

# Olbia & the Gallura



Home to Sardinia's most celebrated stretch of coast, the Costa Smeralda, Gallura provides many of the island's classic images: limpid azure waters lapping onto pearly white beaches; weird, wind-whipped licks of rock tapering into transparent seas; and aging celebrities wooing bikini-clad beauties on their 100m yachts.

Ever since the international jet set discovered Sardinia in the 1960s, Gallura's fantastical coastline has been the island's international calling card. The Costa Smeralda has become one of the Med's most feted resorts, a gilded enclave of luxury hotels, secluded beaches and exclusive marinas. To the north, the Parco Nazionale dell'Arcipelago di La Maddalena boasts some of the island's most memorable seascapes, and windsurfers flock to the windswept waters of the Strait of Bonifacio, the strait that divides Sardinia from Corsica.

For many visitors, Gallura's ravishing beaches and tropical waters are Sardinia. But while they are undeniably beautiful, they represent just a fraction of Gallura's true character. Until the 1960s and the advent of tourism, Gallura was a wild and remote region without so much as a paved road. Farmers and shepherds eked out a meagre existence on the tough and begrudging land. To a modern tourist paying €10 for a can of coke in Porto Cervo, this might seem little more than local folklore, but head inland and it becomes all the more believable. The tough granite landscape, the lonesome valleys and swaths of cork forest – these have all shaped the area's rural and inward-looking character.

And it's inland Gallura that surprises. From the wooded heights of Monte Limbara to Arzachena's archaeological sights and the bucolic setting of Lago di Liscia, there is no end of alternatives to beach-bumming on the coast.

## HIGHLIGHTS

- Don your sea legs and island-hop around the **Parco Nazionale dell'Arcipelago di La Maddalena** (p178)
- Take to the slopes of **Monte Limbara** (p187) and explore the endless cork forests around **Tempio Pausania** (p185)
- Feel the wind in your hair as you windsurf the wild waters off **Porto Pollo** (p178)
- Swap the glamour of the coast for the haunting silence of **Lago di Liscia** (p176) and the nearby **Li Licci** (p176) *agriturismo*
- Clamber the weirdly sculptured boulders of **Capo Testa** (p185)



