



Sardinia

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Best Places to Eat

- » Peschiera Pontis (p825)
- » Ristorante Gallura (p833)
- » Hotel Su Gologone (p840)
- » La Botteghina (p829)
- » Il Fantasma (p814)

Best Places to Stay

- » B&B Lu Pastrucialeddu (p835)
- » Agriturismo Guthiddai (p839)
- » Il Cagliarese (p814)

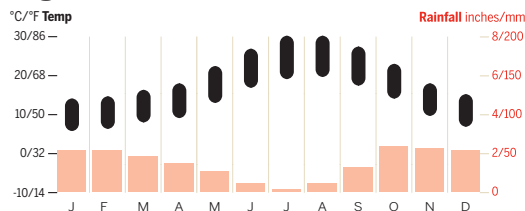
Why Go?

As DH Lawrence so succinctly put it: 'Sardinia is different.' Indeed, where else but on this 365-village, four-million-sheep island could you travel from shimmering bays to alpine forests, granite peaks to cathedral-like grottoes, rolling vineyards to one-time bandit towns – all in the space of a day? Sardinia baffles with prehistory at 7000 *nuraghic* sites, amazes with its weird and wonderful food (maggoty *pecorino* included), and dazzles with its kaleidoscopic blue waters.

Over millennia islanders have carved out a unique identity, cuisine, culture and language, leaving the forces of nature to work their magic on the landscape. And whether you're swooning over the megayachts in the Costa Smeralda's fjord-like bays or feasting on spit-roasted suckling pig at a rustic *agriturismo* (farm stay accommodation), you can't help but appreciate this island's love of the good life. Earthy and glamorous, adventurous and blissfully relaxed, Sardinia delights in being that little bit different.

When to Go

Cagliari



Feb Pre-Lenten shenanigans, from beastly *mamuthones* in Mamoiada to medieval jousting at Sa Sartiglia.

Mar–May Spring wildflowers, Easter parades, and hiking and climbing without the heat and crowds.

Jun–Aug Sun-kissed beaches, open-air festivals and reckless horse races at the S'Ardua.

History

Little is known about Sardinia's prehistory, but the first islanders probably arrived from mainland Italy around 350,000 BC. By the neolithic period (8000 BC to 3000 BC) tribal communities were thriving in north-central Sardinia. Their Bronze Age descendants, known as the *nuragic* people, dominated the island until the Phoenicians arrived around 850 BC. The Carthaginians came next, followed by the Romans, who took over in the 3rd century BC.

In the Middle Ages, the island was divided into four independent *giudicati* (kingdoms), but by the 13th century the Pisans and Genoese were battling for control. They in turn were toppled by the Catalan-Aragonese from northern Spain, who also had to subdue bitter Sard resistance led by Eleonora d'Arborea (1340–1404), Sardinia's very own Joan of Arc.

Sardinia became Spanish territory after the unification of the Spanish kingdoms in 1479 and today there remains a tangible Hispanic feel to towns such as Alghero and Iglesias. In the ensuing centuries, Sardinia suffered as Spain's power crumbled; in 1720 the Italian Savoy took possession of the island. After Italian unity in 1861, Sardinia found itself under the uninterested boot of Rome.

In the aftermath of WWII, efforts were made to drag the island into the modern era. In 1946 a huge project was launched to rid the island of malaria and in 1948 Sardinia was granted its own autonomous regional parliament.

Coastal tourism arrived in the 1960s and has since become a mainstay of the Sardinian economy. Environmentalists breathed a sigh of relief in 2008 when NATO finally withdrew from the Maddalena islands after a controversial 35-year sojourn.

i Getting There & Away

AIR Flights from Italian and European cities serve **Elmas** (☎070 21 12 11; www.sogaer.it) airport in Cagliari; Alghero's **Fertilia** (☎079 93 52 82; www.aeroportodialghero.it); and the **Aeroporto Olbia Costa Smeralda** (☎0789 56 34 00; www.geasar.it) in Olbia. As well as major international carriers, several no-frills airlines operate direct flights, including **Ryanair** (www.ryanair.com), **easyJet** (www.easyjet.com) and **Tuifly** (www.tuifly.com). Some routes are restricted to between April and October.

BOAT Sardinia is accessible by ferry from Genoa, Livorno, Piombino, Civitavecchia and Naples, and from Palermo and Trapani in Sicily. Ferries also run from Bonifacio and Porto Vecchio in Corsica, and from Marseilles via the Corsican ports of Ajaccio and Propriano. The arrival points in Sardinia are Olbia, Golfo Aranci, Santa Teresa di Gallura and Porto Torres in the north; Arbatax on the east coast; and Cagliari in the south. Services are most frequent from mid-June to mid-September, when it is advisable to book well ahead. Useful online resources include www.traghettiweb.it and www.traghettonline.com (in Italian).

FERRY OPERATORS

CMN La Méridionale (☎France 0810 20 13 20; www.cmn.fr) To Porto Torres from Marseille via Corsica.

Corsica Ferries, Sardinia Ferries (☎199 400 500; www.corsica-ferries.co.uk) To Golfo Aranci from Civitavecchia and Livorno. Also Sardinia to Corsica (April to September).

Grandi Navi Veloci (☎010 209 45 91; www.gnv.it) To Olbia and Porto Torres from Genoa.

Moby Lines (☎199 30 30 40; www.moby.it) To Olbia from Civitavecchia, Genoa, Livorno and Piombino; to Porto Torres from Genoa. Also has ferries between Sardinia and Corsica (April to September).

Saremar (☎892 123; www.saremar.it) To Santa Teresa di Gallura from Bonifacio (Corsica).

SNCM (☎079 51 44 77; www.sncm.fr) To Porto Torres from Marseille via Corsica. In July and August some services depart from Toulon.

Tirrenia (☎892 123; www.tirrenia.it) To Cagliari from Civitavecchia, Naples, Palermo and Trapani; to Olbia from Civitavecchia and Genoa; to Arbatax from Civitavecchia and Genoa; to Porto Torres from Genoa.

i Getting Around

BUS Sardinia's main bus company, **ARST** (Azienda Regionale Sarda Trasporti; ☎800 865 042; www.arst.sardegna.it, in Italian), runs most local and long-distance services.

CAR & MOTORCYCLE Sardinia is best explored by road. For details about rental agencies in Cagliari, see p816. There are also rental agencies at airports and in major towns.

TRAIN Trenitalia (☎892 021; www.trenitalia.com) services link Cagliari with Oristano, Sassari, Porto Torres, Olbia and Golfo Aranci. Services are slow but generally reliable. Slow **ARST** (☎070 34 31 12; http://arst.sardegna.it, in Italian) trains serve Sassari, Alghero and Nuoro. Between mid-June and early September, ARST also operates a tourist train service known as the **Trenino Verde** (www.treninoverde.com) – see p807.