

sardinia

car tours and walks



This is a sample from the
PDF edition of
Landscapes of
SARDINIA

a countryside guide
Fifth edition



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This shorter sampler includes some of the introductory text, the introductions to each of the main sections (Picnicking, Car Touring and Walking) with an example of each. There is a total of 136 pages, plus a pull-out touring map, in the full book.



SUNFLOWER BOOKS



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Introduction

How to get there

While most **flights** are seasonal, there are two year-round services: easyJet flies three times a week from Luton to Cagliari (the capital) in the south and Ryanair three times a week to Alghero in the northwest. From around April to early November there are also usually three flights a week to Olbia (near the Costa Smeralda) in the northeast. In high season many budget airlines cover the route, departing from Birmingham, Bristol, Edinburgh, East Midlands, Gatwick, Heathrow, Liverpool, Luton, Manchester, Southampton and Stansted. You will find the usual international as well as Sardinian car-hire firms at any of Sardinia's airports.

If you **take your own car and travel by ferry**, you can sail from Nice, Savona or Livorno to Calvi or Bastia in northern Corsica (3-4 hours), then drive down to Bonifacio for the 50-minute sailing over to Santa Teresa di Gallura (sailings are bookable online at: www.corsicaferries.com).

For the latest list of airlines and ferry companies serving Sardinia, log on to the official Sardinian Tourism web site, www.sardegnaturismo.it.

Getting about on the island

A car is essential for most walks described in this book — and it is certainly the most convenient way of getting around the country. Fully comprehensive insurance is strongly recommended if you take a rental car. Generally you must pay a deposit, except for payments made with a credit card. Make sure that the car is in good condition, too, before taking it out on the roads; any damage should be recorded in the contract.

From a walker's point of view, **public transport** is rather limited. Major towns and cities are served quite well, but not the more remote countryside where you will want to walk. There are **trains** connecting the major cities, including several branches of the very scenic narrow-gauge railway which is a delightful experience. Even **buses** are rarely useful to the walker, since they stick to the main roads and don't pass near the starting points of most walks described here. However, they *do* connect even the most remote villages, if only once a day. Most buses (except for the urban lines) are operated by ARST (www.arst.sardegna.it; freephone when



Narrow-gauge railway at Nurri station

calling from within Italy 0800 865042) and are painted blue. Where a walk *is* accessible by bus, I have mentioned this, but timetables must be checked by telephone or at the nearest bus kiosk. Tickets must also be purchased from a kiosk before boarding the bus! If you want to be picked up by a passing bus, you have to give a clear hand signal — even when waiting at a bus stop. To let the bus driver know that you want to get off at the next stop, just ring the bell. Note that bus stops are not always clearly marked.

Except for the major towns and airports, **taxis** are not easily found. They are hardly an alternative to hiring a car.

Where to stay

Sardinia offers a wide range of accommodation in all categories and prices, from self-catering apartments (usually rented out per week; you have to bring your own linen) to classy hotels. Most establishments are spread along the coast, sometimes clustered in small resorts or ports. There are also hotels in all the bigger towns — convenient if you depend on public transport. In recent years *agriturismo* has become quite popular. These are holidays on a farm, where guests generally sleep comfortably and eat well — at a very reasonable price. Excellent booking sites for *agriturismi* are: www.terranostra.it and www.agriturismo.it/sardegna (both in English). While it's necessary to book well in advance for July and August, this is rarely necessary in low season. Many hotels are closed out of season (October-April).

The small villages of **Aritzo**, **Desulo** and **Fonni** are ideal bases if you want to hike in the central Gennargentu massif and offer a number of good hotels. **Cala Gonone** and **Santa Maria Navarrese**, two friendly resorts (with marinas) facing the Gulf of Orosei, are ideal for those who prefer being near



Picnicking

The varied landscapes of Sardinia provide good opportunities for picnics. Shady woodlands are sometimes the setting for organised picnic sites which have been laid out with tables, benches and fireplaces; some have washing facilities and toilets. All organised picnic places along the routes of the car tours are indicated on the touring map and in the touring notes by the symbol **Ⓐ**. Below is a small selection of particularly pleasant places you might enjoy; all are highlighted on the touring map by the symbol **P** printed in green. If the picnic is well off the beaten track, along the route of one of the walks, the **Ⓐ** symbol on the relevant large-scale *walking* map shows the nearest parking place.

Remember to wear stout shoes if you have to walk any distance — and take a sunhat. All picnickers should read the country code on page 55 and go quietly in the countryside.

1 LAGHETTO SANTA DEGNA (touring map) Ⓐ

by **Ⓐ**: see Car tour 1 at the 124km-point; 2min on foot. The Laghetto Santa Degna, a pond surrounded by a small park with picnic tables and benches, lies in a hollow above the village of Aggius.

2 N S DI CASTRO (touring map; photograph opposite)

by **Ⓐ**: see Car tour 1 at the 167.5km-point; no walking. Enclosed by typical Sardinian pilgrims' shelters, the beautiful Romanesque pilgrimage church of N S di Castro is a peaceful haven. There are some stone benches along the perimeter wall, and a large tree provides shade.

3 CASTELLO DEI DORIA (touring map) Ⓐ

by **Ⓐ**: see Car tour 1 at the 202km-point; about 10min on foot. Dominated by the ruined Castello dei Doria, the village of Chiaramonti is strategically situated on a limestone hill affording a splendid panorama of the surroundings. A short stroll leads through the narrow alleys of the old town up to the ruined castle, from where you enjoy a splendid view in all directions. There are picnic tables and benches here, but *no shade*.

4 FORESTA PIETRIFICATA CARRUCANA NEAR MARTIS (touring map; photograph opposite) Ⓐ

by **Ⓐ**: see Car tour 1 at the 210.5km-point; no walking. At the Foresta Pietrificata Carrucana you will see the petrified trunks of juniper trees dating from the Tertiary period scattered on a grassy hillside. Down by the nearby river there is a small fenced-in picnic site with a few tables and benches, where you also find some shade.

