

Municipality of Sciacca

Summary

Sciacca is a coastal town of approximately 38,400 inhabitants in south-western Sicily, belonging to the Free Municipal Consortium of Agrigento. It is the second most populous municipality in the consortium. Overlooking the Mediterranean Sea, the town covers around 191 km² with 33 km of coastline and a historic centre built on a plateau at the foot of Monte Kronio (386 m). The current mayor is Fabio Termine, elected in June 2022.

History and Identity

Human settlement in Sciacca dates back to the 4th–3rd millennium BC. The town's name is believed to derive from the Arabic word for “bath”, reflecting a thermal vocation that goes back thousands of years. After successive dominations — Sicanian, Greek, Roman, Arab and Norman — Sciacca became a prosperous medieval city. Under the Swabians, Frederick II granted it significant commercial privileges. In 1282 the town joined the Sicilian Vespers revolt and declared itself a free municipality. The 14th century was marked by the violent feud between the Luna and Perollo noble families. In modern times, Sciacca gained cinematic fame as the setting for Pietro Germi's films

Seduced and Abandoned and *In the Name of the Law*, chosen on the advice of Federico Fellini.

Territory, Nature and Thermal Heritage

The municipal territory borders Menfi, Caltabellotta and Ribera, and shares Lake Arancio with two neighbouring communes. The town's most distinctive natural feature is Monte Kronio, whose volcanic steam caves are a geological rarity of global significance — the very origin of Sciacca's centuries-old reputation as a spa town. The coastline offers equipped beaches and the popular Stazzone resort. Regrettably, Terme di Sciacca S.p.A. has been in commissioner-led liquidation for over a decade, leaving the thermal complex closed to the public. The steam caves, too, were closed again in 2024 following the revocation of a management protocol with a local cooperative. The Sicilian Region has recently announced funding and a management tender, but the timeline for reopening remains uncertain. On Monte Kronio, the Antiquarium museum — housing prehistoric finds from the caves — has also been largely inaccessible since a controversial 2020 refurbishment.

Economy and Tourism

Sciacca is a key driver of tourism in the Agrigento province. In 2025 tourist tax revenues reached €1,078,575, in line with 2024, and the winter season recorded a notable 21.6%

increase year-on-year, signalling growing de-seasonalisation. The town attracts a significant share of foreign visitors. Beyond tourism, the local economy is sustained by artisanal and industrial fishing — served by one of the most active ports on the southern Sicilian coast — as well as artistic ceramics (recognised nationally, and the basis for Sciacca's membership of the Association of Ceramic Cities) and agriculture.

Culture, Carnival and Sport

The Carnival of Sciacca is the town's most celebrated event and one of Italy's most important. The 2025 edition drew 135,000 visitors and over 10 million social media impressions, ranking second among Sicily's most attended events (SIAE 2024) and eighth among Italy's most appreciated carnivals on TripAdvisor. The 2026 edition has already broken records, with queues of two hours to enter the city on opening weekend. The event revolves around eight papier-mâché allegorical floats, a craft tradition passed down through generations of local artisans. Cultural life is anchored by the Samonà Theatre, the Cassar Municipal Library (45,000 volumes), and a rich heritage of Baroque churches and historic monuments. The ASD Discobolo Sciacca fencing club and Unitas Sciacca football club represent the town in regional competitions. The Giovanni Paolo II Hospital serves as the main healthcare facility for the wider western province, with a maternity unit exceeding 500 deliveries per year.

Current Challenges (2025–2026)

Despite its strengths, Sciacca faces a series of serious and largely unresolved structural issues.

The water crisis is among the most pressing: the distribution network loses an estimated 50% of its water, causing long supply interruptions in several districts. AICA's management is widely criticised, and despite three maintenance teams deployed since January 2026, the underlying infrastructure remains inadequate.

Waste management has also struggled since the handover to Teknoservice in January 2026, with irregular door-to-door collection, recycling centre access problems and persistent illegal dumping near coastal areas.

Infrastructure decay is widespread: the Portico of the Jesuit College (part of the town hall) has been flagged for structural risk of collapse; the recently refurbished council chamber suffered new water infiltration just months after reopening; street lighting is intermittently out of service in key areas including the hospital zone and Via Roma; and public toilets in the main square and municipal park remain closed and neglected.

On the institutional front, the municipality is hampered by a severe staff shortage in its offices. It was sanctioned by the Sicilian Region for failing to submit the mayor's annual report. Off-budget liabilities required emergency approval before the end of 2025, and the administration has faced criticism for allegedly prioritising internal political balancing over strategic matters such as PNRR hydrogeological risk funding.

Together, these challenges place considerable strain on daily governance and on the town's ability to deliver a quality tourism experience, particularly ahead of the summer

season. Addressing them is essential if Sciacca is to fulfil its considerable potential as one of Sicily's most historically rich and naturally gifted destinations.