



Olbia, the Costa Smeralda & the Gallura

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Best Places to Eat

- » Ristorante Gallura (p143)
- » Spinnaker (p150)
- » Trattoria Gallurese (p163)
- » La Vecchia Costa (p150)

Best Places to Stay

- » B&B Lu Pastruccialeddu (p209)
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- » La Villa Giulia (p208)
- » Agriturismo Ca' La Somara (p209)

Why Go?

Costa Smeralda evokes Sardinia's classic images: pearly-white beaches and weird, wind-whipped licks of rock tapering into emerald seas. The stretch of dazzling coast that the Aga Khan bought for a pittance in the 1960s is today the playground of millionaires and A-listers. Come summer, the scandal-hungry paparazzi haunt the marinas, zooming in on oligarchs cavorting with bikini-clad beauties on yachts so big they eclipse the sun.

A few kilometres' drive inland and you could be on another island entirely: here vine-striped hills roll to deeply traditional villages and mysterious *nuraghe* (Bronze Age fortified settlements), silent cork-oak woods and granite mountains. Immune to time and trends, the hinterland is a refreshing contrast to the coast. Hide away in a country *agriturismo* (farm stay) for a few days to appreciate a very different version of the good life.

Further north the Gallura coast becomes wilder, the preserve of the dolphins, divers and windsurfers who splash around in the startlingly blue waters of La Maddalena marine reserve.

When to Go

Room rates and temperatures soar in summer, when beachgoers, yachties and families flock to the coast, particularly the Costa Smeralda. Spring is a great time to visit: days are mild, wildflowers cloak Gallura's granite interior and the coast is quiet. Taste top-notch Vermentino whites at the wine festivals in Porto Cervo in May and Monti in August. Tempio Pausania hosts pre-Lenten carnival parades and Aggius solemn Easter processions. Surfers come for winter waves and sailors for summertime regattas.

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Often ignored in the mad dash to the Costa Smeralda, Olbia has more to offer than first meets the eye. Look beyond its industrial outskirts and you'll find a fetching city with a *centro storico* (historic centre) crammed

with boutiques, wine bars and cafe-rimmed piazzas. Olbia is a refreshingly authentic and affordable alternative to the purpose-built resorts stretching to the north and south.

History

Archaeological evidence has revealed the existence of human settlement in Sardinia's



Olbia, the Costa Smeralda & the Gallura Highlights

- 1 Hang out with the bronzed, beautiful and superamous on the **Costa Smeralda** (p149)
- 2 Island-hop around the **Parco Nazionale dell'Arcipelago di La Maddalena** (p159) and dive into its jewel-coloured waters
- 3 Lounge on the frosty white sands of **Cala**

- 4 Explore the endless cork forests around **Tempio Pausania** (p162)
- 5 Go with the wind and take to the wild waters off **Porto Pollo** (p157)
- 6 Swap the glamour of the coast for the

- haunting silence of **Lago di Liscia** (p154)
- 7 Clamber the weirdly sculptured boulders of **Capo Testa** (p157)
- 8 Taste crisp Vermentino whites and rich Cannonau reds in contemporary winery **Cantine Surrau** (see boxed text, p151)