5 MONTE TONNERI (map page 104; nearby photos pages 106, 107) Ⓐ

by **Ⓐ**: following Car tour 2, take the right turn after 149km, CASERMA MONTARBU 11 KM, then see Walk 15, page 105, for details of the 10.5km long access road to the state forest of Montarbu/Monte Tonneri; no



PICNIC FOOD

You can buy everything you need for your picnic basket in the local shops or in a supermarket.

Fresh fruit and vegetables are sold in shops called *frutta e verdura*. There are some very tasty cheeses on offer, including the famous sheep's milk cheese (*pecorino*), of which there are many different varieties, depending on whether it is still fresh and soft (*ricotta*) or more ripened and mature (such as *pecorino sardo*).

For bread there is a wide choice of different kinds of wheat bread and buns in all shapes; you get it in *panetterie* and supermarkets. The most famous speciality, *pane*

karasàu ('*karasàrau*' means 'become hard') originally came from the shepherd villages of the Barbagia. It is baked in wafer-thin round slices and kept as a dry bread for weeks. Shepherds used to take it with them when they grazed their animals in areas far away from the village. Warmed up with a few drops of olive oil and a little salt, *pane karasàu* is served in restaurants, a real treat with the first sip of wine. It is also very tasty as a first course, softened in stock and served with tomato sauce, ample sheep's milk cheese and a fried egg. Called *pane frattau*, this is served even in the better restaurants.

Wine is produced locally and usually bottled in the municipal cooperative, called *cantina sociale*. The best-known wine is made from Cannonau grapes, which are mostly cultivated in the mountains, especially the Barbagia. It is a fairly dry, full-bodied and slightly fruity red wine packed with ripe berries.

Good mineral water is bottled in many places, so you don't have to buy water imported from mainland Italy. Spring water is also excellent.

Photographs: the petrified forest near Martis (Picnic 4, left) and N S di Castro (Picnic 2, right)

walking. Near the forestry station there are picnic tables and benches in the shady wood; fountain.

6 CHIESA SAN PIETRO DI GOLGO (map page 84) $\bar{\Delta}$

by $\bar{\Delta}$: from Baunei (Car tour 2 at the 232.5km-point), follow the access route to Walk 9 on page 83; no walking. Near the enclosed church of San Pietro there are picnic tables under gnarled old olive trees.

7 SU GOLOGONE (touring map) $\bar{\Delta}$

by $\bar{\Delta}$: drive to the large car park on the leafy banks of the river Cedrino (Car tour 2 at 314.5km); 2min on foot. Behind and below the chapel of N S della Pietà, the spring of Su Gologone (the largest on Sardinia) rises from a deeply-etched, turquoise-glimmering cleft in the limestone rock. There are some picnic tables and benches on the shady river bank.

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8 SANTA VITTORIA (touring map; photograph page 35)

by ☞: from Serri continue to the car park at the Nuragic sanctuary of Santa Vittoria (Car tour 3 at the 86km-point); less than 5min on foot. From the visitor centre, follow the gravel track straight ahead for a few minutes, until it swings right. The chapel of Santa Vittoria stands just at the steep cliff-edge of the plateau; in front of it is the Nuragic holy well described in the panel on page 35. You can sit on a wall for your picnic.

9 GIARA DI GESTURI (map page 109; photograph page 111)

by ☞: from Tuili (Car tour 3 at the 134km-point) follow the access to Walk 16 on page 108; about 5min on foot. From the car park follow the beginning of Walk 16 for a few minutes, to the Chiesetta Santa Maria, where you can rest on basalt rocks under shady trees.

10 GROTTA SU MANNU (map page 124) ☞

by ☞: following Car tour 4, take the left turn after the 232km-point that leads to the Grotta su Mannu. After 1.4km you reach the car park at the entrance to this fine limestone cavern; no walking. Picnic tables and benches under shady trees, fountain, bar. For more information on the cavern see Walk 20, page 122.

11 SANTA CATERINA DI PITTINURI (touring map) ☞

by ☞: follow Car tour 5 to the coastal resort of Santa Caterina di Pittinuri (57km); 2min on foot. Behind the beach there is a shady picnic area with tables and benches in a small valley.

12 MONTE FERRU (touring map) ☞

by ☞: see Car tour 5 at the 79km-point; no walking. This shady picnic area with tables and benches is just by the roadside; fountain.

13 SAN LEONARDO DE SIETE FUNTES (touring map) ☞

by ☞: see Car tour 5 at the 88.5km-point; 3min on foot. There is a shady park with tables and benches above the road, with seven springs (hence 'Siete Futes') bubbling in its upper part. The surroundings are wild and romantic, although somewhat neglected. Lichen hangs from branches, ivy creeps up the gnarled old trees, and mossy rocks make this wood a fairy-tale setting. If you want to escape the heat of the coast, you will find a cool and shady haven up here.

14 CHIESA SAN MAURO (touring map)

by ☞: see Car tour 5 at the 169.5km-point; 2min on foot. The country church of San Mauro is set in tranquil surroundings and enclosed by typical pilgrims' shelters (*kumbessias*). You can picnic under the big tree at the church or in front of the *kumbessias*. See panel on page 45.

15 SA PUNTIGHEDDA (touring map) ☞

by ☞: see Car tour 6 at the 162km-point; no walking. The shady picnic area of Sa Puntighedda, with tables and benches, is next to a forestry house. There is a fountain by the roadside.

16 MONTELEONE ROCCA DORIA (touring map)

by ☞: see Car tour 6 at the 268.5km-point; no walking. There are several pleasant places for a picnic in this village — for instance, the small square in front of the late Romanesque parish church of San Stefano or a little bit further uphill at the small church of Sant'Antonio (benches).



