



Oristano & the West

Includes ➔

Oristano	92
Arborea	97
Sinis Peninsula	98
San Salvatore.....	100
Tharros.....	101
Montiferru.....	102
Oristano Province	105
Bosa	106

Best Places to Eat

- ➔ Essenza del Gusto (p109)
- ➔ Desogos (p103)
- ➔ Agriturismo Montiferru (p103)
- ➔ Locanda di Corte (p109)
- ➔ Agriturismo Sinis (p100)

Best Places to Sleep

- ➔ Antica Dimora Del Gruccione (p214)
- ➔ Hotel Lucrezia (p214)
- ➔ Eremo del Cavaliere (p214)
- ➔ La Torre di Alice (p215)
- ➔ Hotel Regina d'Arborea (p214)

Why Go?

This part of central Sardinia boasts much of what makes the island such a beautiful and intriguing place: sublime beaches, verdant hills, ancient ruins and mysterious nuraghe temples.

In the heart of it all is Oristano, one of Sardinia's great medieval cities. It's a lively place with a gracious historic centre and laid-back atmosphere. A short hop away, the Sinis Peninsula harbours gorgeous beaches and ancient Roman ruins, while, to the north, Bosa charms with its riverside *centro storico* (historic centre).

For an altogether different experience, venture inland for a taste of rural Sardinia. The villages and soaring slopes of Monti Ferru are ripe for foodie touring with their prized local specialties, most notably *bue rosso* beef and extra-virgin olive oil.

Festival-goers will also enjoy the area. Oristano hosts colourful carnival celebrations, and the village of Sedilo stages one of Sardinia's most exhilarating events, the extraordinary S'Ardia horse race.

When to Go

- ➔ January is prime time for spotting pink flamingos on the Sinis Peninsula.
- ➔ In February, you can thrill to the acrobatic horsemanship of Oristano's Sa Sartiglia, the most colourful carnival on the island.
- ➔ Head to western Sardinia's beaches in June, to bask in the warm sun without the peak summer crowds.

ORISTANO

📍 0783 / POP 31,600

With its elegant shopping streets, ornate piazzas, popular cafes and some good restaurants, Oristano's refined and animated centre is a lovely place to hang out. Though there's not a huge amount to see beyond some churches and an interesting archaeological museum, the city makes a good base for the surrounding area.

History

The flat, fertile countryside around Oristano was an important nuraghic centre, but it was the Phoenicians who first put the area on the map. Arriving in the latter half of the 8th century BC, they established the city of Tharros, which later thrived under the Romans and became the de facto capital of western Sardinia.

The city was eventually abandoned in 1070 when its citizens, fed up with continuous Saracen raids, decamped to a more easily defensible inland site, Aristanis (present-day Oristano). This new city became capital of the Giudicato d'Arborea, one of Sardinia's four independent provinces, and the base of operations for Eleonora of Arborea (c 1340–1404). A heroine in the Joan of Arc mould, Eleonora organised the 14th-century war against the Spanish and wrote the Carta de Logu (Code of Laws) before succumbing to the plague. With her death, anti-Spanish opposition crumbled and Oristano was incorporated into the rest of Aragonese-controlled Sardinia. It wasn't a good time for the city. Trade collapsed and the city suffered from plague and famine.

The construction of the Cagliari–Porto Torres highway in the 1820s, and Mussolini's land-reclamation programs, gave Oristano a much-needed boost.

👁️ Sights

Oristano's main sights are in the *centro storico* (historic centre), a pretty area of stone houses, sunny piazzas and baroque streets.

★ **Piazza Eleonora d'Arborea** PIAZZA
Oristano's elegant outdoor salon sits at the southern end of pedestrianised Corso Umberto I. An impressive, rectangular space, it comes to life on summer evenings when townsfolk congregate and children blast footballs against the glowing *palazzi*. The city's central square since the 1800s, it's

flanked by grand buildings, including the neoclassical Municipio. In the centre stands an ornate 19th-century statue of Eleonora raising a finger as if about to launch into a political speech.

Bargain hunters should drop by on the first Saturday of the month when the piazza hosts an antique market.

Cattedrale di Santa Maria Assunta

CATHEDRAL

(Duomo; Piazza del Duomo; ☀ 9am–7pm summer, to 6pm winter) Lording it over Oristano's skyline, the Duomo's onion-domed bell tower is one of the few remaining elements of the original 14th-century cathedral, itself a reworking of an earlier church damaged by fire in the late 12th century. The free-standing *campanile* (bell tower), topped by its conspicuous majolica-tiled dome, adds an exotic Byzantine feel to what is otherwise a typical 18th-century baroque complex.

Centro di Documentazione sulla Sartigiglia

MUSEUM

(www.biblioteca.oristano.it; Via Sant'Antonio 9; ☀ 9am–2pm & 3.30–7pm Mon–Thu, 9am–2pm Fri, 9am–1pm Sat) **FREE** For a visceral taste of Oristano's headline festival, **Sa Sartigiglia** (☀ Feb), pop into this free museum adjacent to the city's Pinacoteca. Look out for various depictions of the Mamuthones, the sinister costumed characters that feature in many Sardinian carnival festivities, and peruse the collection of festival memorabilia, which includes masks, costumes and an interesting selection of historic photos dating as far back as 1864.

Pinacoteca Carlo Contini

GALLERY

(Via Sant'Antonio 9; adult/reduced €4/2.50; ☀ 10am–1pm & 4.30–7.30pm) Oristano's municipal art gallery has a small but interesting permanent collection of Sardinian paintings, together with rotating exhibits by local artists.

Museo Antiquarium Arborense

MUSEUM

(📍 0783 79 12 62; www.antiquariumarborense.it; Piazza Corrias; adult/reduced €5/2.50; ☀ 9am–8pm Mon–Fri, 9am–2pm & 3–8pm Sat & Sun) Oristano's principal museum boasts one of the island's major archaeological collections, with prehistoric artefacts from the Sinis Peninsula and finds from Carthaginian and Roman Tharros. There's also a small collection of *retabli* (painted altarpieces), including the 16th-century *Retablo del Santo Cristo*, by the workshop of Pietro Cavarò, which depicts a group of apparently beatific