

Erice

Not far from Trapani, on the top of a lonely mountain, 751 mt high, it stands, grave and lonesome, protected by nature, a small and precious jewel of our province.

For centuries, the beauty of the views, the stillness of the place, and the mist that often makes it safe from prying eyes, has made Erice the preferred place for the studies of the scholars and for the prayers of the monks. Made of narrow and winding little streets, typically medieval arches, richly decorated courtyards and small shops, up to now it preserves the ancient fascination unchanging.

It has the shape of a perfect equilateral triangle, crowned on two vertexes by the Castle of Venus, in the north-east, and by the Mother Church, in the south-west. In the middle, the Church of San Domenico (the Church of Saint Dominic) is today the seat of the prestigious International Centre of Scientific Culture "Ettore Maiorana", lynch-pin of an intense activity of scientific research directed by professor Antonino Zichichi, who founded it in 1963.

The town is also famous for the peculiar local pastry, the nuns has



been devoting themselves to since the most ancient times.

If you are in the neighbourhood, do not miss the feast dedicated to Maria Santissima di Custonaci (Most Holy Mary of Custonaci), protector of the town. In all Erice marshes celebrations begin during the week that precedes the last August Wednesday to then culminate in the procession winding along the streets of the town. On Good Friday it occurs the Procession of Misteri: under favour of the suggestive medieval surroundings, the statuary groups pass by through the town, representing the most important stages of the Passion of Christ.

We can get to Erice by cableway

Useful Information and Numbers

CAP 91016

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Comune 0923 554000 / 502600 / 558595

www.comune.ericetp.it

Carabinieri 112 / 0923 869212

Corpo Forestale 0923 869161

Emergenza Incendi 1515

Ufficio Turistico - Via Pepoli, 11 - 0923 869025 - 0923.869388 - 0923.869544

Funivia (Monte) 0923 869720 (**Valle**) 0923 569306

www.funiviaerice.it

Centro di Cultura Scientifica "E. Maiorana"

0923 869133 www.ccsem.infn.it

Museo - Biblioteca 0923 869172

Galleria Civica d'Arte Contemporanea "La Salerniana" 0923 869224 - www.lasalerniana.it

Museo Agroforestale 0923 869532

What to see

The Church of the Annunciation is near the Trapani Gate. It was built by Frederick of Aragon in the 14th century with a defensive purpose as you can see from its massive look and the decorative battlements. From the three-storied quadrangular bell tower, with single lancet windows on the first floor and double lancet windows in the others, you could control the gulf below.

The outside was modified many times and just two doors are still in the original style. The wonderful rose window is now hidden partially by a Gothic porch added one century later. The neo-Gothic interior with a nave and two side aisles is characterised by pillars supported by cross vaults. In the side aisles there are many chapels built in different periods.

Municipal Museum "Antonio Cordici" - Located in the interior of the Town Hall in Umberto I square, the Museum keeps archaeological finds, statues and paintings. The Antonello Gagini's sculptural group of the Annuncia-



tion (1525) and a small marble head of Venus Ericina deserve particular attention.

The street in front of the museum, Via Cordici, reaches San Domenico square which is bounded by the homonymous street and beautiful buildings.

Venus Castle - In the southeasterly area of a Mount Erice with a beautiful view over the sea and the plain below there is the castle of Venus whose actual look dates back to the Norman period. However its history started a lot of time before when Aeneas built in this place a temple for his mother Venus. Since then the cult of Venus Ericina spread throughout the Mediterranean.

During the Norman period on the ruins of the temple with its same stones was built a fortress surrounded with imposing walls and protected by the Balio Towers connected to the castle by a drawbridge. The drain on the main gate enriched by the coat of arms of Charles V of Spain and by a wonderful double lancet window confirms its defensive character.

Balio Garden - The Balio Garden surround the Venus Castle and the Balio towers built in the Norman period to defend the castle. The name of the towers and the garden comes from the Norman governor's name, the so-called the "bajuolo", who lived there. The outlook both towards Mount Cofano and

towards Trapani and the Egadi's islands is wonderful.

Elymian-Punic Walls - The imposing Ely-



mian walls (8th – 6th century BC) followed the northeast side of town, the only one exposed to possible attacks. Afterwards some smaller blocks were added to the oldest big blocks of the lower part of the wall to raise the wall. There were sighting towers, a very narrow communication trench with steep staircases and small openings for the passage of people and perhaps supplies.

The only part of the walls in a good state is the one along Via dell'Addolorata from Carmine Gate to the Sword Gate.

The Church of St. Orsola - Built in 1413, the Church of St. Orsola still keeps in the main nave the original structure with ribbed cross vaults. The Mysteries, sculptural groups of the 18th century, are carried on shoulder during the Good Friday procession.

You can use the cableway to go to Erice from Trapani.

For further information: www.funiviaerice.it

Events

Mysteries Procession

On Good Friday in Erice takes place the procession of the Mysteries. It's very similar, but smaller, to the one that takes place in Trapani the same day.

Four statuesque groups representing Jesus Christ's Passion and Resurrection parades through the streets of the city accompanied by the music of the bands that emphasize the Jesus Christ's agony.

The Mysteries date back to the 17th century and are carried on shoulder by the representatives of the Maestranze (the different working classes of the city). The procession starts in the afternoon from the Church of St. Orsola and return there after parading in the

main streets of Erice.



The Mount Erice Uphill Time Trial

Every year, usually in May, thousands of people attend enthusiastically the well-known race in the uphill street to go to Erice: the Uphill Time Trial. Recently it became an international appointment.

The steep route is about 6 kilometers uphill and it is very exciting especially for those who love speed and competition. There are many curves. Cars start from the valley and reach the top of the Mount Erice, i.e. from Valderice to the final straight near the monumental complex of St. John in Erice.

Excellent results are usually preceded by a preparatory period. On Friday the participants check the car. On Saturday they test the route trying to memorize how to do it better and on Sunday they compete. The route is prepared carefully putting tires in the most dangerous places to avoid crashing. Each fan have his favourite place to see the race and try to return every year there. The winner is the one who complete the route in the shortest time possible. It is an high level competition whose participants are each years more and more.

The Mount Erice Uphill Time Trial celebrated this year, 2007, its 50th edition which was characterised by the participation of a lot of foreign pilots and the historic cars category. The Uphill Time Trial has always been valid as first trial of the Italian Cup, but now is also valid as first trial of the European Championship.

Whoever wants to reach Erice during the competition may use the cableway and admire once more the wonderful landscape from above.



The map

ERICE VETTA

