



Sardinia

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Best Places to Eat

- ➔ Martinelli's (p848)
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- ➔ Agriturismo Agrisole (p870)
- ➔ Jaddhu (p872)

Best Places to Stay

- ➔ Lemon House (p882)
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- ➔ Agriturismo L'Oasi del Cervo (p854)
- ➔ B&B Costa Smeralda (p872)
- ➔ Casa Solotti (p877)

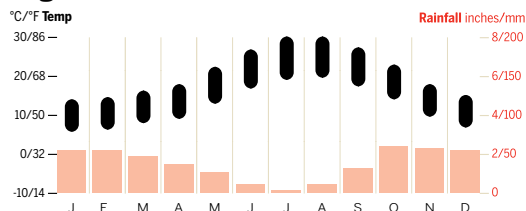
Why Go?

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, dazzles with its kaleidoscopic blue waters and whets appetites with island treats like spit-roasted suckling pig, sea urchins and crumbly *pecorino* cheese.

Over millennia islanders have carved out a unique identity, cuisine, culture and language. And whether you're swooning over the mega-yachts in the Costa Smeralda's fjord-like bays or kicking back 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 carnival madness to medieval jousting at Sa Sartiglia.

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

Jun–Aug Sun-kissed beaches, open-air festivals and folksy fun at Nuoro's Sagra del Redentore.

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 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 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 withdrew from the Maddalena islands after a 35-year sojourn.

Getting There & Away

AIR

Flights from Italian and European cities serve **Elmas airport** (☎070 211211; www.cagliari-airport.it); in Cagliari; Alghero's Fertilia (p865); and the **Aeroporto Olbia Costa Smeralda** (☎0789 563444; 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), **TUIfly** (www.tuiify.com) and **Meridiana** (www.meridiana.it). Note that there is a marked increase in flights in summer, with many seasonal flights operating between June and September.

BOAT

Sardinia is accessible by ferry from Genoa, Livorno, Piombino, Civitavecchia and Naples, and from Palermo 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. See www.traghettiweb.it and book ahead.

Ferry Operators

Corsica Ferries, Sardinia Ferries (☎0825 09 50 95; 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.

La Mèridionale (☎in France 491 994 509; www.lameridionale.fr) To Porto Torres from Marseille via Corsica.

Moby Lines (☎199 30 30 40; www.mobyline.it) Operates four daily crossings from Bonifacio to Santa Teresa di Gallura between mid-April and late September. High-season tickets cost from about €22 per person or €30 with a small car.

Saremar (☎199 11 88 77; www.saremar.it) Runs seasonal ferry services between Santa Teresa di Gallura and Bonifacio.

SNCM (☎in France 3260; www.sncm.fr) Ferries to Porto Torres from Marseille via Propriano or, less frequently, Ajaccio. From Propriano to Porto Torres, bank on about €26 per person or €38 with a car.

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.

Getting Around

BUS

Sardinia's main bus company, **ARST** (ARST; ☎800 865042; www.arst.sardegna.it), runs most local and long-distance services.

CAR & MOTORCYCLE

Sardinia is best explored by road. There are rental agencies in Cagliari as well as in airports and major towns.

TRAIN

Trenitalia (☎892021; www.trenitalia.com) services link Cagliari with Oristano, Sassari, Porto Torres, Olbia and Golfo Aranci. Services are slow but generally reliable. Slow ARST trains serve Sassari, Alghero and Nuoro. Between mid-June and early September, ARST also operates a tourist train service, the Trenino Verde (p850).