

This is a sample from the PDF edition of

Landscapes of

SARDINIA

a countryside guide



Andreas Stieglitz updated by Sunflower Books

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 144 pages, plus two pull-out maps, in the full book.





Sardinia, the second largest island in the Mediterranean, is a walker's paradise off the beaten track. Travellers are overwhelmed by its scenic diversity, ranging from rough and primeval landscapes to gentle, golden sand dunes, from scorching rocky plateaus and windswept plains reminiscent of Africa to rolling hills with lush pastures and dense brushwood, from towering mountains cloaked in fine oak woods to a turquoise sea that touches the rocky coast. The fragrant Mediterranean macchia permeates the scenery, with colourful rock roses and an extravaganza of wild flowers flourishing in spring.

Enclosing fields and pastures, a myriad of stone walls patterns the landscape. Animal husbandry is still of great economic importance, and there is a lovely pastoral feel to the Sardinian countryside. Flocks of sheep graze on verdant grassy slopes, moufflons and wild boar roam the wild and rugged highlands, and eagles hover silently above. Steeped in history, Sardinia boasts thousands of *nuraghi* standing proudly in the countryside, ancient stone towers testifying to the famous Nuragic civilisation. Yet another asset is the excellent cuisine, a tasty combination of refined Italian and hearty Sardinian culinary skills.

Both occasional walkers and ardent trekkers are delighted by the unexpected and spectacular walking opportunities on Sardinia. The roof of the island culminates in the Gennargentu massif with the adjacent Barbagia — very rewarding walking territory which takes in the Punta La Marmora, at 1834m/6015ft the highest elevation on the island. The wild limestone massif of the Supramonte extends further east, with its glaring-white cliffs, densely wooded slopes, steepsided ravines and craggy defiles.

Only a stone's throw away from the lively Costa Smeralda, the serrated granite ridges of the Gallura in the northeast attract walkers for their remoteness. The massive upheaval of Monte Limbara rises near Tempio, its weird rock formations sculpted over millennia by wind and weather.

Separated by the Cixerri rift valley, the southwest comprises two great mountain ranges cloaked in dense oak woods, the Iglesiente and Sulcis. Occasional spoil heaps, abandoned miners' villages and old mine galleries bear witness to the past, when this region was extensively mined.

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Today it is a landscape of great scenic splendour, with good trails snaking through the hills and stunning vistas from the mountaintops.

The basalt plateau of Giara di Gesturi, a windswept plain rising in the fertile Marmilla region, is famous for its semi-wild horses roaming the sparse cork oak woods. Countless paths criss-cross this uniform tableland, where stone walls and some marshes provide the only landmarks.

Getting out into the countryside, you quickly leave all traces of tourism behind. Taste the real flavour of the island as you follow the walks and car tours described in this book. You will be richly rewarded for any effort. *Landscapes of Sardinia* puts this miniature continent in your pocket.

Benvenuti in Sardegna!

A word of thanks

I would like to thank all my friends who accompanied me on many walks with infinite patience. They made this task even more wonderful. I am especially grateful to my mentor Reinhard Michel, a lover of the island whom I would like to thank for his company on many trips to Sardinia. Once again, I would like to thank my publishers, Sunflower Books, for their unflagging enthusiasm, and for updating this Sixth edition just prior to publication. Last but not least a very special thank you to all those lovely people I met on Sardinia, locals and travellers alike. Tante grazie a tutti!

Recommended books

Landscapes of Sardinia is a practical touring guide to countryside exploration which should be used in conjunction with standard guides. General guidebooks for Sardinia include those published by Dorling Kindersley (Eyewitness Guide), Insight Guides, Marco Polo, Rough Guides and Lonely Planet.

Landscapes of Corsica is in the same format as this guide — should you decide to 'island hop' the 12km over the sea from Santa Maria Gallura to Bonifacio.

Literature

Sea and Sardinia by D H Lawrence

Novels and short stories by Grazia Deledda, the Sardinian Nobel Prize winner

Padre Padrone by Gavino Ledda. The autobiographical novel of a shepherd's son.



How to get there
While most flights are seasonal, there are some yearround direct services from the UK, mostly to Cagliari (the capital) in the south: these vary from year to year, but check easyJet, Ryanair and BA. Of course there are many flights year-round via Italy. From around April to early November and especially in high season, budget airlines cover the route from Birmingham, Bristol, Edinburgh, East Midlands, Gatwick, Heathrow, Liverpool, Luton, Manchester, Stansted and Southampton. 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, Toulon, Savona or Livorno direct to Sardinia, or you could sail from Nice or Marseilles to Calvi or Bastia in northern Corsica, then drive down to Bonifacio for the short hop over to Sardinia (see www.corsicaferries.com).

