



Drive & Hike tour (DHSAR)

Wild Sardinia

*Wild nature and ancient culture along
the spectacular east coast of Sardinia*



TRIP NOTES

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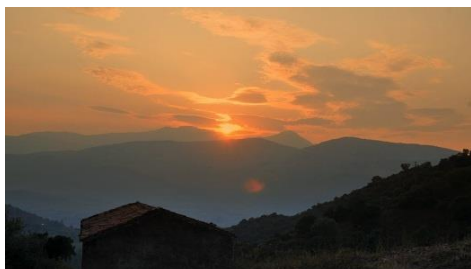
INTRODUCTION

The island of Sardinia has long been known for its dazzling sandy beaches and clear crystalline sea, and is immensely popular as a summer retreat not only for the happy few, but also the more ordinary tourist. Only recently have its many unspoilt natural and cultural treasures been receiving attention from the trekking crowd. This means that it is still possible to wander its many spectacular trails alone, enjoying the peace and quiet of a true hiker's paradise. Your trip will take you to the heartland of the wild Supramonte region and along Sardinia's east coast, without doubt the island's most spectacular area for hiking. Here sheer limestone cliffs coloured by wild flowers and the fruits of strawberry trees drop down vertically into the blue Mediterranean Sea, where little sandy beaches open up on vertiginous gorges. Small cultivated valleys carry the fruits of man's fatigues: above all olive groves and vineyards yielding splendid local wines. Wild animals such as wild boar, the Sardinian wild sheep or mouflons, and many species of birds of prey, including eagles, roam the barren karst plateaus of the mountain ranges occasionally descending into the verdant valleys where encounters with hikers are not uncommon.

During the first days of your trip you will explore the heartland of the Supramonte of Oliena. You may climb up to the high limestone plateau dominated by the area's highest peak Monte Corrasi, and walk through the fragrant Mediterranean maquis along the towering cliffs of Punta Sos Nidos enjoying wide panoramic views over the valley of Oliena and the Su Gologone Gorge. You'll walk through the lush, garden-like scenery of the Oliena Valley with its many olive groves and vineyards producing the splendid local 'Canonau' wine. Then you then set off from the Nuragbic village of Sa Oche with its sacred spring through the unspoilt Lanaittu Valley in the direction of the mysterious Nuragbic village of Mount Tiscali. From here you will then walk down to the amazing Su Gorropu Canyon passing through the 'Steps' of the Scala Surtana to reach the little town of Dorgali. Should you choose to have an extra day at Dorgali, you may well hike to the entrance of the amazing canyon and explore its first and most spectacular part, where the vertical limestone cliffs reach up to 400 metres high.

The following days you'll explore the stunning coastline, the famous Gulf Of Orosei, between of the fishing villages of Cala Gonone and Santa Maria Navarrese. You walk down to the sea along the spectacular Codula Fuili Gorge with its bizarre rock formations. Here you can also admire the remains of a Nuragbic village located on a natural terrace in the rock, with its panoramic view of the Gulf of Orosei. Then you travel on in direction of Baunei, where you make a beautiful round walk on the Golgo High Plateau. Visit the Su Sterru sinkholes, some of Europe's deepest, before walking down along the rocky path to Cala Goloritze, dominated by its 75m high Punta Salinas obelisk. Make sure you take your time for a refreshing dive, before walking up again along the Salinas plateau to your pick up point at Golgo again. An extra day might see you walk down to the romantic bay of Cala Luna along the path that follows the bottom of the Codula di Luna Gorge. Finally you will walk from on a wonderful path along the coast to the Pedra Longa monolith and back again enjoying the most amazing views on the Coast of Orosei.

Your trip will take you on a discovery of the many natural and cultural treasures of one of the most impervious regions of the beautiful island of Sardinia, yet also offers the opportunity to enjoy some of the area's nicest beaches and most crystalline seas. An ideal mix of beautiful hiking and some lazy relaxation, topped off by Sardinia's fine traditional cuisine and strong honest local wines.



Please note: this is a moderately easy tour which is suitable for those who have some experience of walking and a good general physical condition. Most of the walks are on good paths, sometimes on steep terrain. Average walking times: approx. 3 to 6 hours each day.



