing sodium chloride on the bottom. The landscape is absolutely peculiar since the natural area blends with human works, and the reflections of the water tie up with the old windmills. On the sea there rises the archipelago of the Aegadean Islands, making the panorama even more charming.

### A visit

**How to get there:** You take the A29 Palermo-Mazara del Vallo motorway and turn off for Trapani. In Trapani follow the signs for "Porto" and get on provincial highway 21 in the direction of Marsala as far as the Maria Stella mill; the reserve entrance is signposted.

**Presence of guides and/or signs:** The managing body organises guided visits in the reserve along a signposted itinerary making it possible to observe the saltpan ecosystem and sight the bird species present at different times of year. To book guided visits contact the reserve offices.

The visitor centre is at the Maria Stella mill.

The salt museum is in the south-eastern part of the reserve at the Nubia Tower. It exhibits the old tools used for producing salt.

### Other information

**Nearest emergency medical service:** Ospedale San Antonio Abate via Cosenza - Erice (Trapani province) - Tel. 0923 809111

**Tourist information:** Trapani Tourist Board

p.zza Saturno - - Tel. 0923 545511



## 72/Estuary of the river Belice

### Name of reserve:

River Belice Estuary and Dunes Special Nature Reserve

### Managing body:

Trapani Regional Province - Environment Office

p.zza Vittorio Veneto - 91100 Trapani - Tel. 0923 806111/806212

Total surface area: 241 hectares Zone A: 129 hectares

Year of institution: 1984 Province: Trapani Commune: Castelvetrano

**The reserve** The reserve protects a coastal strip of about 5 kilometres which is to be considered the most African of Sicilian beaches. Indeed it is constituted by a beach with fine sand that extends from Marinella di Selinunte to Porto Palo, interrupted by the mouth of the river Belice. The estuary is a very good ornithological observation point because of the presence of a lot of resident and migratory avifauna. The beach is constituted by low sandy dunes, with a landscape continually modified by waves and the action of strong winds that move the sand creating accumulations in which some specialized plants succeed in taking root and "stopping" the sandy dune. These plants are typical of sub-tropical climates; indeed, they withstand extreme aridity, continual insolation and very high temperatures. The ecosystem is extremely fragile and in addition to different kinds of birds also has interesting dune fauna.

At the mouth of the river and along its course there is typical riparian and marsh vegetation made up of reeds, rushes and buntings.

### A visit

**How to get there:** You take the A29 Palermo-Mazara del Vallo motorway as far as the Castelvetrano junction. Then take state highway SS 115 for Marinella di Selinunte, where you will find signs.

**Presence of guides and/or signs:** There are two main signposted accesses: one which you get to from the pine wood, while the other one is at the railway box.

You can get to both from the seaside village of Marinella di Selinunte.

### Other information

**Nearest emergency medical service:** Vittorio Emanuele II Hospital via Marinella - 91022 Castelvetrano - Tel. 0924 930111

### Tourist information:

Tourist Board - via Garibaldi - 91022 Castelvetrano - Tel. 0924 904932

## 73/Santa Ninfa Cave

### Name of reserve:

Santa Ninfa Total Nature Reserve

**Managing body:** Legambiente

**Body locally responsible:** Santa Ninfa Cave Nature Reserve Via S. Anna 101 - 91029 Santa Ninfa - Tel. 0924 62376 - Fax 0924 62360

[riservasantaninfa@katamail.com](mailto:riservasantaninfa@katamail.com)

[www.parks.it/riserva.grotta.santa.ninfa](http://www.parks.it/riserva.grotta.santa.ninfa)



Total surface area: 140 hectares Year of institution: 1995

Province: Trapani Communes: Santa Ninfa and Gibellina

**The reserve** The total reserve area comprises the hypogean environments of the Santa Ninfa Cave, which extends horizontally for about 1.5 kilometres in the subsoil and is a unique place of major geological, speleological and hydro-geological interest. The fact is that the cave is still active and through it there flow the waters of the Biviere stream. In its waters there form isolites or "cave pearls" of peculiar beauty and rarity. The valley of the stream corresponds to the supply basin of the cave. All the reserve area is rich in nature aspects linked to karst phenomena. The whole plateau is characterized by the presence of chalky rocks in which rainwater, infiltrating the ground, has created underground cavities and modelled the surface rocks, creating particular morphologies. In addition to the Santa Ninfa cave, over 40 other caves have been found, 22 of which have been explored and studied through speleological campaigns. Also, in the reserve a necropolis of protohistoric origin has been found, and the remains testify to the presence of the mysterious ancient population of the Elymians.

**Curiosity** It was rather an unknown population that settled in the north-western part of Sicily. Probably they came from Asia Minor, perhaps driven away from Troy led by the prince Elymo; they fled the Greek and founded Segesta, Erice and Entella. Always at war with the Greeks, in the end they were defeated and decimated by the profound Hellenisation of the island.

### A visit

**How to get there:** You take the A29 Palermo-Mazara del Vallo motorway as far as the Salemi junction. Then take state highway SS 188 for Santa Ninfa. In the village you find the signs for the visitors centre and the reserve.