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

retting 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 island. 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

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. Where a walk is accessible by bus, I have shown this, but please check the latest timetables at the website I suggest at the start of the walk or at the nearest bus



Narrow-gauge railway at Nurri station

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, ring the bell. Note that bus stops are not always clearly marked.

Buses (except for some urban lines) and trains are operated by ARST (www.arst.sardegna.it), but since their website is only in Italian, a more useful site may be www. sardegnamobilita.it, in English and interactive.

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

There 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 very reasonable prices. An excellent booking site for agriturismi (in English) is: www.agriturismo.it/en/farmhouse/sardinia.

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).

.**>**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 \blacksquare . Below is a small selection of particularly pleasant places you might enjoy; all are highlighted on the touring map by the symbol P. If the picnic is well off the beaten track, along the route of one of the walks, the \blacksquare 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 59 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; photo overleaf)

by \(\mathbb{\varphi}\): 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 \(\mathbb{\varphi} : \text{ 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*.

by \(\mathbb{\text{\tex

5 MONTE TONNERI (map page 104; nearby photos on 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



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



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

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.

of the 10.5km long access road to the state forest of Montarbu/ Monte Tonneri; no 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) ⊼

by 🖨: 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; photo overleaf) ⊼

by 🖨: 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 Pieta, the spring of Su Gologone (the largest on Sardinia) rises from a deeplyetched, turquoise-glimmering cleft in the limestone rock. There are some picnic tables and benches on the shady river bank.

8 SANTA VITTORIA (touring map; photo page 35)

by \(\mathbb{\text{\text{\text{e}}} : 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; photo page 111)

by A: 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 MANNAU (map page 124) 戸

by \(\mathbb{\text{\te}

11 SANTA CATERINA DI PITTINURI (touring map) ⊼

12 MONTE FERRU (touring map) A

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

13 SAN LEONARDO DE SIETE FUNTES (touring map; photo on pages 44-45) ≔

by \(\mathbb{\text{\tex

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 (map on pages 134-135; photo on page 59) 戸

by \boxminus : 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.

.**●**Touring

On Sardinia remote scenery can be enjoyed without even getting out of your car. Despite many modern 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

Tomprising the northeastern corner of Sardinia, the Comprising the northeastern I 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 (▲▲※暈), 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 junction of the SS133 and SS125, by traffic lights where you enter Palau (brown signpost: ROCCIA DELL'ORSO/MOLO TURISTICO). 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; **■**), turn left and continue to the signposted (paying) car park 20

for a short climb up famous Bear Rock.

Climbing Bear Rock

40min return; ascent 60m/200ft; 3€ covers parking; access 3€ pp From the car park follow the path through greenery and up between rock outcrops. Continue zigzagging up on cobbles to an old military lookout post on the rise. Here the path bends right and descends briefly, before leading to Bear Rock — and a magnificent view of the Archipelago della Maddalena off the northeastern tip of the island... and Corsica's mountains in the hazy distance.



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.

Return from Capo d'Orso the way you came, until you can fork left for Le Saline/Cannigione. Follow this road straight ahead, then, at the roundabout, take the left turn signed 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 (A 15km). Pass through the 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, just before reaching the resort of Baia Sardinia, take the signposted right turn (28km) to PORTO CERVO/OLBIA. 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).

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Ignore the left turn for Porto Cervo Marina (33.5km), but turn left after some 300m to PORTO CERVO. Take the first left after another 150m, just where the road curves right. (Watch out — this is a blind bend.) This road, 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. Return and continue to Porto Cervo (35km **▲▲※₽**), where you can park in the car park on your right. Follow the paved walkway off the zebra crossing 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, at the roundabout, take the signposted left turn for OLBIA/CALA DI VOLPE. As the road eventually winds downhill, you reach a road junction, where you first continue ahead towards CALA DI VOLPE/ROMAZZINO (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 drive to the Hotel II Piccolo Golf), a track forks 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 Tjunction (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 Cannigione. When you come to the main SS125 (64.5km), turn right for Arzachena. Two kilometres along, park in front of the Info Point/Museo Malchittu (66.5km M¾) 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 $\times \oplus \oplus$), where you take the signposted left turn for Tempio/Calangianus/ LUOGOSANTO (SS427) just beyond some traffic lights. Leave the town and keep ahead before taking the right turn for Tombe dei Giganti (72km; brown sign). Turn left after 2km (74km), to follow the signposted road for 400m to the visitor centre at the Tomba dei Giganti Coddu Ecchju (Vecchiu)★ (¶M; photo overleaf). 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 semicircular 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 lane as it bends slightly to the left (78.5km) and at a long farm building turn left towards Li Muri (79.5km 🗷). The Necropolis of Li Muri (17) is an interesting burial site dating from the late Neolithic period (3500-2700 BC). 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. Be sure to visit the nearby Sculpture Garden.

