



Olbia, the Costa Smeralda & Gallura

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Why Go?

The Costa Smeralda evokes Sardinia's classic images: pearly-white beaches and weird, wind-whipped licks of rock tapering into emerald seas. The dazzling coastal strip that the Aga Khan bought for a pittance is today the playground of millionaires and A-listers. Come summer, 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 inland, a very different vision of the good life emerges. Here, vine-striped hills roll to deeply traditional villages and mysterious *nuraghi* (Bronze Age fortified settlements), silent cork-oak woods and granite mountains. Immune to time and trends, the hinterland offers a refreshing contrast to the coast, best appreciated during a multiday getaway at a country *agriturismo* (farm-stay).

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

- ➔ In March and April, join traditional Easter processions in the ancient streets of Tempio Pausania.
- ➔ Stake your claim on northeastern Sardinia's legendary beaches in June before peak holiday crowds arrive.
- ➔ See the summer out in style at San Teodoro's annual wind-sports festival in September.

Olbia, the Costa Smeralda & Gallura Highlights

1 Costa Smeralda

(p155) Hanging out with the bronzed, beautiful and super-famous on Sardinia's most exclusive coastline.

2 Parco Nazionale dell'Arcipelago di La Maddalena

(p167) Island-hopping around the archipelago and diving into its jewel-coloured waters.

3 Cala Brandinchi

(p154) Lounging on the frosty white sands of 'Little Tahiti.'

4 Tempio

Pausania (p171) Exploring ancient stone streets and endless cork forests.

5 Porto Pollo

(p170) Riding the wind through the wild waters between Sardinia and Corsica.

6 Olivastri

Millenari di Santo Baltolu (p161) Taking refuge from the coastal glamour and clamour in the haunting silence of this magnificent ancient olive grove.

7 Capo Testa

(p162) Clambering among weirdly sculpted boulders and looking for columns from an ancient Roman quarry.

8 Cantine Surrau

(p159) Tasting crisp Vermentino whites and rich Cannonau reds at this contemporary winery.