**Presence of guides and/or signs:** You can book guided visits by contacting the reserve offices.

### Other information

**Nearest emergency medical service:**

p.zza Fleming, 1 - Santa Ninfa - Tel. 0924 61538

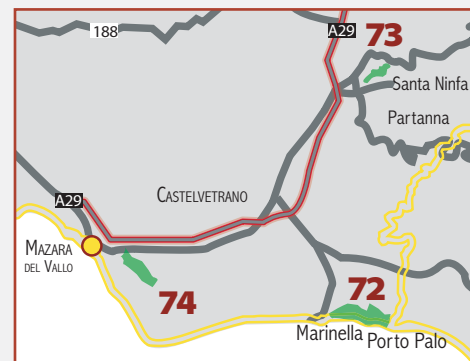
### Tourist information:

Trapani Tourist Board - p.zzetta Saturno - Tel. 0923 545511

[www.apr.trapani.it](http://www.apr.trapani.it)

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**Estuary of the river Belice.**



## 74/Lake Preola and Gorgi Tondi

### Name of reserve:

Lake Preola and Gorgi Tondi Total Nature Reserve

**Managing body:** WWF Sicilia

**Body locally responsible:** Lake Preola and Gorgi Tondi

Total Nature Reserve - Via F. Maccagnone, 2/a

91026 Mazara del Vallo - Tel. 0923 934055

[preola@tiscalinet.it](mailto:preola@tiscalinet.it)

[www.riservewwfsicilia.it](http://www.riservewwfsicilia.it)

Total surface area: 335 hectares Zone A: 107 hectares

Year of institution: 1998 Province: Trapani Commune: Mazara del Vallo



**The reserve** The reserve is made up of humid areas, namely Lake Preola, which is the biggest and is elongated, and the three small round lakes called Gorgo Alto, Gorgo Medio and Gorgo Basso. The pools originated from some depressions that afterwards filled with water. The managing body is exploring the feasibility of some hypotheses of actions aiming to restore the hydro-geological balance of the basin, which has been put at risk by major agricultural activity. If the winter rains have been plentiful, up to the middle of June Lake Preola is full of freshwater mixed with brackish water. The riparian vegetation is made up of dense lines of marsh reed, domestic straw and reed-mace that create a natural habitat for migratory species before they move on to Africa.

### A visit

**How to get there:** You take the A29 Palermo-Mazara del Vallo motorway as far as the Campobello di Mazara junction. Then take state highway SS 115 towards Trapani. Immediately after the motorway viaduct, on the left, you take the Gilletto-San Nicola provincial road as far as the junction with the Gorgi Tondi provincial road that goes through the reserve. On the left you see the sign for the reserve entrance.

**Presence of guides and/or signs:** The main path for a visit starts immediately after the reserve entrance, where there begins the earthwork of the provincial road that goes among the pools of karstic origin (Gorgo Alto and Gorgo Medio on the left, Gorgo Basso on the right). The best period for visiting the reserve is from October to May, when the lake is full of water and has rich avifauna.

### Other information

**Nearest emergency medical service:** Ospedale Civico A. Ajello via Salemi - Mazara del Vallo - Tel. 0923 901111

**Tourist information:** Mazara del Vallo Tourist Board

piazza S. Veneranda, 2 - Tel. 0923 941727



## 75/Aegadean Island

**Name of reserve:** Aegadean Island Marine Protected Area

**Managing body:** Marine Protected Area - Palazzo Florio

Via Florio, 1 - 91023 Favignana (TP) - Tel. 0923 922585

[www.ampegadi.it](http://www.ampegadi.it)

[ampegadi@virgilio.it](mailto:ampegadi@virgilio.it)

**Total surface area:** 53.992hectares **Year of institution:** 1991

**Province:** Trapani **Commune:** Favignana

**The reserve** The Aegadean archipelago is made up of three islands, Favignana, Levanzo and Marettimo, with very beautiful landscapes and archaeological riches. The Egadi (from "aegates", land of goats) were inhabited in prehistoric times, as we know from the graffiti found in 1949 in the Genovese Cave on the island of Levanzo, datable to about 12,000 BC (Neolithic period). They were sung of by Homer, who in the *Odyssey* describes the island of Favignana with extreme clarity. Subsequently they became of strategic importance both in the Hellenic period and in the Roman-Punic epoch. At Calarossa, on the island of Favignana, the Carthaginian fleet suffered its biggest defeat.

The sea is clear and rich in important fish fauna thanks to a position that dominates the western part of the Channel of Sicily. Of vital importance for the islands has been and is tuna fishing, done with the traditional technique of the "mattanza." On the right of the Favignana landing stage you can see the big buildings of the old tuna station and the "camperia" (the store where the nets were placed), reminding us of the prosperity and the entrepreneurial spirit of the Florio family, who owned the tuna station. Recently a project for recovery of the industrial complex was approved. It will be restored and turned into a cultural centre and museum of the sea, and it will also contain craftsmen's shops, a sailing school and other things. On the other side of the harbour there is the pretty profile of the villa where the Florios and their guests sojourned during the "mattanza".

