COORDINATES:⬚ 37°29⬚0⬚N 14°4⬚0⬚E SURFACE: 416,97 km² INHABITANTS: 60.137

Caltanissetta (Sicilian: *Nissa* or *Cartanissetta*) is a city and *comune* located on the western interior of Sicily, capital of the province of Caltanissetta. It lies in an area of rolling hills with small villages and towns, crossed by the river Salso. Caltanissetta is the hub of public transport in the area and is also the site of a longwave transmitter (shutdown in 2002) and shortwave transmitter. The mast used for the longwave transmitter may be the tallest structure in Italy.

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History

Caltanissetta's origins can be traced back to 406 BC, when admiral Nicia of Hamilcar's siege force from Carthage established a fort at the site, later called Castra Nicia (Fort Nicia).

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In AD 829, the town was occupied by the Saracens. The similarity of the Carthaginian name to the Arabic word *nissa* (meaning "women") resulted in the Saracen name of *Qalat al Nissa* ("Fort of the Women"), which has since been Italianized to
Caltanissetta
. The settlement was captured by the Normans in 1086. A charter was granted to the town in accordance with count Roger Borsa's vast plan for the urbanisation of Sicily and the urban plan that is still in evidence today was laid out.

After the Normans the city was under the Hohenstaufen, the Anjou and the Aragonese, who gave it the title of county. Here Frederick II of Sicily was proclaimed king. The city was the seat of another Parliament who aimed to set the disputes arisen during the reign of Frederick III (1355-1377).

In 1406 Caltanissetta became a fief of the Moncada family of Paternò, and subsequently decayed deeply. In 1539 the construction of the Cathedral was started and in1566 a notable bridge was built over the Salso River. In this period the city began to expand outside the walls, and new quarters (Santa Flavia, San Rocco degli Zingari and San Francesco) were created.

On July 8, 1718 the city was assaulted by Piemontese troops, which caused large losses in the population. In 1787 Johann Wolfgang Goethe visited it.

In 1813, after 406 years, the Moncada seignory ended, as the feudal constitution was abolished and Caltanissetta turned into the 22nd Comarca of Sicily. In 1819 it was declared capital of the province, but one year later it was sacked as a punishment for its loyalty to the House of Bourbon. In 1844 it was elevated to a bishopric seat.

After many Nisseni had taken part in his Mille's ("the Thousand's") deeds, Giuseppe Garibaldi entered the city, together with Cesare Abba and Alexandre Dumas, père. On October 22 of the same year a plebiscite declared Caltanissetta part of the new Kingdom of Italy.

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In 1875, however, the population rose against the prefect, who was fired. On April 8, 1878, the city was connected to a railway, ending the historical difficulties in reaching it. Three years later the king Umberto I visited Caltanissetta along with his wife Margherita of Savoy and his son Victor Emmanuel III.

The city was heavily damaged during World War II.

Economy

The economy of Caltanissetta remained heavily reliant on agriculture until the 19th century, when a heavy sulfur mining industry began. Soon 275 sulfur mines were created in the Nissena province, employing 32,000 workers. A renowned firm established in the city is the Fratelli Averna SpA, producing a liqueur sold in the whole of Italy and beyond, the Amaro Averna.

The city has long been stricken by poverty, especially the west side.

Main sights

The city's monuments include:

- **Palazzo Moncada** is a large building, remained unfinished, erected in 1635 by Guglielmo Moncada. It has finely decorated corbels in the balconies of the main floor.

- The **Cathedral** (Santa Maria la Nova, 1539-1622). The façade was finished in the year 1840. The church has a late-Renaissance appearance that breaks the characteristic Baroque mold of most of the island of Sicily. Inside are frescoes by the Flemish painter Guglielmo Borremans, who worked here from 1722. Other works include a wooden *Blessed Virgin* draped in silver lamina (1760), a polychrome wooden statue by Stefano Li Volsi, and two marble statues portraying the *Archangels Gabriel* and *Raphael*. The Treasury houses a fine silver monstrance from the 15th century.

- The church of **St. Agatha** (1605), in late-Renaissance style. The façade is by Natale Masuccio, and is decorated by frameworks on a light coloured background. It has a Greek cross plant, with splendid Baroque decorations includings frescoes by Luigi Borremans (18th century).

- The church of **San Domenico** (16th century, with a convex façade from the 18th century) houses noteworthy paintings by Guglielmo Borremans and Filippo Paladini (*Madonna del Rosario*). The painting depicting the *Madonna del Carmelo* , also by Paladini, is now usedi in the Cathedral.

- The **Palazzo Vescovile** ("Bishop's Palace") is the seat of the Museum of Sacred Art. It has a painting by Gian Battista Corradini of the *Madonna del Rosario* (1614).
- The church of the **Santa Croce** ("Holy Cross") is from the 17th century but has been

substantially altered.

- The church of **San Sebastiano** (16th century), with a 17th century wooden statue of the saint.

Caltanissetta is also home to the *Museo Archeologico*, which holds displays from mostly prehistoric times and include finds from digs conducted in the 1950s, including vases and tools from the Bronze Age and early Sicilian ceramics.

In the neighbourhood of Caltanissetta two other notable monuments can be seen:

- The **Castello di Pietrarossa** ("Red Stone Castle"), built in red bricks by the Arabs over a cliff west to the city and later enlarged by the Normans. Today only ruins are visible, as the castle was destroyed in 1567 by an earthquake.
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The Abbey of the Holy Spirit (Santo Spirito), built by Roger Borsa and his wife in 1092-1098, though heavily altered in the following centuries,. The original forms are still recognizable in the posterior part, with its characteristic massive jutting apses. These are parted by flat pilasters strips and connected by a series of little arcches. The left entrance has an ogival portal from the 13th century. The lunette once contained a figure of Christ Blessing, which was eventually moved inside the church. The latter has a rectangular nave and a wooden-beamed ceiling. The walls and the apses have frescoes attributed to the 15th century. The vault of the apse shows a 17th century figure of Christ Pantocrator.

Climate

[Months](#) [Seasons](#)	Year					
Jan		[Feb](#) [Mar](#) [Apr](#)	May		Jun	Jul
[Nov](#)						
[Average high (°C)](#)	10,5		11,5		13,9	
						17,2

Average low (°C)	3,9	4,0	5,2

7,4

Source Wikipedia