Touring

On Sardinia remote scenery can be enjoyed without even getting out of your car. Despite many new roads, most places still feel ‘out in the wilds’. The six suggested car tours (covering almost 1600km/1000mi) take in the most scenic parts of the island, giving you an overview of Sardinia’s varied landscapes. Each tour is designed to take in the main attractions in that particular area and to provide as much variety as possible. The tours are arranged in such a way that they may be easily combined, allowing you to drive round the whole island. But, realistically, you will probably only be able to cover perhaps three of these tours in a single holiday, especially if you want to walk as well.

Most tours are too long for one day if you drive at a leisurely speed to enjoy the scenery. Consider spending a night en route, rather than rushing back to base. Driving is slow on the winding mountain roads. The touring notes are deliberately brief; I concentrate on giving accurate instructions (*signposting to be followed* is highlighted in SMALL CAPITALS). Most of all I emphasise possibilities for **walking** and **picnicking** — all the walks and picnics in the book either lie on the main routes or are reached via short detours.

The **fold-out touring map** is designed to be held out opposite the touring notes and contains all the information you will need to follow the suggested tours. Due to its small scale, only major, secondary and relevant minor roads have been included (I recommend the 1:200,000 map published by the Touring Club Italiano for detailed information). Lack of space prevents us from printing all town plans, so I give you clear guidance through all built-up areas. The **symbols** used in the text correspond to those on the touring map and are explained on the touring map key. Distances quoted are *cumulative kilometres* from the starting point.

Most of the **roads** are in very good condition, with an asphalt surface. There are still some gravel roads (*strade bianche*) which are rather a strain if you follow them for long distances. Most country roads pass straight through villages, where you should *drive with extra caution*: reduce your speed and be prepared for the unexpected. Anywhere on Sardinia, livestock and dogs roam freely on country roads. And remember, on Sardinia, as in mainland Italy, you must by law drive with your lights on — even in bright sunlight!

Car tour 1: GALLURA AND ANGLONA

Palau • Porto Cervo • San Pantaleo • Arzachena • Aggius • Tempio
• Passo del Limbara • Chiaramonti • Martis • Bulzi • Castelsardo

247km/153mi; approximately 12 hours (two days)

En route: Picnics 1-4; Walks 1 and 2

Comprising the northeastern corner of Sardinia, the landscape of the Gallura is predominantly granite. It derives its name from *gallo* ('cock'), the heraldic beast of the Viscontis, a noble Pisan family who ruled over this region at the height of the Middle Ages. Countless bays and inlets, bizarre granite cliffs and rocky offshore islets rising from a sea shimmering in turquoise and azure — the natural splendour of the Gallurese coast is overwhelming. In the 1960s, Prince Karim Aga Khan and his consortium began to develop the Costa Smeralda ('Emerald Coast'), engaging internationally renowned architects such as Jacques Couëlle and building an exclusive holiday paradise for the jet set. Strict regulations and limited planning permissions helped to create a touristic world of classy hotels, apartments, marinas and golf courses along this splendid stretch of coastline extending north of Olbia for some 55 kilometres. But in contrast to the bustle and the smart set on the coast, the interior of the Gallura is a remote mountainous region where time seems to stand still. Totally different again is the Anglona to the west, with its market towns and Romanesque churches built by the Pisans. These rolling hills are characterised by volcanic trachytes and tuffs alternating with Tertiary sediments. The old ruined castle of Castelsardo rises like an eagles' nest on the coast.

Opposite Palau (🏰🏠🚧🚗), a harbour from where the ferry sails to Maddalena (Walk 1), the Archipelago della Maddalena spreads out before you, and the straits of Bocche di Bonifacio separate Sardinia from Corsica. Turn sharp right at the road junction with traffic lights where you enter Palau (brown signpost: MOLO TURISTICO/ROCCIA DELL'ORSO). Follow the road straight ahead, ignoring a sharp right turn to Le Saline/Cannigione. When you meet a T-junction at Capo d'Orso (4km; snackbar), turn left at the T-junction and continue to the signposted car park for a short climb up famous Bear Rock, described in the panel opposite.

Return from Capo d'Orso the way you came, until you can fork left for LE SALINE/CANNIGIONE. Follow this road straight ahead, then take the left turn signposted to CANNIGIONE. Soon you cross a sandy dam separating a bay and a *stagno* that extends inland (8km). The coastal road winds its way along the Golfo di Saline (⚓ 15km). Pass through the



Ascent of Bear Rock

Allow 40min return and a climb of 60m/200ft. A fee (2€) is charged for the car park and another 2€ for access to the rock

From the car park follow the path through greenery. Soon the path climbs between rock outcrops, then continues as a stone-cobbled footpath that zigzags uphill. An old military lookout post stands on the rise. From here the path bends right and descends briefly, before leading to Bear Rock. From below this rock overhang there is a magnificent view of the Archipelago della Maddalena off the northeastern tip of the island. The largest islands are Maddalena and Caprera, while the mountains of Corsica rise in the hazy distance. Return the same way to the car park

TAFONI

In the eastern half of Sardinia granite is very prominent. Its manifold fantastically-eroded forms add to the special attraction of landscapes like the Gallura.

Weathering creates sandy-grained granite detritus and large rounded blocks of stone, which — due to their characteristic form — are referred to as ‘wool sacks’. When erosion continues and more detritus is washed away, these ‘woolsacks’, which are initially below ground level, appear above the earth’s surface. Sculptured over millennia by wind and weather, the granite rock is modelled as if by artist’s hand. Bizarre hollow structures are created which are called *tafoni* (after *tafone*, the Corsican word for window. Many *tafoni* together can create

web-like structures, and sometimes the rocks are entirely riddled with *tafoni* holes. In Gallura these caves created by weathering are referred to as *konki* (*konka* meaning ‘hollow’); in other parts of Sardinia *tafonised* rocks are referred to as *perdas pertuntas* (‘stones riddled with holes’). Sometimes mushroom-like structures form, for instance the so-called ‘mushroom’ (*fungo*) in Arzachena and the ‘bear’ (*orso*) at Capo d’Orso east of Palau. Traditionally *tafoni* are used by shepherds as natural shelters from sun and rain; it is not uncommon to find little walls built around them. *Tafoni* occur most frequently in granite, but can sometimes also be found with other types of rock.