Return to the long farm building and turn left for 500m. Then leave your car in the car park on the left, to visit the **Tomba dei Giganti li Lolghi** (80km **ff**). Dominated by its high portal

Walk to the temple of Malchittu

40min return; ascent 40m/130ft Follow the gated field track to the left of the museum and tourist office. Soon you pass a farm on your right and ignore 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.

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 Ecchju (Vecchiu), an edge is cut into the portal stone as a high relief — a masterpiece of its time.

Return to the SP14 and turn right to continue. The tour now gradually leads into the interior of the Gallura, a 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



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 lenath. 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.

Photo: Tomba dei Giganti Coddu Ecchju (Vecchiu)

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. Corsican immigrants 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 A), from where steps climb over 100m/300ft to the ruined Castello di Balaiana (11) 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.

Ignore the right turn to Agliento, but take the next right turn signposted to Aggius (115km). Then fork right again, following signposting for Trintità 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 for TEMPIO P when you meet a T-junction (123km). Soon there is a car park on the right (by a large building), where you can enjoy the view (☜ឝ) 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 $\blacksquare P1$). On coming into Aggius keep right, then turn right at a T-junction. 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.

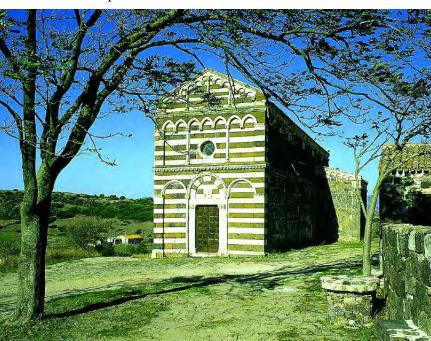
Go straight ahead through the town in the direction of OLBIA

Right: Lago del Coghinas

until, just after crossing the railway, you can take the signposted right turn to OSCHIRI. Go straight over a miniroundabout for Oschiri. At the next roundabout (after 0.7km) turn right to the SS392 and head left, soon leaving Tempio behind. The road winds its way gradually into wooded hills. You pass a signposted left turn to Monte Limbara/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 禹). 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





San Pietro delle Immagini (di Simbranos), near Bulzi

Coghinas comes into sight. Ignore a right turn signposted to Coghinas not long before crossing the reservoir. When you reach the main SS729 motorway just before Oschiri (163.5km), turn right towards SASSARI. Turn off right after 3km for N S DI CASTRO and meet a T-junction straight away: turn left towards N S DI CASTRO (brown sign). After well over 1km you reach the car park at the beautiful Romanesque pilgrimage church of N S di Castro (167.5km †P2), shown on page 16.

Return the same way to the motorway and turn right to continue towards Sassari. Then take the signposted right turn towards TULA/OZIERE (just past an overpass). Fork left for TULA at the 'stop' sign, then take the second

turn off the roundabout (MARTIS), to join the SS132. Soon ignore the right turn for Tula and continue ahead. 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 towards MARTIS when you enter Chiaramonti (202km 🛍 😭). 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 (\mathbf{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 \aleph), which is also set in a limestone region. At the end of the village, take the right turn signposted Foresta PIETRIFICATA CARRUCANA (small white sign). Soon you reach a fork where you keep right, following the one-way system. The petrified trunks of juniper trees from the Tertiary period (photo on page 16) 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 (P4; 210.5 km). 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 opposite, San Pietro delle Immagini (di Simbranos; 225km *). Note that

the sign is on the *left*. 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. As you enter Sedini don't miss the 'Domus de Janas' on the left (M), a huge rock with cave dwellings; it was not signposted a press date. 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 SS134 leads across isolated plateaus in the direction of Castelsardo. Just before crossing the SP90, the Roccia dell'Elefante, shown below, rises on the righthand 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 SP90 and continue ahead into Castelsardo (247km **†**■**≜**× $\mathbf{P}\Phi$). 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.





Despite no tradition of walking on Sardinia, over the last couple of decades, it 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 foldout touring map shows the general location of all the walks. $D\theta$ 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.

With the support of the EU, the Sardinian Forestry Authority issued a series of PDF files describing *in English* 76 island walks on both new and reclaimed trails. Unfortunately, these English files are no longer available. There is, however, an excellent website in Italian: sardegnasentieri.it.

