

## From Wikipedia

**COORDINATES:** 38°11′0″N 15°33′0″E﻿ / ﻿38.18333°N 15.55000°E﻿ / 38.18333; 15.55000 **SURFACE:** 211,23km<sup>2</sup> **INHABITANTS:** 242.721

**Messina** (Italian pronunciation: [mesˈsiːna], Sicilian: *Missina*) is the third largest city on the island of Sicily, Italy and the capital of the province of Messina. It has a population of c. 240,000 inhabitants in the city proper and about 500,000 in the province. It is located near the northeast corner of Sicily, at the Strait of Messina, just opposite Villa San Giovanni on the mainland. The main economical resources of the city are: the port (commercial and military), provided with several shipyards; agriculture, that includes the cultivation of lemons, oranges, mandarin oranges, olives and wine production; tourism. The city has been a Roman Catholic Archdiocese and Archimandrite seat since 1548 and is home to a locally important international fair.

{oziogallery93}

## History

Founded by Greek colonists in the 8th century BCE, Messina was originally called **Zancle**, from the Greek:

ζάγκλον

meaning "scythe" because of the shape of its natural harbour (though a legend attributes the name to King Zanclus). A

*comune*

of its province, located at the southern entrance of the Strait of Messina, is to this day called 'Scaletta Zanclea'. In the early 5th century BC, Anaxilas of Rhegium renamed it

**Messene**

in honour of the Greek city Messene (Greek:

Μεσσήνη

). (See also List of traditional Greek place names.) The city was sacked in 397 BC by the Carthaginians and then reconquered by Dionysius I of Syracuse.

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In 288 BC the Mamertines seized the city by treachery, killing all the men and taking the

women as their wives. The city became a base from which they ravaged the countryside, leading to a conflict with the expanding regional empire of Syracuse. Hiero II, tyrant of Syracuse, defeated the Mamertines near Mylae on the Longanus River and besieged Messina. Carthage assisted the Mamertines because of a long-standing conflict with Syracuse over dominance in Sicily. When Hiero attacked a second time in 264 BC, the Mamertines petitioned Rome for an alliance, hoping for more reliable protection. Although initially reluctant to assist lest it encourage other mercenary groups to mutiny, Rome was unwilling to see Carthaginian power spread further over Sicily and encroach on Italy. Rome therefore entered into an alliance with the Mamertines. In 264 BC, Roman troops were deployed to Sicily, the first time a Roman army acted outside the Italian Peninsula.

At the end of the First Punic War it was a free city allied with Rome. In Roman times Messina, then known as **Messana**, had an important pharos (lighthouse). Messana was the base of Sextus Pompeius, during his war against Octavian.

After the fall of the Roman Empire, the city was successively conquered by the Goths, then by the Byzantine Empire in 535, by the Arabs in 842, and in 1061 by the Norman brothers Robert Guiscard and Roger Guiscard (later count Roger I of Sicily). In 1189 the English King Richard I, (*"The Lionheart"*) stopped at Messina en route to the Holy Land and briefly occupied the city after a dispute over the dowry of his sister, who had been married to William the Good, King of Sicily

Messina was most likely the harbour at which the Black Death entered Europe: the plague was brought by Genoese ships coming from Caffa in the Crimea. In 1548 St. Ignatius founded there the first Jesuit college of the world, which later gave birth to the *Studium Generale* (the current University of Messina).

The Christian ships that won the Battle of Lepanto (1571) left from Messina: the Spanish author Miguel de Cervantes, who took part in the battle, recovered for some time in the *Grand Hospital*. The city reached the peak of its splendour in the early 17th century, under Spanish domination: at the time it was one of the ten greatest cities in Europe. In 1674 the city rebelled against the foreign garrison. It managed to remain independent for some time, thanks to the help of the French king Louis XIV, but in 1678, with the Peace of Nijmegen, it was reconquered by the Spaniards and sacked: the university, the senate and all the privileges of autonomy it had enjoyed since the Roman times were abolished. A massive fortress was built by the occupants and Messina decayed steadily. In 1743, 48,000 perished from plague in Messina. In 1783, an earthquake devastated much of the city, and it took decades to rebuild and rekindle the cultural life of Messina.



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## Main sights

### Churches and sanctuaries

- The *Cathedral* (12th century), containing the remains of king Conrad, ruler of Germany and Sicily in the 13th century. The building had to be almost entirely rebuilt in 1919-1920, following the devastating 1908 earthquake, and again in 1943, after a fire triggered by Allied bombings. The original Norman structure can be recognised in the apsidal area. The façade has three late Gothic portals, the central of which probably dates back to the early 15th century. The architrave is decorated with a sculpture of *Christ Among the Evangelists* and various representations of men, animals and plants. The tympanum dates back to 1468. The interior is organised in a nave and two equally long aisles divided by files of 28 columns. Some decorative elements belong to the original building, whereas the mosaics in the apse are reconstructions. Tombs of illustrious men besides Conrad IV, include those of Archbishops Palmer (died in 1195), Guidotto de Abbiate (14th century) and Antonio La Legname (16th century). Special interest is held by the Chapel of the Sacrament (late 16th century), with scenic decorations and 14th century mosaics. The bell tower holds one of the largest astronomical clocks in the world, built in 1933 by the Ungerer Company of Strasbourg. The belfry mechanically animated statues, which illustrate events from the civil and religious history of the city every day at noon, are a popular touristic attraction.

- *Annunziata dei Catalani* (late 12th-13th century). Dating from the late Norman period, it was transformed in the 13th century when the nave was shortened and the façade added. It has a cylindrical apse and a high dome emerging from a high tambour. Noteworthy is the external decoration of the transept and the dome area, with a series of blind arches separated by small columns. It clearly reflects Arabic architectural influences.

- *Santa Maria degli Alemanni* (early 13th century), which was formerly a chapel of Teutonic Knights. It is a rare example of pure Gothic architecture in Sicily, as is witnessed by the arched windows and shapely buttresses.

- Sanctuary of *Montevergine*, where the incorrupt body of Saint Eustochia Smeralda Calafato is preserved.

### Fountains

- The Fountain of Orion, located next to the Cathedral, built by Giovanni Angelo Montorsoli in 1547.

- The Fountain of Neptune, looking towards the harbour, built by Montorsoli in 1557.

- The Senatorial Fountain (1619)

- *Quattro Fontane* (*The Four Fountains*), though only two elements of the four-cornered complex survive today.

## Climate

Climate data for Messina

Month	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr
Average high °C (°F)	14			
(57)	14			
(57)	15			
(59)	17			
(63)	21			
(70)	26			
(79)	29			
(84)	29			
(84)	27			
(81)	22			
(72)	18			
(64)	15			
(59)	21			
(70)				
Daily mean °C (°F)	12			
(54)	12			
(54)	13			
(55)	15			
(59)	19			
(66)	23			
(73)	26			
(79)	27			
(81)	24			
(75)	20			
(68)	16			
(61)	13			
(55)	18			
(64)				
Average low °C (°F)	10			
(50)	10			
(50)	11			
(52)	12			
(54)	16			
(61)	20			
(68)	23			
(73)	24			
(75)	21			
(70)	18			
(64)	14			

(57)	11
(52)	16
(61)	
Precipitation cm (inches)	11
(4.3)	10
(3.9)	8
(3.1)	5
(2)	3
(1.2)	1
(0.4)	1
(0.4)	2
(0.8)	5
(2)	10
(3.9)	10
(3.9)	11
(4.3)	84
(33.1)	

*Source: Weatherbase*