Photograph: Bear Rock

resort of **Cannigione** spread out along the beautiful, deeply-indented Golfo di Arzachena. Take the signposted left turn for BAIA SARDINIA (19km; the road ahead leads to Arzachena). When you meet a T-junction, turn left towards BAIA SARDINIA/PORTO CERVO. Then take the signposted right turn (28km) to PORTO CERVO/OLBIA not long before

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reaching the resort of Baia Sardinia. You get a brief glimpse of the small marina of Porto Quato on your left, snuggling in a narrow inlet.

Pass the turn-offs to Pitrizza and Liscia di Vacca before meeting a T-junction where you turn right for PORTO CERVO (signposted). Ignore the left turn for Porto Cervo Marina (33.5km), but turn left after some 300m to PORTO CERVO. Fork left on Via Stella Maris after another 150m, just where the road curves right. (*Watch out — this is a blind bend.*) Via Stella Maris leads you directly to the famous church of **Stella Maris** ('Star of the Sea'; ⚔ 34km). Reminiscent of traditional Sardinian architecture, this modern church was built by Michele Busiri-Vicci in 1968. Continue to **Porto Cervo** (35km 🏠🏠🚰🚰), where you can park in the car park on your right. Follow the paved walkway from here down into the centre. Inhabited all year round, Porto Cervo is the exclusive main resort of the Costa Smeralda.

Continue ahead on the road, ignoring the signposted left turn to Porto Cervo Centro and passing more car parks. Meet the main road again and turn left to continue towards ARZACHENA/OLBIA. Then take the signposted left turn for OLBIA/CALA DI VOLPE. As the road winds downhill, you soon reach a road junction, where you first continue ahead towards ROMAZZINO/GOLF (the fork to the right is signposted for Olbia). After a short while you pass the classy Hotel Cala di Volpe (🏠 42km), one of the settings for the James Bond film 'The Spy Who Loved Me'. It was built in the style of a knight's castle by the French architect Jacques Couëlle in the 1960s. Some 400m beyond it (opposite the driveway to the Hotel Il Piccolo Golf), a track forks sharp right through the bushes to the sandy bay, from where there is a good view across the marina to the legendary hotel.

Return to the road junction (44.5km) and turn left for OLBIA/GOLFO ARANCI. A lay-by on the left (46.5km 🚰) affords a splendid view of the seascape. Meet a T-junction (53km) and turn right towards SAN PANTALEO/ARZACHENA. Imposing serrated ridges dominate the landscape ahead; from a lay-by with a shrine on the right-hand side of the road you can enjoy the spectacular mountain scenery at leisure (57.5km 🚰). Once in the centre of **San Pantaleo** (58.5km 🚰🚰), keep right towards ARZACHENA. The road now twists and bends downhill. On meeting a T-junction (62km), turn left to continue towards ARZACHENA. Soon go straight ahead for ARZACHENA, ignoring a right turn to Baia Sardinia. When you come to the main SS125 (64.5km), turn right for ARZACHENA. Two kilometres along, park in front of the

Museo Malchittu (66.5km M \otimes) on your right, and break your journey with a short walk to the temple of Malchittu (see route description in the panel at the right).

Continue into the centre of **Arzachena** (69km \otimes), where you take the signposted left turn for TEMPIO/CALANGIANUS/LUOGOSANTO (Viale P Dettori) just beyond some traffic lights. Leave the town and keep ahead before taking the signposted right turn for TOMBA DEI GIGANTI CODDU VECCHIU (72km). Turn left after 2km (74km), to follow the signposted road for 400m to the visitor centre at the **Tomba dei Giganti Coddu Vecchiu**★ (TM). This typical megalithic tomb was built in two distinct phases: an older corridor tomb (18-16C BC) was extended in Nuragic times (16-12C BC) by adding a semi-circular forecourt (*exedra*) edged by stone slabs; this was used for cultic rites and sacrifices. The central stone slab or portal stone has a height of 4m/12ft; its edge is cut into the stone as a high relief. The small opening at the bottom of the portal stone gave the only access to the once-covered burial chamber. By the way: despite their name, these ancient people were no giants (*giganti*), but quite short compared to the average height today; it was the monumental size of the tombs themselves that gave rise to the name in fairly recent times.

Return to the main road and turn left to continue. Then (77.5km) take the right turn signposted to LI LOLGHI/LI MURI. Keep on the main track as it bends slightly to the left (78.5km) and park just beside a large farm building (79.5km). Now follow the track to the left for a short walk (20 minutes return) to an interesting burial site dating from the late Neolithic period (3500-2700 BC). The track passes two farms, one on the right and the other

Walk to the temple of Malchittu

Allow 40min return and an overall climb of 40m/130ft

Follow the gated field track to the left of the museum. Soon go straight ahead past a farm on your right, ignoring another farm up on your left. Go through a gate and continue on the track as it begins to rise, passing a vineyard on the right. Go through another gate, followed by a short steep climb. Bear left at a fork in the track and soon turn left on a path running through scrub. The path climbs steeply over rocks, to reach the temple, standing on a small saddle. This rather plain drystone building features an apse at the back. It was probably built around 1500 BC and is well preserved except for the original wooden gable roof. A window over the lintel (architrave) serves to spread the weight.



