

welcome to Sardinia



Captivating Coastlines

Believe the hype: Sardinia has some of the most dreamy and dramatic beaches you'll find without stepping off European shores. Many think the glossy brochure images of too-blue-to-be-true seas and blindingly white sands are digitally enhanced, but when they actually arrive they realise: the pictures barely do them justice. Picture yourself dropping anchor in Costa Smeralda's scalloped bays, where film stars and supermodels frolic in emerald waters; going castaway on the Golfo di Orosei's coves, where sheer cliffs ensure seclusion; or sailing to La Maddalena's cluster of granite islands. Whether you're seeking seclusion in the dunes on the wave-lashed Costa Verde

or lounging on the Costa del Sud's silky smooth bays – unroll your beach towel and you'll never want to leave, we swear.

Outdoor Adventure

Teasing you away from that same beach towel are Sardinia's mountains and forests, gorges and caves, coastal paths and downhill trails. Hike through the lush, silent interior to the twilight of Tiscali's nuraghic ruins; along vertiginous cliff tops fragrant with juniper and myrtle to the crescent-shaped Cala Luna; through holm oak forests to the boulder-strewn Gola Su Gorropu, hailed as Europe's Grand Canyon. Not enough action for you? Why not join the climbers on Cala Gonone's sea-facing limestone crags, the



This is an island where coastal drives thrill, prehistory puzzles and sheep (four million of them) rule the roads. Sardinia captivates with its wild interior, dazzling beaches and endearing eccentricities.

(left) Relaxing on the brilliant waters of Cala Mariolu (p190)

(below) Streetside dining in Bosa (p101)



horse riders cantering through pinewoods in Arborea, or the mountain bikers blazing down centuries-old mule trails in Oliastro. The sea's allure is irresistible to windsurfers on the north coast, while divers wax lyrical about shipwrecks off Cagliari's coast, the underwater Nereo Cave and Nora's submerged Roman ruins. Whether you go slow or fast, choose coast or country, Sardinia is one of Europe's last great island adventures.

Island of Idiosyncrasies

As DH Lawrence so succinctly put it: 'Sardinia is different.' Indeed, where else but here can you go from near-alpine forests to cathedral-like grottoes, or from rolling vineyards to one-time bandit towns in the space

of a day? This is the island of 7000 *nuraghi*, the puzzling Bronze Age towers and settlements where you can piece together prehistory. Only here will you find culinary curiosities like sea urchins and anemones, donkey sausages and – if you're determined – *casu marzu* (maggoty pecorino). Sardinia is also a refuge for wildlife oddities like the *asini bianchi* (albino donkeys) on Isola dell'Asinara and the wild horses that roam Giarra di Gesturi plateau. And it's an island of fabulously eccentric festivals, from Barbagia's carnival parade of ghoulish *mamuthones*, said to banish winter demons, to the death-defying S'Arda horse race in Sedilo. History and heritage, food and countryside – in every way we can think of Sardinia is different, and all the more loveable for it.