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DAY-TO-DAY PROGRAMME

One of the main characteristics of a Genius Loci Travel 'Drive & Hike, Walk & Discover' Tour is the freedom you have in putting together your own daily programme. You're the guide, you decide! The programme below can easily adapted to your needs – and availability of time.

In our route notes you will find descriptions and maps for several walks and trips, giving you the opportunity to choose freely what you want to do every day. The only things we fix for you are your hotels, chosen from the nicest and best located ones available. All this means that after a day's worth of freely exploring the wonderful island of Sardinia, you will not have to worry about finding a place to eat and sleep at night, but can relax and reload your batteries for your next day's discoveries.

Day 1 – Arrival in Cagliari

Arrival in Cagliari. From Cagliari you can drive by car to nearby Barumini (about one hour drive). But, before driving there, you should visit the coastal lakes with its colonies of pink flamingos, unique for Europe! And perhaps have a drink on the nice Poetto beach. In case you still have time you can already visit the Nuraghe of Barumini today. They are at their best towards the end of the afternoon. Don't be too late at your hotel though, so that you can enjoy a stroll through the nice village and a drink in the beautiful garden. At night you can have a great dinner based on local specialties in a beautiful place just next to the hotel.

Accommodation: Gesturi - Hotel****

Day 2 – The high plain of Gesturi

Today's walk will bring you onto the highplain of Gesturi. The altopiano (high plain), also known as La Giara dei Gesturi – Sa Jara in local dialect is a unique plateau of volcanic origin. Relatively isolated from the surrounding countryside it now is a beautiful natural wilderness, stretching out for about 12 by 4 km. A savannah like landscape of cork oak trees and bushes, with a few small lakes, the area is home to Sardinia's last population of wild horses, the so-called cavallini. There are several round walks possible, which can fill easily the whole day. But do take your time also the visit the small villages, and in case you did not do this yet, the Nuraghe of Barumini.

Accommodation: Gesturi - Hotel** – Meals included: 1 breakfast**

Day 3 – Oliena

Today you travel on to Oliena, with several interesting stops along the road. Also is it possible to stay a few days in Aritzo, before travelling on to Oliena (see programme below).

Day 1 – Arrival in Oliena

Arrival in Oliena. After settling in your hotel you may freshen up and opt to make already a short walk climbing up to the high plateau of Punta Sos Nidos, a perfect introduction to the wild nature of the Supramonte. In the evening you will enjoy a nice dinner based on local specialties in your hotel's restaurant.

Accommodation: Oliena - Hotel* – Meals included: 1 dinner.**

Day 2 – Roundwalk Oliena

This morning you will walk through a wild limestone landscape, beneath the towering walls of the Supramonte's highest peaks. This vast area is an isolated land of shepherds, slashed with deep gorges and inaccessible peaks that are home to a rich fauna of eagles, mouflons, foxes, wildcats, and wild boar. From the mountain's flanks there are airy views across the high belvederes and karst plateaus of the Supramonte and into the fertile valley of Oliena.



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Halfway through your walk you will arrive at the beautiful Su Gologone spring, an opening in the limestone that is the only source of running water in the area. After a well-deserved lunch break you can choose to continue walking to Oliena or travel back there by private transfer. Walking back to Oliena, you pass through a pleasant agricultural landscape of olive groves and ‘Canonau’ vineyards. After crossing a small ancient bridge of Roman origin you then arrive at Oliena where you can freely wander through the old village centre before being picked up again for the ride to your hotel where you have your dinner.

Accommodation: Oliena - Hotel* – Meals included: 1 breakfast, 1 dinner.**

Distance: 11 (21) km. – Walking time: 4 (7) h. – Ascents & descents: + 200 m./- 800 m. (+/- 850 m.)