The three islands are morphologically different:

Favignana has a ridge formed by the Monte Santa Caterina and to the sides it is fairly flat, characterized by Mediterranean maquis; because of the colour and the transparency of the sea that surrounds it, Favignana has often been compared to the most exotic tropical islands and in effect it is true: when you arrive on top of the high rock wall that surrounds Cala Rossa, in particular, the sea really has that unmistakable turquoise shade that one immediately associates with the south seas. Besides, the sea is the main attraction of the island: for those who simply want to swim as for those people who love diving in. From Punta Ferro to Punta Sottile, from Cala Rotonda to Punta Lunga, from Punta Fanfalo to Cala Azzurra and the Burrone beach, there really are so many places.

At Cala Rossa, besides having a magnificent swim you can see the evident traces of what was once one of the main economic activities of this island, the extraction of tufa, used for building houses all over the Aegadean archipelago. Generations of workers hewed out the rock creating quarries that today have the mysterious and fantastic look of abandoned places. Exploration of the caves, among holes, little caves and burrows, satisfies the most adventurous spirits: of particular interest are the underground ones in the nearby Cavallo area.

Levanzo is entirely rocky and has no water sources. It measures just six square kilometres and there is only one village, looking out on Cala Dogana, with a few white houses and polychrome boats of fishermen. A holiday there is all rest, and is spent in swims and walks along the

paths traced out by the Forestry amid bushes of myrtle, thyme, rosemary and euphorbia. The most charming destinations are the little bays, including Cala Tramontana, Cala Minnola and Cala Fredda.

Marettimo rises with spectacular dolomite limestones reaching the height of 786 metres (Pizzo Falcone). It is the most distant from Sicily, but also the greenest and most solitary. There is only one village huddling near the landing stage, with a few hundred inhabitants and no roads. Marettimo has almost entirely preserved its wild look, with plants that are also rare and often unique. On the island indeed there are what botanists call "plant relicts", plants that are so rare that they appear like the only ones that have survived the passing of the centuries (among them are senecio and scabious). To get to know the island you sail round the coast or go along the paths wedged in among the rocks, on foot or on a mule's back. The destinations of the land excursions are the ruins of the fortress on Punta Troia, the Punta Libeccio lighthouse, the Monte Falcone, all places from which enchanting panoramas can be admired. By sea, instead, you can go to tiny stony beaches and cavities along the shores, among which there is Bombarda, which takes its name from the incessant roar provoked by the waves.

An interesting initiative, on all three islands in the archipelago is fishing tourism, that is say an opportunity to go out to sea with experienced Egadi fishermen to participate in their fishing and to get to know with them the remotest and most hidden spots on the islands.

**Curiosity** In late spring tunas approach the western coast of Sicily, where they find the ideal conditions for reproducing. And this is the moment when the boats go out to sea to position the nets forming a long corridor made up of "chambers" into which the tuna is channelled going through them in a forced direction. From chamber to chamber the Rais will give the order to open and close the various doors causing the shoal to approach more and more the fatal Chamber of Death, a net with a much denser mesh and often also closed at the bottom.

There is a man, always positioned on a boat, who with a fishing-line in his hand "feels" from the number of quivers how many tunas have entered and communicates it to the Rais. When the number of entangled tunas is judged enough, the Rais orders the start of the "mattanza", the killing of the fish that, exhausted by the search for a way out and wounded by the inevitable clashes with their "companions", are hooked up and hoisted on board.

The complicated ritual for tuna fishing follows rules, times and formalities rigorously also established by the Rais, the head of the tuna station and once the head of the village. It has ancient origins and it even seems that it was practised by the Phoenicians, but it is only with the Arabs that we find the native nucleus of this "rite" that today is still at the base of the fishing. And it is a real rite, animated by propitiatory songs and propitiatory ones (scialome), which ends with a bloody struggle.

The term "mattanza" derives from the Spanish "matar", to kill, which in turn derives from the Latin "mactare", to glorify, to immolate.

### A visit

**How to get there:** The islands are easy to reach from the parts of Trapani and Marsala by ferries or hydrofoils.

**Presence of guides and/or signs:** On the three islands there are paths signposted by Forestry Board but Managing Body it is advisable to make your tours with people from the place.

### Other information

**Nearest emergency medical service:**

Favignana - via delle Fosse - Tel. 0923 921283;

Levanzo - Tel. 0923 924092; Marettimo - Tel. 0923 923117

**Tourist information:** Favignana Local Tourist Board

piazza Madrice, 8 - Tel. 0923 921647

[www.egadiweb.it](http://www.egadiweb.it)



**From left. Favignana, the "mattanza". Levanzo and Favignana.**



**From left. Marettimo, Punta Troia. Favignana, Cala Rossa.**



Isola di Marettimo



Isola di Levanzo



Isola di Favignana



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I S O L E

E G A D I

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