Once on this website, you have several choices: clicking on 'MAPPA-INTERATTIVA' you can pinpoint the exact location for your walks. Clicking on 'LE NOSTRE CARTE' takes you to a wide range of territories and how many walks there are in each. Clicking on DA VEDERE OF ITINERARI lets you choose the type of walk that interests you — for instance, coastal, forestry, architectural, transhumance routes ...

There is a wealth of information on each page about grade, times, equipment, etc. There is also a map of the walk and a (brief) description of the route, together with a downloadable GPX file. So even if you do not read Italian, once you have used Google to translate the first walk, you'll know what to look for from the wealth of walks available.

Grading, signposting/waymarking, maps, GPSWe've tried to give you a quick overview of each walk's **grade** in the Contents. But some walks have shorter or alternative versions, and in the Contents we've only had space to show the *lowest* grade of a *main* walk: for full details — including easier versions — see the walk itself. Here is a brief overview of the two gradings applicable in this book:

- easy-moderate ascents/descents of no more than about 300-500m/ 1000-1800ft; good surfaces underfoot; easily followed
- moderate-strenuous ascents/descents may be over 500m/1800ft; variable surfaces underfoot — you must be sure-footed and agile; possible route-finding problems in poor visibility

Any of the above grades may be followed by:

possibility of vertigo — for those with no head for heights

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. Many of the routes are waymarked (usually with red/white stripes), and there is good signposting, often with route numbers and times to various destinations. A few routes are cairned; please help maintain these cairns by keeping them 'topped up'.

The maps in this book are based on Openstreetmap mapping (see page 2), but have been very heavily annotated from notes and GPS work in the field. It is a pity that we have to reproduce them at only 1:50,000 to keep the book to a manageable size; quite a few walkers buy both the paperback and download our pdf files so that they can print the maps at a larger size — or you can enlarge them on a photocopier. Should you wish to 'have a go' on your own, you can use the Sardena Sentiere maps referred to on the previous page — or you might like to purchase some of the Italian national survey maps, which cover 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.

Free **GPS** track downloads are available for all the walks: see the Sardinia page on the Sunflower website. Please bear in mind, however, that GPS readings should *never* be relied upon as your sole reference point, as conditions can change overnight. *But even if you don't use GPS*, the maps are now so accurate that you can easily compare them with the maps on your smartphone and pinpoint your exact position. And it's great fun opening the GPX files in Google Earth to preview

the walks in advance!

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.

Organisation of the walksThere 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 take you twice as long if you allow ample time for longer breaks—picnicking, photography and nature-watching.

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

s m u je	rimary road econdary road ninor road insealed road, street eep track	••• P □□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□	spring, fountain, etc picnic suggestion (see pages 15-18) best views bus stop railway station	*†	church.shrine charcoal burners' terrace, limekiln watchtower cemetery picnic tables.kiosk
2	ath, steps		car parking	ΑŤ	transmitter.pylon
n	nain walk		building.enclosure	Д	map continuation
a	lternative walk		castle, fortress	∆₩	rock formation.mill
2→ 0	ther described walk	⅍∩	quarry, mine.cave	>	electricity sub-station

Walk 1: CAPRERA

Distance/time: 13.6km/8.4mi; 3h30min

Note: The island of Caprera is popular with the locals on weekends. They tend to *drive* on the roads followed in this walk, so it's a good idea to do the walk on a working day, when the island is quiet and peaceful.

Grade: • moderate. Clear paths, gravel tracks and tarmac roads; total height gain of 300m/985ft. Some signposting, various panels (in Italian)

Equipment: see pages 57-58 How to get there and return: car ferry to La Maddalena and then by (4.5km). There are ferry sailings approximately every hour from Palau (where Car tour 1 begins) to La Maddalena (Isola di Caprera ferry; www.delcomar.it); tickets are sold in the harbour kiosk/cafeteria, where a timetable is also displayed. The sailing takes 15 minutes. Then leave La Maddalena by heading east along the front, keeping right at roundabouts and passing the military barracks. Follow signs to CAPRERA when the road moves inland. Cross a narrow causeway that takes you over to the neighbouring island of Caprera. From the end of the causeway, continue for about 350m/yds before parking by the roadside (41° 12.886'N, 9° 27.003'E), where a signposted footpath forks off right into the macchia. There is no suitable access by bus currently.