Tomba dei Giganti Coddu Vecchiu

GIANTS' TOMBS

According to legend, giants with supernatural powers built the *nuraghi* and buried their dead in the so-called giants' tombs (*tomba dei giganti*). In reality it was simply the enormous scale of these chamber tombs, built from stone slabs, which

gave them their name. More than 500 giants' tombs have been found on Sardinia, the largest of which measure more than 30m/100ft in length. In these chamber tombs the Nuragic people kept the remains of their dead as in a charnel house. Giants' tombs appear to

be a further development of long dolmen and gallery graves. These were inspired by the western megalithic culture which radiated to Sardinia. At the front of a giants' grave two semicircular wall extensions embrace an *exedra*. If viewed from the air, these wall extensions look like horns, which is perhaps a reference to the cult of the bull. Older graves (before 1500 BC) have the *exedra* surrounded by huge upended stone slabs. The portal stone, which can be up to 4m/12ft high, is found in the centre; a small opening within the base provides access to the tomb itself.

on the left, before reaching the **Necropolis of Li Muri (II)**. Reminiscent of dolmen, this burial site comprises several rectangular tombs built of stone slabs. They are encircled by smaller stone slabs standing in an upright position. They edged the earthen burial mounds (*tumuli*) that once covered each tomb. Beside each tomb, small stone boxes for sacrifices and several standing stones (menhirs) can be seen, some of which have fallen over.

Return to your car and continue ahead on the wide gravel track for 500m. Then leave your car in the car park on the left, to visit the **Tomba dei Giganti li Lolghi★ (80km II)**. Dominated by its high portal stone, this fine megalithic tomb rises on a hillock. Apparently it was built by extending an existing chamber tomb (1800-1600 BC). It was once covered by a large elliptical burial mound (*tumulus*) some 27m/88ft long. It is therefore thought that all *tombe dei giganti* developed from more simple types of tombs such as chamber tombs and dolmens. As at Coddu Vecchiu, an edge is cut into the portal stone as a high relief — a masterpiece of its time.

Return to the asphalt road and turn right to continue. The tour now gradually leads into the interior of the Gallura, a



San Pietro delle Immagini (di Simbranos), near Bulzi

scarcely populated mountainous region that seems unchanged from time immemorial. Granites glowing in white, yellow and reddish hues crop out in the entire northeastern part of Sardinia, testifying to the crystalline base of the island. The landscape is characterised by long serrated ridges (*serras*), seemingly endless cork oak woods and poor pastures. Scattered farms (*stazzi*) are seen now and then, a rare type of settlement on Sardinia. Immigrants from nearby Corsica settled in the Gallura beginning in the 17th century; they preferred to live in isolated *stazzi* rather than villages.

Reach a car park on the right (91km \overrightarrow{A}), from where steps climb over 100m/300ft to the ruined Castello di Balaiana (■) and the 12th-century Capella di San Leonardo (✝). Continue ahead past the right turn to the Castello di Baldu (93km). Enter **Luogosanto** (95.5km) and follow signposting for TEMPIO through the village. Beyond Luogosanto the road winds down into a valley where you meet the SS133; turn left towards TEMPIO. The road gradually zigzags uphill before running dead straight across a plateau. You find yourself amidst a typical Gallurese landscape, scarcely populated and covered by light cork oak woods and pastures, with the granite *serras* of Aggius rising ahead.

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Ignore the right turn to Agliento, but take the next right turn signposted to AGGIUS (115km). Then fork right again, following signposting for TRINITÀ D'AGULTU/BADESI/VALLE D'ORIA (117.5km). The road leads across another wide basin encircled by granite *serras*. Take the left turn signposted PANORAMICA DI AGGIUS (121km), now heading straight for the granite massif. Turn right when you meet a T-junction (123km). Soon there is a car park on the right (opposite a half-finished building), where you can enjoy the view (📷) of the bizarre granite rock formations at leisure. Some more lay-bys encourage short stops to admire this gorgeous mountain scenery. Down in a deep gully to the right is the Laghetto Santa Degna, a pond surrounded by a small park with picnic tables and benches (124km $\overline{AP1}$). Meet the village road when you enter **Aggius** and turn right to continue. There is a viewing platform on the left (125.5km 📷) affording a beautiful vista of the village, spread out on the foothills of its serrated granite ridges.

On coming to the SS127, turn left to **Tempio Pausania** (131km 🗺️🏰🏰🏰🏰). Surrounded by mountains and ever-green oak woods, this is the friendly capital of the Gallura. The picturesque old town, with its traditional houses of grey, unplastered granite, still retains its historic ambience. Together with the neighbouring towns of Calangianus and

Aggius, Tempio is the centre of the Sardinian cork industry.

Go straight ahead through the town in the direction of OLBIA until, just after crossing the railway, you can take the sign-posted right turn to OSCHIRI. Turn left at the next T-junction, soon leaving Tempio behind. The road winds its way gradually



Lago del Coghinas

into wooded hills. You pass a signposted left turn to Monte Limbara/Località Vallicciola (139km): this road zigzags up the slopes of Monte Limbara for 6.2km before reaching the Località Vallicciola, where Walk 2 starts. The main tour, however, continues straight ahead on the SS392, soon passing a shady picnic spot called Fundu di Monti on the left, with stone benches and good spring water (140.5km A). Following a valley, the road twists and bends steadily uphill through wooded mountains before crossing the **Passo del Limbara** (143km).

Now you descend in more bends. Eventually the Lago del Coghinas comes into sight. Ignore a right turn signposted to Coghinas soon before crossing the reservoir. When you reach the main SS199 trunk road just before **Oschiri** (163.5km), turn right towards SASSARI. Turn off right after 3km for CASTRO and meet a T-junction straight away: turn left towards TULA/CASTRO. After well over 1km you reach the car park at the beautiful Romanesque pilgrimage church of **N S di Castro** (167.5km P2 ; photograph page 15).

Return the same way to the main road and turn right to continue towards Sassari. Then take the signposted right turn towards MARTIS. Soon ignore the right turn for Tula and continue ahead towards CHIARAMONTI. Treeless pastureland extends all around you; a *nuraghe* rises prominently on a hillock to the right. The road gradually winds its way up to the trachyte plateau of Monte Sassu which rises ahead of you to the right; the slopes are studded with olive trees. When you reach the plateau, scattered cork oaks alternate with occasional fields; the imposing Limbara massif is seen rising in the distance.