Day 3 – Mount Tiscali & Sa Oche

After breakfast you begin your day with a short drive into the valley of Lainaittu, past the grotto of Sa Oche. Here you can pay a visit to the amazing Nuraghic temple of the Sacred Spring, discovered only recently. You then start your great day walk, which will bring you into the homeland of the Nuraghic people. You start with a rough stretch climbing up towards Mount Tiscali. The underground village of Tiscali, situated in a large sink hole (doline) at the top of the mountain, is perhaps the most scenic archaeological site you have ever seen! Then, after a stop at a great viewpoint, overlooking the Flumineddu River and the Su Gorropu Gorge, one of the most impressive natural beauties of Sardinia, you re-descend to the lush valley of the Sa Oche, where you can now take the time to visit some grotto's and the archaeological sites, before driving on to your next hotel at Dorgali. In the evening you will enjoy a hearty dinner and have plenty of opportunity to taste the heady local ‘Canonau’ wine.

Accommodation: Dorgali - Hotel* – Meals included: 1 breakfast, 1 dinner.**

Distance: 10 (13) km. – Walking time: 4 (6) h. – Ascents & descents: + 550 m./- 500 m. (+ 450 m./- 400 m.)

Day 4 – Exploring Dorgali & the Codula Fuili Gorge

Today you walk from your hotel to the centre of the little town of Dorgali, well-known for its artisan tradition of wood and leather working. Then, from Dorgali, you climb up from the Flumineddu Valley to the saddle of Monte Tuili. From here you can see the entire Supramonte! You cross the saddle through an old rock-hewn tunnel and then start walking down towards the Codula Fuili Gorge. While walking through the fragrant Mediterranean *maquis* you will marvel at the fractured vertical cliffs of the gorge and be able to glimpse the dazzling white beach of Cala Fuili. Along your route you also have the opportunity to visit the remains of a tall nuraghe, situated on a natural panoramic terrace. A small path then takes you along the coast to the little village of Cala Gonone where you will have plenty of time to relax on the beach and have an ice cream or refreshing drink before taking the local bus back to Dorgali where you can be picked up for your private transfer (optional) back to the hotel. In the evening you can relax with a nice aperitivo on the hotel's panoramic terrace before having yet another great dinner based on local specialities.

Accommodation: Dorgali - Hotel* – Meals included: 1 breakfast, 1 dinner.**

Distance: 15 km. – Walking time: 5 h. – Ascents & descents: + 400 m./- 580 m.





Optional Extra Day - Gorge of Gorropu

On this extra day you have the opportunity to walk to the amazing Gorge of Gorropu, sculpted by the forces of the Flumineddu River. After breakfast you drive from your hotel down into the valley, to the trailhead of today's path, near the modern bridge over the river.

From here you follow an easy path upstream along the river passing through the fragrant Mediterranean maquis coloured by wild flowers and the red fruits of the strawberry trees. When arriving near the gorge you can climb down into it. Local guides will explain the nature and geology of the amazing canyon to you after which you are free to walk in and explore this eerie wonder of nature on your own. By climbing over huge boulders and passing through narrow passages you reach the point where the base of the gorge is only 5 m. wide! From here you turn back to the entrance of the gorge, and backtrack your route to pick up your car and drive back to the hotel. Dinner is in the hotel's restaurant again.

Accommodation: Dorgali - Hotel***

Distance: 13 km. – Walking time: 4 h. – Ascents & descents: +/- 280 m.

Day 5 – From Dorgali to Santa Maria Navarrese

This morning you drive from Dorgali in southern direction, along one of the most beautiful roads of the island, with great views over the Gulf of Orosei and the bare Supramonte peaks. Your destination is the medieval church of San Pietro, on the high plain of Golgo above Baunei. From here you make a great round walk through an amazing, almost 'Far West' landscape. Your walk will take you past the great sinkhole of Su Sterru, and a number of natural ponds. From the high plain you then descend towards the coast along the magnificent gorge leading to the little bay of Cala Goloritzè dominated by its tall rock needle of Punta Salinas reaching over 75 m. tall. Here you have time for a refreshing bath in the crystalline water where up until a few years ago monk seals still swam around. You then walk back up from the little bay to the Golgo high plain by way of the Serra Salinas, offering beautiful views of the coast towards Porta Quau. Through Mediterranean maquis and holm oak forest you reach the high plain again where you have the time for a drink at the 'Rifugio', before continuing to your hotel in either the charming village of Baunei or in Santa Maria Navarrese, where you can spend the next two nights in a nice family-run hotel near the sea. This evening you will dine at the hotel restaurant.