62 Landscapes of Sardinia

aprera ('Goat Island') is largely covered by light woodland and *macchia*. Most parts of the island were declared a nature reserve in 1980, to prevent them being developed. This walk initially threads through coastal *macchia*. A short and gentle climb onto the island's central ridge follows, from where there are magnificent views over the surrounding Archipelago della Maddalena. A gun emplacement dating back to World War II is seen on Poggio Rasu, and a short detour takes you up the island's highest peak. Finally, you stroll to the former retirement home and country estate of Guiseppe Garibaldi, Italy's most popular 19th-century freedom fighter.

Start out at the small CAR PARK by the side of the road (**O**). Follow the signposted footpath (PERCURSO 1) to the right (south), into the macchia. Among the many plants flourishing in this area are tree spurge, asphodels, rock roses, mastic trees, myrtle, gorse and acacias. Keep straight ahead on the main path past any short paths branching off right, down to the coast. Continue ahead when you reach a track junction below a BUILDING (seen up on a hill to the left; **15min**). The track soon passes a GROVE OF UMBRELLA PINES with picnic tables (1).

Turn right at the end of the grove, as indicated by an arrow fingerpost, passing a small old BUNKER. There is a small cove to your right in the Golfo di Stagnali, fringed by a coarse-sand beach of weathered granite — as are all beaches on the Gallurese coastline. Continue straight ahead on the main track until you join an asphalt road which you follow to the right. Bear left at the fork soon encountered (the 'Museo geomineralogico' is signposted to the right here). A short time later you reach a major junction of

> View to La Maddalena from the ferry crossing

tracks and roads. Here you take the first road on your left, which begins to climb gradually. Looking back, there is a sweeping view over the Archipelago della Maddalena with its many islands and indented coastlines. Beyond the strait of Bonifacio in the northwest, the neighbouring island of Corsica is seen in the distance.

You approach a gun emplacement dating back to the end of the 19th century, spread out



to the right, on the western flanks of Poggio Rasu. This peak is easily recognised by the transmitter mast on its shoulder. When the road bends to the left (2; 1h10min), a right turn would take you into the barracks, nestling with camouflaged rooftops covered by greenery on a flat patch of hillside. If, however, you carry straight on along the track from this bend in the road, you can walk on an embankment to the gun emplacement on Poggio Rasu ('Bare Hill'; **3**; **1h15min**). Some rusty iron girders testify to the bridge that once led across the moat, but since this bridge has become dilapidated, you have to go down to the right, into the moat, and climb back up on the other side. Built from local granite into the rocky outcrops, the wellcamouflaged gun emplacement, seen against the magnificent backdrop of the archipelago, is a

powerful evocation of recent history.

Return to the bend in the road at 2 and turn right to continue on the road. It keeps climbing for a short distance (looking back there is another good view of the military site) before it levels out and begins to descend. Leave the road in a slight left bend where two trails turn off right: take the trail to the left (PERCORSO 6). You pass a RUINED HOUSE some 10 minutes later, before meeting another road, where you turn right. Pass a CONCRETE CISTERN on the right and an old derelict FOUNTAIN on the left, on a bend (4); 1h45min).

Keep straight ahead on the road for another six minutes or so, until you reach a lay-by on your left. Continue ahead for about 50m/yds, then fork sharp right uphill on a trail (PERCORSO 7), to make a short detour. Climbing the





The peak of Monte Teialone — with its lookout post from WWII and forestry department weather station

trail, you reach a DILAPIDATED HOUSE. Take the steps that begin here, up to the highest peak on Caprera, Monte Teialone (6; 212m/695ft; 2h15min). The peak is crowned by an lookout post from World War II. The main peak is fenced-in because the forestry department runs a weather station up there.

Return to the road and turn right to continue. Eventually you pass a DERELICT HOUSE on the left (**2h45min**). Not far beyond it, follow the road as it bends left, ignoring the track straight ahead to Punta Galera. The asphalt runs out immediately and you reach a track junction where you turn down to the left (the track straight ahead leads up to a restored gun emplacement on Monte Arbuticci). Pass two turns on your right in quick succession and continue straight ahead on the main track.

The track winds down past a sharp left turn. Soon you reach a T-junction, where you turn left. Now follow this track straight ahead, ingoring any turn-offs. When you meet the end of a tarmac road at a turning circle, turn left uphill on a minor road for a short detour to the Casa Garibaldi: ignoring the agriturismo on your right, continue to climb straight ahead on a footpath. Reach the fenced-in property of the Casa Garibaldi and skirt it to the right along the fence, to reach the car park and MAIN ENTRANCE/ TICKET OFFICE (6; 3h15min). At the time of writing the entrance fee was $7 \in$, with concessions.

Return the same way to the turning circle and follow the road ahead past any turn-offs, back to the small CAR PARK where you set out (3h30min).

Sardinia

Sixth edition

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 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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