

Route 5

- **Tour:** Eraclea
- **Starting point:** Agrigento
- **Arrivo:** Trapani
- **Points of interest:** Selinunte - Mazara - Trapani
- **Km:** 222



Travel along the sea passing from Selinunte, Eraclea, Mazzara to arrive to the Erice mountain and to enjoy from there one of the most beautiful views in one of the most evocative towns of the island.

■ **History and traditions:**

Selinunte

According to the Athenian historian Thucydides, Selinunte was founded by people from Megara Hyblaea, a city on the east coast of Sicily, in the 7th century BC. The city had a very short life (about 200 years). During this time its population grew to a total of about 25,000. A wealthy trade center, Selinunte was envied by the Carthaginians.

Selinunte had an almost permanent conflict with Segesta, which allied itself with Athens. However, the Athenians were defeated by the Syracusans, and Segesta now asked help from Carthage. Diodorus Siculus tells that the Carthaginian commander Hannibal (not to be confused with his more famous namesake), in 409 BC destroyed Selinunte after a war that counted about 16,000 deaths and 5,000 prisoners. The city was besieged for nine days by an army of 100,000 Carthaginians.

Mazara

Mazara was widely reported on national newspapers in March 1998, when a bronze statue called Dancing Satyr (Satiro Danzante) was found off the local port, at a depth of 500 meters below the Sicilian Channel, in the Mediterranean Sea, by a local fishing boat. The statue is believed to have been sculpted by Greek artist Praxiteles and is currently hosted in a museum appropriately built in the city.

The Dancing Satyr is a bronze statue of the Hellenic Age, dated back from around the 4th century BC and seems to be made by Greek artist Praxiteles. It represents a satyr and is about 250 cm (98.4 in.) tall. It is currently hosted in the Satyr Museum. (foto: 001_Tp_mazaraSatiro)

Erice

It is located in a beautiful place at the top of a mountain, from which a wide stunning view of the islands near the coast can be seen. Erice is a historical town on the mountain close to Trapani in Sicily, Italy.

In the northeastern part of the town there are the remains of ancient Elymian and Phoenician walls indicating

different stages of settlements and occupations. Every year it hosts important scientific meetings, organised by CNR. There are two castles: the Pepoli Castle, which dates back to Saracen times and Venus Castle which dates back to the Norman period, on top of the ancient Temple of Venus. The town overlooks the bay of Castellammare del Golfo on the northern coast of Sicily. The view is stunning and offers a beautiful ride to the town.

■ Sightseeing and Landscape:

Selinunte

Selinunte is an ancient Greek archaeological site in the south province of Trapani. Selinunte is the modern Italian name for the ancient Selinunte.

The archaeological site contains five temples centered on an acropolis.

Mazara is widely considered one of the most important fishing centres of Italy; Mazara del Vallo is also known to be one of the Italian cities with the highest percentage of immigrants; it hosts at least 3,500 regular immigrants, mainly coming from nearby Tunisia and the rest of Maghreb, spread around the old Arab city centre (the Casbah). A local school, managed by the Tunisian government, in which only Arabic and French are taught, is hosted in the city, is the cause of many disputes because of its closeness to the Italian culture. Most local schools seem to be open to the Arabian culture and even provide Arabic language classes for both Italians and Arabs, and notable integration with local students.

Trapani

The city was built to serve as port of the nearby city of Erice (Eryx), which overlooks it from Monte San Giuliano. According to two ancient legends the city has mythical origins. In the first legend, Trapani stemmed from the sickle fallen from the hands of the prosperity goddess Demetra while she was seeking for her daughter Persephone, who had been kidnapped by Ades. The second myth features Saturn, god of the sky, who eviscerated his father Chronos with a sickle which, falling into the sea, created the city. In ancient times Saturn was the god-protector of Trapani. Today Saturn's statue stands in a piazza in the centre of the city.

As for the true story of Trapani, Drepanum is known to have fallen to the Carthaginians in 260 BC. Subsequently, it passed to the Romans in 241 BC. Thenceforth it followed the history of southern Italy in general and Sicily in particular through the Middle Ages and into the Modern Era.

Over the centuries the salt-pans and related salt industries along the coast have created a unique environment of great cultural and economic relevance. This route is called Via del sale ("the salt road"). Several active salt mills lie along this road. Fishing industry also flourishes, especially the famous tuna fishing through the mattanza technique.

In October 2005, Trapani was the location of Acts 8 & 9 of the Louis Vuitton Cup. This sailing race featured, among others entrants, all the boats that will take part in the 2007 America's Cup.
