

Welcome to Sardinia

Sardinia captivates with its wild hinterland, out-of-this-world beaches and endearing eccentricities. Here coastal drives thrill, prehistory puzzles and four million sheep rule the roads.

Beach Beauties

Sardinia has some of the dreamiest beaches you'll find without stepping off European shores. Yes, the sand really is *that* white, and the sea the bluest blue. Imagine dropping anchor in Costa Smeralda's scalloped bays, where celebrities and supermodels frolic in emerald waters; playing castaway on the Golfo di Orosei's coves, or sailing to La Maddalena's cluster of granite islands. Whether you're walking barefoot across 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.

Outdoor Adventures

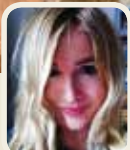
Whether you go slow or fast, choose coast or country, Sardinia is one of Europe's last great island adventures. Hike through the lush, silent interior to the twilight of Tiscali's nuraghic ruins. Walk the vertiginous coastal path to the crescent-shaped bay of Cala Luna. Or ramble through holm oak forests to the mighty boulder-strewn canyon of Gola Su Gorropu. 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.

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 snow-white beaches, or find wildlife oddities such as the blue-eyed albino donkeys on the Isola dell'Asinara. The island is also a culinary one-off, with distinct takes on pasta, bread and *dolci*, its own wines and cheeses – including maggoty *casu marzu pecorino*, stashed away in barns in the mountainous interior. In every way we can think of Sardinia is different, and all the more loveable for it.

Time Travel

Sardinia has been polished like a pebble by the waves of its history and heritage. The island is scattered with 7000 *nuraghi*, Bronze Age towers and settlements, *tombe dei giganti* ('giant's grave' tombs) and *domus de janas* ('fairy house' tombs). Down every country lane and in every 10-man, 100-sheep hamlet, these remnants of prehistory are waiting to be pieced together like the most puzzling of jigsaw puzzles. Sardinia is also an island of fabulously eccentric festivals, from Barbagia's carnival parade of ghoulish *mamuthones*, said to banish winter demons, to the death-defying S'Ardia horse race in Sedilo.



Why I Love Sardinia

By Kerry Christiani, Writer

Sardinia was love at first sight for me. No matter how often I return, I find new coastal trails to explore and mountains to climb, hidden bays to kayak to and little-known *agriturismi* tucked away in the silent hinterland. The island is deceptive – it looks small on paper, but unravel it and it is huge. It's like a continent in miniature, shaped by its own language and fierce traditions, its own cuisine and culture, its own history and the mystery that hangs over it like a shroud. Sardinians are proud of their island, and so they should be.

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