Cross the SS672 before climbing in hairpin bends to the next plateau; this one is limestone. Bear left at the crossroads when you enter **Chiaramonti** (202km P3). Dominated by the ruined Castello dei Doria, the town is strategically situated on a limestone hill affording a splendid panorama of its surroundings. If you feel like stretching your legs, a short stroll will lead you through the narrow alleys of the old town up to the ruined castle, from where you enjoy a splendid view in all directions (P3). Down in the town there is a small shady park (A) on the right-hand side of the main road which is also a good place for a break. Continuing on the main road through the town, bear right downhill at a fork.

After a series of bends you reach the picturesque village of **Martis** (208.5km X), which is also set in a limestone region. At the end of the village, take the right turn signposted FORESTA PIETRIFICATA CARRUCANA 1 KM. Soon you

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reach a fork where you keep right, following the one-way system. The petrified trunks of juniper trees from the Tertiary period (photograph page 15) are scattered on a grassy hillside to your left, enclosed by a stone wall. Opposite there is a small fenced-in picnic site down by the river (AP4; 210.5km). Continue to follow the one-way system, keeping left at the next fork. Meet your outward route again, and now turn right, back to the main road. Turn right again when you rejoin the main road (SS127).

Soon you cross under the railway; table-topped mountains rise all around you. Go through **Laerru** (220.5km) and continue ahead for 2km before turning left in the direction of CASTELSARDO. After another 2km, turn right down a concreted lane to the church shown on page 23, **San Pietro delle Immagini** (di Simbranos; 225km ☙). This beautiful country church stands isolated in a hollow. The white limestone walls alternating with reddish trachyte are a characteristic feature of Pisan late Romanesque style. Trachyte crops out in the surrounding depressions while the plateau is made of limestone — a stratification which is typical throughout the Anglona.

Continuing on the main road, the next village en route is **Bulzi**. Then the road climbs once more up onto a limestone plateau. When you enter Sedini a yellow signpost, 'Domus de Janas', points left to a rock with some cave dwellings. In the centre of **Sedini** (232.5km) there is a shady green space with benches. Continue ahead past a right turn at the end of the village. The SS143 leads across isolated plateaus in the direction of Castelsardo. Just before crossing the SS200, the Rocca dell'Elefante, shown below, rises on the right-hand side of the road. Shaped by wind and weather, this rock of trachyte and limestone bears a striking resemblance to an elephant when seen from the west. Cross the SS200 and continue ahead into **Castelsardo** (247km ☙☛☛☛☛☛☛☛). Crowned by a ruined medieval castle which once belonged to the Genovese Doria family, the town is strategically placed on a rocky promontory jutting into the sea.





Walking

Over the last few years, walking on Sardinia has become quite popular. An increasing number of locals and visitors alike are beginning to explore the varied countryside on foot. This book covers some of the best walking on the island. For quick orientation, the fold-out touring map shows the general location of all the walks. *Do* follow the instructions closely and beware of attempting to walk cross-country — deep gorges and dense brushwood can make such a route either impassable or very hazardous.

The Sardinian Forestry Authority has issued a booklet, *Un'Isola di sentieri. 76 itinerari per il trekking in Sardegna*. It describes 76 official, waymarked walks, both linear and circular, divided over 12 areas, each with a large-scale map. It is available as a series of PDF files or, with some luck, you should be able to get it on the island or by writing ahead to: Ente Foreste della Sardegna, viale Luigi Merello 86, 09123 Cagliari, Italy. Downloading the PDF files is quite simple, although the web site is only in Italian (the files themselves are also in English). Go to www.sardegnaambiente.it/foreste. At the menu bar, look for 'Foreste e Parchi' and select 'Sentieri'. Then select an area from the menu or click on the interactive map. This will open the relevant area page. Now you have a choice: 'Scarica la brochure' will allow you to download the relevant map of the selected area (with walking notes), while 'Scarica tutti i documenti' will produce an overview of all maps for the 12 areas.

Waymarking, maps

Most walks in this book use distinct footpaths, trails and tracks that are all easily followed, although there is also the odd bit of cross-country walking. Few of the routes are **waymarked**, and there is little signposting — so you will have to rely on the descriptions and maps in this book. Some routes are cairned; experienced walkers will help maintain these cairns by keeping them 'topped up'.

The **maps** printed with the walks are based on the official Italian topographical maps and have been annotated to show new roads, walking routes, and other information which should be helpful. Should you wish to 'have a go' on your own, you might like to purchase some of these maps. The Italian national survey, Carta d'Italia, covers Sardinia in both

1:25,000 and 1:50,000 scale. As it is difficult to obtain these maps on Sardinia itself, if you want to buy them before you travel, contact your local specialist map supplier.

What to take

Equip yourself properly for each walk, bearing in mind the distance and the height at which you will be walking. It can be quite cool high up in the mountains — easy to forget, when you are based in a hotel down on the coast. Don't forget to take **raingear** (especially in spring), just for the odd rainy day. Waterproof clothing that 'breathes' (such as Goretex) is best, since it reduces sweating. It is also essential that you wear **sturdy walking boots**, with good grip and ankle support. Some walking routes are on loose soil or gravel, where you could easily lose your footing. A **telescopic walking stick** (or, better still, one for each hand!) is a great help on rough or steep terrain. They will increase your agility, ease the strain on your knees considerably and let you 'work' with the upper part of your body as well.

Take enough **food** and **water** with you on your walks, as well as emergency rations of high nutritional value, like chocolate, nuts and dried fruit. I would advise you *against* drinking any spring water, but the many proper fountains, clearly labelled *acqua potabile*, are safe (you'll see the locals taking the water in plastic containers). Take at least 1.5l of water with you on any walk over two hours. Sufficient **sun protection** is also important, especially from May to September. The intensity of the sun can be very high, even if there is some cloud, so *do* take suncream (SPF 12 upwards), a sunhat with wide brim and UV-protective sunglasses.