Accommodation: Santa Maria Navarrese - Hotel***

Distance: 13 km. – Walking time: 5 h. – Ascents & descents: +/- 600 m.

Optional Extra Day - Cala di Luna

On this extra day you have the opportunity to walk down the stunning gorge 'Codula di Luna' to the wonderful little bay of Cala di Luna with its dazzling white sandy beach. After breakfast you will be brought to the start of the walk near Teletotes, between Baunei and Dorgali. From here you then walk all the way down to the coast, following a small trail running along the mostly dry stream bed. You will admire the most bizarre rock formations while passing through the midst of colourful oleander trees. At the end of the walk you arrive at the sandy Cala Luna Beach, an ideal spot for a refreshing swim. You will then be picked up by boat for the return trip to Santa Maria Navarrese, gliding along high vertical cliffs over the crystalline sea. In the evening you are free to go out for dinner..

Accommodation: Santa Maria Navarrese - Hotel ***

Distance: 12 km. – Walking time: 4 h. – Ascents & descents: + 80 m./- 250 m.

Day 6 – The Wild Coast south of Santa Maria Navarrese

Your last walking day is dedicated to the wild coast immediately south of Santa Maria Navarrese. After breakfast you walk from your hotel through the village of Santa Maria Navarrese to the trailhead of the path leading south along the steep rocky coast in the direction of the limestone monolith of Pedra Longa (of course you can also drive here). You will pass through fragrant Mediterranean maquis dotted with wild flowers and small shady patches of holm oak.



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During this first part of the walk you will enjoy marvellous views of the spectacular coast of the Gulf of Orosei and the towering Pedra Longa. After arriving at the gigantic rock jutting out of the sea you can climb down to its base for some impressive views from below, before climbing up the quiet tarmac road to the mountain saddle dominated by the Monte Scoine and the Monte Oro. From here an incredibly panoramic gravel road takes you back in the direction of Santa Maria Navarrese. The view includes the whole of the bay of Arbatax with its coastal lagoons and red basaltic rocks, against the back drop of the Ogliastra Mountain Ranges. At the end of the walk a short steep descent takes you back down to Santa Maria Navarrese. In the evening you are free to go out for dinner in one of the nice little restaurants in the little village.

Accommodation: Santa Maria Navarrese - Hotel***

Distance: 15 (24) km – Walking time: 4-7 h. – Ascents & descents: +/- 600 m. (+/- 1250 m.)

Day 7 – Departure

End of trip. After breakfast you drive back to the airport or other destinations. Optional extension into the real 'heart' of the Gennargentu National Park, with a stay in Aritzo:

Day 7 – Free day: Sightseeing & Walking

There are many different options for walking & sightseeing today. In the morning you will drive inland, and finally arrive at a beautiful hotel near the charming little village of Aritzo. But before getting there you will have several options for amazing walks through a stunning landscape. We suggest the short roundwalk around the Pedra Liana, but also the walks near Aritzo itself are worth exploring. As a last option you can as well opt for a lazy morning on the beach and then do a discovery tour through the inland of the Ogliastra Province. Don't be too late at your hotel though, as you can enjoy the pool and the spa there. At night you'll have a great dinner based on local specialties on the premises of the hotel.

Accommodation: Aritzo - Hotel***

Day 8 – The highest peak of Sardinia

Today's walk will bring you to Sardinia's highest point, Punta La Marmora (1834 m.). First you drive up from Aritzo to the starting point of your walk at the mountain refuge of Sa Crista at S'Arena, high up the Gennargentu mountains, passing along the western fringe of the Gennargentu and Gulf of Orosei National Park, offering splendid panorama's on the valley of Aritzo and Desulo to the west and on the Girgini forest to the east. Then you start walking from the mountain refuge of Sa Crista (1502 m.), passing over Sardinia's second highest peak Bruncu Spina (1828 m.) up to the very top of Sardinia. You walk through a bare, windswept landscape covered only by low ground hugging shrubs and rocks. Throughout April and the beginning of May you may still find snow covering part of the path. Paths follow the mountain's flank or crest, so you walk mostly on gentle slopes, except for some short sections leading up to the actual peaks of Bruncu Spina and Punta La Marmora. During your walk you may see mouflon, eagles and small groups of horses grazing on the mountains flanks. During spring and early summer several wild flowers will spot your walk with different colours. However during late summer and autumn you will find an essentially bare landscape greeting you.

