

# Understand Sardinia

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Find out how Sardinia is weathering the economic storm, balancing development against environmental concerns and negotiating tricky transport connections with the rest of Italy.

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Prehistoric civilisations, Romans, Pisans, Spaniards and 19th-century bandits – all have made their mark on this island, and their history makes gripping reading.

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Discover what makes a Sardinian tick and why the island has one of the world's largest populations of centenarians.

## **THE ARTS** .....244

From male harmony singing to poetry duels, folk dance to handicrafts – traditional arts are alive and well in Sardinia.

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Eat at rustic *agriturismi*, visit local wineries and loosen a belt notch for a feast of home-grown seasonal fare.

# Sardinia Today

Tourism is booming and unemployment is slowly dropping, but there are still some niggling worries that are stopping Sardinia from walking into the sunset. The high cost of travel to the mainland, the economic struggle between development and sustainable tourism, and the military presence on the island's coastline are all flagged as causes for concern. But that didn't stop the island from throwing one heck of a party when the Giro d'Italia kicked off in Alghero in May 2017, celebrating its 100th edition.

## Best on Film

**Padre Padrone** (Father and Master; 1977) The true story of Gavino Ledda's harsh life as a shepherd.

**Ballu a Tre Passi** (Three-Step Dance; 2003) Four snapshots of life in Sardinia, with some beautiful shots of the Costa del Sud.

**La Destinazione** (The Destination; 2003) The story of a young Italian *carabiniere* (police officer) sent to a remote Sardinian village in Barbagia to investigate the murder of a shepherd.

## Best Blogs

**Sardegna in Blog** (<http://sardegna.in.blog.it>) All things Sardinia feature on this island-focused blog.

**Sardegna Cultura** ([www.sardegna.cultura.it](http://www.sardegna.cultura.it)) For the inside scoop on the island's cultural life.

**Sardegna.com** ([www.sardegna.com/it/blog](http://www.sardegna.com/it/blog)) Interesting insights into island trails, arts, food and lifestyle.

**SardegnaBlogger** ([www.sardegna.blogger.it](http://www.sardegna.blogger.it)) Articles devoted to Sardinian current affairs and more.

## Transport Connections

Sardinians are feeling the brunt of the high cost of travel to and from the island. While island's tourism economy depends on low-cost flights, many of these don't operate daily year-round leaving the locals in the hands of the big ferry companies such as Moby and Tirrenia. With a number competitors recently becoming defunct – among them Saremar and Go in Sardinia – the ferries remain expensive (around €180 one way between Naples and Cagliari, for instance), a bone of contention for residents in terms of feeling disconnected from the mainland. To mitigate this, the island has requested support from the Italian government and the EU to bring prices down for locals.

Their calls have to some extent been answered: in 2017 a decree for '*continuità territoriale*' (territorial continuity) was passed, ensuring Sardinians can reach the mainland without leaving the country borders. This entails capping fares for residents until 2021, ensuring they receive preferential rates on airline and ferry services to the mainland, especially for the most-travelled routes between Olbia, Alghero and Cagliari and Milan and Rome.

## Sustainable Tourism vs Development

Striking the right balance between development and sustainable tourism remains an ongoing issue. Sardinia's progressive Salvacoste (Save the Coastline) law, first introduced in 2004, was a controversial ban on building within 2km of the coast, considered by many the best environmental protection measure ever passed in Italy. But it has run up against challenges in the wake of more recent economic crises. Recently the Sardinian government has been working on a new '*legge urbanistica*' (town planning law) that aims to allow further development of existing properties while still protecting