



Nuoro & the East

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Why Go?

Nowhere is nature such an overwhelming force as in the wild, wild east, where the Supramonte's imperious limestone mountains roll down to the Golfo di Orosei's cliffs and startling aquamarine waters. Who knows where that winding country road might lead you? Perhaps to deep valleys concealing prehistoric caves and *nuraghi* (Bronze Age fortified settlements), to the lonesome villages of the Barbagia steeped in bandit legends, or to forests where wild pigs snuffle amid centuries-old holm oaks. Neither time nor trend obsessed, this region is refreshingly authentic.

Outdoor action is everywhere: along the coast where you can drop anchor in a string of pearly white bays, up in the cliffs where you can multipitch climb above the sea, on old mule trails best explored by mountain bike, and at peaks and ravines only reachable on foot. True, the Costa Smeralda attracts more celebrities, but we think you'll agree that the real rock stars and rolling stones are right here.

Best Places to Eat

- ➔ Il Portico (p175)
- ➔ Gologone (p180)
- ➔ Nascar (p196)
- ➔ Agriturismo Nuraghe Mannu (p193)

Best Places to Stay

- ➔ Agriturismo Guthiddai (p214)
- ➔ Lemon House (p216)
- ➔ Hotel L'Oasi (p215)
- ➔ Casa Solotti (p213)

Road Distance (km)

Cala Gonone	85			
Nuoro	53	32		
Orosei	88	20	35	
Tortoli	65	54	72	69
	Arizto	Cala Gonone	Nuoro	Orosei

NUORO

POP 36,400

Once an isolated hilltop village and a byword for banditry, Nuoro had its cultural renaissance in the 19th and early 20th centuries when it became a hotbed of artistic talent. Today museums in the historic centre pay homage to local legends like Nobel Prize-winning author Grazia Deledda, acclaimed poet Sebastiano Satta, novelist Salvatore Satta and sculptor Francesco Ciusa.

The city's spectacular backdrop is the granite peak of Monte Ortobene (955m), capped by a 7m-high bronze statue of the Redentore (Christ the Redeemer). The thickly wooded summit commands dress-circle views of the valley below and the limestone mountains enshrouding Oliena opposite.

History

Archaeologists have unearthed evidence of prehistoric nuraghe settlements in the Nuoro area. A popular theory maintains that the city was established when locals opposed to Roman rule grouped together around Monte Ortobene. But little is known of the city before the Middle Ages, when it was passed from one feudal family to another under the Aragonese and, later, Spain.

By the 18th century the town, by now under Piedmontese control, had a population of around 3000, mostly farmers and shepherds. A tough, often violent, place, it rose in rebellion in 1868 when citizens burned down the town hall to protest attempts to privatise public land (and thus hand it to the rich landowners). This action, known as Su Connuttu, no doubt confirmed the new Italian nation's view of the whole Nuoro district as a 'crime zone', an attitude reflected in its treatment of the area, which only served to further alienate the Nuoresi and cement their mistrust of authority.

Nuoro was appointed a provincial capital in 1927. It quickly developed into a bustling administrative centre. Although the traditional problem of banditry has subsided and the town presents a cheerful enough visage, Nuoro remains troubled, as high unemployment forces many young people to leave in search of work.

Sights & Activities

Museo Etnografico Sardo

MUSEUM

(www.isresardegna.it; Via Antonio Mereu 56; adult/reduced €3/1; ☎9am-1pm & 3-6pm Tue-Sun summer, 10am-1pm & 3-5pm Tue-Sun winter) Zooming

in on Sardinian folklore, this museum harbours a peerless collection of filigree jewellery, carpets, tapestries, rich embroidery, musical instruments, weapons and masks. The highlight is the traditional costume display – the styles, colours and patterns speaking volumes about the people and their villages. Look out for fiery red skirts from the fiercely independent mountain villages, the Armenian-influenced dresses of Orgosolo and Desulo finished with a blue-and-yellow silk border, and the burkalike headdresses of the ladies of Ittiri and Osilo.

Other rooms display life-size exhibits from the region's more unusual festivals. These include Mamoiada's sinister *mamuthones* (costumed characters), with their shaggy sheepskins and scowling masks, and Ottana's *boes* (men masked as cattle), with their tiny antelope-like masks, huge capes and furry boots.

Museo d'Arte

GALLERY

(MAN; www.museoman.it; Via S Satta 15; adult/reduced €3/2; ☎10am-1pm & 3-7pm Tue-Sun) Housed in a restored 19th-century townhouse, the Museo d'Art is the only serious contemporary art gallery in Sardinia. Its permanent collection boasts more than 400 works by the island's top 20th-century painters, including Antonio Ballero, Giovanni Ciusa-Romagna, Mario Delitalia and abstract artist Mauro Manca. Local sculptors Francesco Ciusa and Costantino Nivola are also represented. The gallery also hosts more wide-ranging temporary exhibits, usually held on the ground and top floors.

Chiesa di San Carlo

CHURCH

(Piazza San Carlo; ☎hours vary) To see a bronze copy of Francesco Ciusa's *La Madre dell'Ucciso* (Mother of the Killed), which won a prize at the Venice Biennale in 1907, you should visit the pink chapel Chiesa di San Carlo.

Museo Deleddiano

MUSEUM

(www.isresardegna.it; Via Grazia Deledda 42; adult/reduced €3/1; ☎9am-1pm & 3-6pm Tue-Sun summer, 10am-1pm & 3-5pm Tue-Sun winter) Up in the oldest part of town, the birthplace of Grazia Deledda (1871-1936) has been converted into this lovely little museum. The rooms, full of Deledda memorabilia, have been carefully restored to show what a well-to-do 19th-century Nuorese house actually looked like. Best of all is the material relating to her Nobel prize – a congratulatory telegram from the king of Italy and prize-giving ceremony