Accommodation: Aritzo - Hotel***

Day 9 – Departure

End of trip. After breakfast you drive back to the airport (or travel independently to other destinations).



TOUR DETAILS

ACCOMMODATION & MEALS

Accommodation is mainly on a half-board basis in 3-star hotels and equivalent agriturismos. All rooms have en-suite facilities. Dinners are included except on day 6 in Santa Maria Navarrese when you are free to organise your dinner from the wide choice of restaurants in the village. No picnic lunches are included in the tour price. Materials for picnics can be purchased in the villages where you'll be staying or you can ask your accommodation holder to prepare a lunch packet for you.

Nights 1 & 2: The first two nights you are staying in a beautifully located 3-star hotel near Oliena. From your hotel, right underneath the high peaks of the Supramonte, you enjoy a wonderful panoramic view over the valley of Oliena.

Nights 3 & 4: These nights are spent in a comfortable 3-star family-run hotel near Dorgali, in the valley of the Flumineddu River. Meals are based on traditional Sardinian cuisine.

Nights 5 & 6: These nights you stay in a cosy 3-star hotel in the little fishing village of Santa Maria Navarrese, at walking distance from the seaside.

Nights 7 & 8: *The final nights you stay in a beautiful 4-star hotel near the little village of Aritzo. One of the most authentic and best hotels of Sardinia.*

INCLUDED

- 6 nights accommodation – BB/HB
- 2 nights Agriturismo/Hotel in Oliena *** - HB
- 2 nights Hotel in Dorgali*** - HB
- 2 nights Hotel in Baunei or Santa Maria Navarrese *** - BB
- 2 nights Hotel in Aritzo **** - (1 HB + 1 BB)
- Meals: 8 breakfasts, 4 dinners
- Private transfers as specified
- Extensive route notes, with description of the route & tourist information
- Maps at 1 : 25.000 scale (or better)
- GPS-tracks for each walk
- 24/7 h. assistance

NOT INCLUDED

- Departure & city taxes
- Visa & Travel Insurance
- Drinks and meals not mentioned in the itinerary
- Optional additional tours or activities
- Tips
- Items of personal nature



LEVEL OF DIFFICULTY

Moderate: In the standard programme there are some more difficult walks, which include some longer sections uphill, sometimes on paths with rough surfaces. Most of the trails are well maintained. However, often the most difficult parts of the walks can be shortened and/or avoided. Also some longer options are available.

Fitness: High standard of fitness is not necessary but clients should be able to walk for up to 5 hours a day, even in hot and dry conditions. Some shorter and longer options are available.

Waymarking: Few trails are waymarked, but they can easily be found using your route descriptions and maps.

TOUR VARIATIONS

One of the main characteristics of a Genius Loci Travel 'Drive & Hike, Walk & Discover' Tour is the freedom you have in putting together not only your own daily programme, but also the length of the tour and the places to visit. The above programme is only an example of what is possible. It is a well-balanced programme, which shows you the great variety of this part of Sardinia, both the authentic inland areas, as well as the stupendous coastline, a unique combination of archaeological treasures and a stunning nature.

However, according to your interests we can easily adapt the programme to your demands. More mountains, more sea, more culture, more relax.... You decide!

EXTRA NIGHTS

It is possible to include extra nights in any of the towns en route. We strongly recommend an extra day to explore the Gorropu Canyon, as well as an extra day to walk through the 'Codula di Luna' to the splendid beach of Cala di Luna. *Extra walking or sightseeing options can be provided as indicated in the day-to-day programme.*

EXTENSIONS

Longer versions of this tour are available. When starting in Cagliari we recommend two nights in central Sardinia, and make some walks onto the beautiful high plain of the Giara, the only place where wild horses still roam around and explore the impressive *nuraghe* settlements of Barumini. It is also possible to extend the tour with one or more nights in Alghero, Olbia or Cagliari or in several other towns or tourist locations.

Extra walking or sightseeing options will be provided.

UPGRADE

It is possible to book an upgrade in some of the places en route. Details and prices on request.

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