Below is the minimum recommended equipment (additional items are listed in the walk introduction as necessary):

walking boots (broken-in)	telescopic walking stick	rain gear plastic ground sheet	whistle first-aid kit
waterproof jacket	sunhat sunglasses	compass	picnic water
light fleece	suncream	torch	

Walkers' checklist

For your own safety, please remember:

- **At any time a walk may become unsafe.** If the route is not as described in this book, and your way ahead is not secure, or if mist closes in on a mountain walk, do not attempt to go on.
- **Never walk alone in remote areas.** If you are going to tackle a difficult walk, you should tell a responsible person

(eg someone in your hotel) *exactly* where you are going and at what time you plan to be back.

- **Do not overestimate your energy.**
- **Be properly equipped** (see notes above).
- Please bear in mind that **twilight** is much shorter in these southern latitudes than in northern Europe. Night falls quite suddenly on Sardinia.
- For one reason or another, a **walk may take much longer than expected**; take this into consideration.
- A **torch, whistle, compass, first-aid kit and mobile** weigh little, but could save your life.
- Finally, **do not take risks** or walk cross-country through uncharted terrain or without a map on unknown paths.
- Read the '**Important note**' on page 2 and the **Country code** below, as well as guidelines on grade and equipment for each walk you plan to do.

Country code

Agriculture is the main source of employment for the rural population on Sardinia. Although the landscape appears picturesque to us, for most people here life means hard work. People should be respected, as well as their land. These simple guidelines are obvious, but important:

- Help to protect the wildlife. (*By the way, snakes are seldom seen, and there are no poisonous snakes.*)
- Leave gates as you find them.
- Walk quietly, and do not frighten animals.
- Walk quietly.
- Don't take anything from the gardens or fields. You can buy fruit and vegetables cheaply at the local markets or directly from the farmer.
- Take all your litter away with you.

Landscape in the Marmilla



Organisation of the walks




























There are walks for all abilities in this book. You might begin by looking at the large fold-out touring map inside the back cover. Here you can see at a glance the overall terrain, the road network, and the orientation of the walking maps. There is at least one photograph for every walk, to give you an idea of the landscape.

Each walk begins with some basic planning information: distance/time, grade, special equipment and how to get there. Pay particular attention to the ascent. A total height gain of more than 500 metres/1600 feet is pretty tough going for the average walker. If the **grade** is beyond your scope, don't despair! There is sometimes a short or alternative version of a walk, and in most cases these are less demanding.

When you are on your walk, you will find that the text begins with an introduction to the overall landscape and then quickly turns to a detailed description of the route itself. **The words *path, trail, track* and *road* have specific meanings in the walking notes.** *Path* means footpath, not usually wider than 0.6m/2ft. *Trail* is used for old routes, worn by time, for example stone-cobbled trails such as old charcoal burners' routes. These are generally up to 2m/6ft wide. *Track* refers to an unsurfaced vehicle track, whether used by 4-wheel drives, farm vehicles or even motor cars. *Roads* are surfaced, with asphalt or concrete.

The **time checks** given at certain points always refer to the total walking time from the starting point of the walk, based on an average walking rate of 4km per hour and allowing an extra 15 minutes for each 100m/330ft of ascent. These time checks are not intended to pre-determine your own pace, but are meant to be useful reference points. Please bear in mind that these times include only brief pauses where you might stop to recover breath or orientate yourself. A walk might easily take you twice as long if you allow ample time for protracted breaks — picnicking, photography and nature-watching.

Below is a key to the **symbols** on the walking maps:

	primary road		spring, fountain, etc		church.shrine
	secondary road		picnic suggestion (see pages 14-16)		charcoal burners' terrace, limekiln
	minor road, street		best views		watchtower
	unsealed road		bus stop		cemetery
	track		railway station		picnic tables
	old trail		car parking		transmitter.pylon
	path, steps		building enclosure		map continuation
	main walk		castle, fortress		rock formation.mill
	alternative walk		quarry, mine.cave		electricity sub-station

Walk 6: CALA GONONE • CALETTA FUILI • CALA DI LUNA

See also photograph page 2

Distance/time: 10km/6.2km; 3h

Grade: moderate, with climbs totalling 190m/620ft. Some short sections involve a little bit of scrambling over rocks. In spring and late autumn you may have to wade through the lagoon at Cala di Luna to reach the beach and jetty.

Equipment: see pages 53-54; optional: swimwear; the bar/restaurant Su Neulagi at Cala di Luna is open during the season.

How to get there: 🚗 by car to Cala Gonone (Car tour 2 at the 287.5km-point). Park at the harbour. 🚌 There are also buses from Dorgali and Oliena; enquire about times at kiosks, visit www.arst.sardegna.it or telephone ARST: freephone 0800-865042.

To return: 🚤 by boat from Cala di Luna back to Cala Gonone. Regular sailings during the season (from Easter until end of September). Ticket sales and information on sailings at the harbourside kiosk in Cala Gonone. (Ticket office: tel 0784-93305; www.calagononecrociere.it)

Alternative walk: Caletta Fuili — Cala di Luna — Caletta Fuili (13km/8.1mi; 4h; moderate to strenuous, with ascents totalling 360m/1180ft). Access: 🚗 to/from the car park at the end of the road to Caletta Fuili. If the boat isn't operating, you can begin the walk at Caletta Fuili. Follow the main walk to Cala di Luna and return the same way.

Note: In spring and autumn you may have to wade through the lagoon when water is retained after rainfall behind the beach at Cala di Luna.

The crystal-clear colours of the sea, glaring-white limestone cliffs, and lush vegetation in all shades of green contrast wonderfully on the Golfo di Orosei. First you follow a road lined by oleanders, then an old shepherds' path which threads through coastal *macchia*, past some old charcoal-burning terraces, to Cala di Luna. Backed by towering limestone cliffs, this is arguably the most beautiful sandy bay on Sardinia. Set at the mouth of a gorge with an oleander-filled valley floor and a small lagoon, it is the perfect place to relax — knowing you can comfortably take the boat back to Cala Gonone.

Start out at the **HARBOUR** in **Cala Gonone**. Walk along the beach, then follow the seafront past hotels and restaurants. Leaving the last houses behind, past a car park, continue along the beach. Turn right up a small stepped path into the *macchia* when some rocks eventually block your way (there is a sign here, 'SPIAGGIA PER CANT'. Skirt a wire-mesh fence. Soon leave it behind and keep following the path a little further, then climb up some steps to the road and turn left to continue. Lined by beautiful oleanders, the road runs above the magnificent coastline, affording good views of the azure Golfo di Orosei. The road ends at a small **CAR PARK** above **Caletta Fuili (1h)**.

Here you look down into the rocky ravine of the **Codula**

Fuili, its mouth is fringed by a small sandy cove facing the sea. Mastic trees and splendid oleanders thrive on the gravelly floor, forming an almost impenetrable thicket. From the end of May, the oleanders here will be in full bloom. Descend steps down into the ravine (**1h05min**) and cross it. The path zigzags steeply uphill on the opposite side of the ravine. Ignore a faint path ascending steeply to the right after five minutes, and bear left on the main path, contouring for a few paces before rising again. Meet a fork immediately, and keep right, uphill, on the main path. (The path to the left descends to the Grotta del Bue Marino.)

Initially you scramble up a limestone outcrop. The stony path runs quite a distance inland, far away from the coastline, crossing rocks and scree through a mixed coastal *macchia* with some high trees. Most common are mastic trees, myrtle, wild olive trees, rock roses and tree spurge. Note, too, the beautiful old Phoenician



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junipers with their gnarled and twisted trunks. Keep an eye out for CHARCOAL BURNING TERRACES here and there as you tramp through the *macchia*.

Descend into a small valley, where you ignore a minor left turn; then climb again. Ten minutes later you pass the **Grotta Oddoana (2h15min)**, a limestone cave in the rock face to the right. From here you have to scramble down steeply over *breccia* (sedimentary rock composed of angular limestone fragments). When you reach the floor of the **Codula di Oddoana**, keep right on the ascending path, ignoring the left-hand fork down to Caletta di Oddoana.

From the slopes of **Frunco Nieddu** ('Black Hill', referring to the dark volcanic rock; **2h35min**) you enjoy a

Cala di Luna



first glimpse of Cala di Luna diagonally below. The path swings to the right, inland. A steep descent over loose stones takes you down to the wide valley floor of the **Codula di Luna (2h50min)**. Surrounded by a dense thicket of oleander, the river has created a brackish lagoon (*stagno*), which is very typical at the mouth of many Sardinian rivers. The whitish limestone called *pedra de luna* ('moon stone') is believed to have given the ravine its name.

Turn left (towards the sea) on the sandy valley floor, then turn right after some 50m/yds, crossing the thicket of oleanders and alder trees. Poisonous thorn-apples with their prickly capsules thrive on the valley floor. Go through a wooden gate. Soon you reach the **BAR/RESTAURANT SU NEULAGI.*** A few more paces will take you out to the magnificent sandy beach of **Cala di Luna (3h)**. Apart from swimming and sunbathing, you can inspect five **CAVES** which open at the bottom of the cliffs to the left. The **JETTY** from where the boat leaves is to the right, at the cliffs at the end of the beach.

*Note: In spring you may not be able to reach the bar/restaurant by heading directly towards the sea because there is too much water blocking your way. In this case you first have to go about 100m/yds to the right (inland), until you are almost level with the two caves that can be seen on the opposite wall. Now cross over to the other bank and follow the gravelly valley floor through scattered stands of oleander towards the sea. Join a path and follow it to the bar/restaurant.)

CHARCOAL-BURNING TERRACES AND LIMEKILNS

Up to the middle of the 19th century, mixed deciduous forests were common on Sardinia, but with the start of industrialisation clear-felling erased large areas of wood. The timber of the holm oak was used as fuel in the smelting of ores, for railway sleepers, and for the production of paper. By 1910 around one quarter of the total area of Sardinia had become deforested. Charcoal burners were used around that time everywhere in the hills. Their round stone terraces can still be commonly seen today on walks through the mountains.

Charcoal was an important fuel, used in blast furnaces and for the production of lime. In order to increase its combustibility and reduce its weight by 75-80%, the wood was smouldered in kilns. For this process the timber of the holm oak was stacked into cones on the charcoal-burning terraces and then covered with clay. Air could enter the structure from below, through the loose stone foundation, and escape through a central shaft in the kiln. After ten to twelve days the kiln was opened and the charcoal cooled with sand. The yield was generally around 2000 to 3000 kg (2 to 3 tonnes) of charcoal per kiln. Today it is not unusual to find the remains of limekilns in the vicinity of charcoal-burning terraces. They can be recognised as circular pits in the ground, surrounded by a wall. The limestone stacked in these hollows was covered with stone slabs and soil. In order to heat these limekilns, large quantities of charcoal were needed — approximately ten tonnes in order to extract 100 to 150 tonnes of quicklime in nine to fifteen days. Slaked lime was an important building material, used for mortar and for rendering.



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Sardinia Fifth edition

area covered by this book



walking map



touring map



Sardinia, the second largest island in the Mediterranean, is a paradise off the beaten track. The **car tours** and **walks** in this book will overwhelm you with their scenic diversity — ranging from rocky plateaus reminiscent of Africa to verdant hilly pastures, from towering mountains cloaked in fine oak woods to a turquoise sea edged by golden sand dunes. The fragrant Mediterranean maquis permeates the landscape, with an extravaganza of wild flowers bursting forth in spring. Steeped in history, Sardinia also boasts thousands of **nuraghi** still rising in the countryside — ancient stone towers testifying to the famous Nuragic civilization.

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