

## **WELCOME TO ALGHERO**

A jewel set in the most beautiful stretch of coast of the Mediterranean, illuminated by the crystal-clear blue of the sea and the magnificence of art. This is Alghero. Nature has endowed it with beaches of the finest sand, blades of rock rising from the waves, caves that are thousands of years old and a climate to be envied. Man has enriched it with the most elegant campaniles and a historic centre without equal, the splendid fruits of Catalan presence. This is why Alghero has been a town for elite holiday-makers since the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, long before Sardinia became a destination for mass tourism. Discover all the charm of a dream that has shone unchanged for more than a thousand years.

## HOTEL VILLA LAS TRONAS: HISTORY

Hotel Villa Las Tronas rises at the edge of the sea, on a promontory between Cala Lavatoio in the north and Cala Capone in the south. A centuries old park separates it from Lungomare Valencia. The name *Las Tronas* ("the pulpits" in *algherese*) derives from the characteristic shape of some of the rocks, now largely eroded by the sea. The villa's origins date back to around 1880, when it was built on the ruins of an ancient watch-tower by Alessandro, the third Count of St. Elia (Elijah) and was initially destined to be a hunter's cabin.



In 1910 the piers and town walls were built, aimed at ensuring the necessary privacy for guests, while between 1918 and 1920 Don Luigi Arborio Mella, the fourth Count of St. Elia, did important renovation work, urged on by his English wife Lady Rosamond Marke Wood: the building took on its shape vaguely inspired by the medieval castle, following the fashion of the time and the rank of the family.

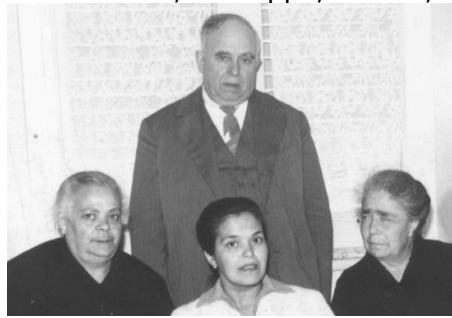


His brother Alberto had in the meantime become *Maestro di Camera* (Chamberlain) for Pope Pius XI, and kept this rank with Pius XII, too. The villa thus became a meeting-place for the best society of the epoch; the Romanov princesses and Italian Royalty were habitual guests, in summer to swim in the sea, in winter for hunting.



*Don Luigi Arborio Mella, fourth Count of St. Elia (1873-1955).  
Gran Cordone dell'Ordine della Corona d'Italia; Grande Ufficiale dell'Ordine dei S.S. Maurizio e  
Lazzaro; Balì del Sovrano Ordine Militare di Malta; Senatore del Regno;  
Gran Mastro delle Cerimonie di Corte di S.M. Vittorio Emanuele III Re d'Italia.*

In 1959 Francesco Arborio Mella, fifth Count of St. Elia, sold the villa to the husband and wife Leonardo Masia and Giuseppina Fonnesu, who turned it into a hotel and donated it to their children, Giuseppe, Teresa, Adriana and Battista.



*Il Cav. Leonardo Masia tra la moglie Giuseppina Fonnesu (a sinistra) e la consuocera Caterina La Spina.  
Al centro la figlia Adriana.*

Among their first clients were the dramatist, Samuel Beckett and the actors, Virna Lisi, Ugo Tognazzi, Liz Taylor and Richard Burton.

In 1961 another floor was built and the villa restored by Cavaliere (Sir) Andrea Trova, Teresa's husband, taking on its current form; in the meantime Nino La Spina, Adriana's lawyer husband, helped to manage the administrative aspects of the hotel. The atmosphere thus featured an unusual "double insularity": the La Spina family were in fact Sicilian. Many pieces of antique furniture present in the hotel actually came from the Sicilian homes of the La Spina family.



In 2006 the villa obtained the "five star hotel" classification.

**HOTEL VILLA LAS TRONAS:  
WHERE WE ARE**

*Maritime transport*

Porto Torres - 30 km  
Olbia - 150 km  
Golfo Aranci - 170 km  
Cagliari - 240 km

*Airports*

Alghero - 10 Km  
Olbia - 150 km  
Cagliari - 230 Km

## HOTEL FACILITIES

During your stay at the Hotel you can enjoy a series of exclusive opportunities to satisfy your every desire. You will find below some information on what Hotel Villa Las Tronas is able to offer to make your visit unforgettable.

### **Beauty Center**

The Hotel is equipped with a brand new Wellness Centre.

The Beauty Center and gym are already in use, whereas the covered, heated swimming-pool with sea-water and swimming against the current, the fun showers, sauna, Turkish bath and Kneipp walkway will be ready in the coming months. Please ask for information at the Reception.

The Villa Las Tronas Beauty Center offers guests whole-body massage, facial treatment, manicures and pedicures, sun showers and hydromassage.

The gym has Technogym cardiofitness equipment.

Appointments may be made for Beauty & Fitness services every day from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. and from 4 to 7 p.m., excluding Fridays; appointments for Fridays should be made at least 24 hours earlier at the Reception.

A full price list is available in your room.

### **Panoramic restaurant**

The panoramic restaurant, open also to clients not staying at the Hotel, offers delicious meals renewing the sumptuous Mediterranean tradition. Dinner is served by candlelight and often accompanied by classical music played live.

Breakfast is served from 8 to 10.30.

Dinner from 8 to 9.30 p.m. It is advisable to book early.

*Brunch* is served in summer from 1 to 2.30 p.m.

Every evening from 7 to 9 p.m. an aperitif is offered.

### **Special events**

The Hotel will be happy to organise receptions and banquets, on request, for up to 70 people.

### **Meeting room**

The Hotel's meeting room can accommodate up to 20 people.

### **Billiard room**

### **Open-air swimming pool with sea-water**

In summer the external panoramic swimming pool with sea-water is available.

The pool is open and attended from 10.30 a.m. to 1.15 p.m. and from 4.30 to 7.30 p.m. It is best to ask the receptionist to introduce you to the pool attendant.

### **Wet-dock**

The ancient quay is protected from the *mistral* but not from south-westerly winds; when meteorological conditions permit, small boats can be tied there during daytime, but have to be moored during night hours. When entering and leaving the quay the engine must be switched off and oars used, to the distance stated in Coastguard measures in force.

There is no quay attendant, but the use of mooring facilities is free.

### **Park**

The hotel is situated in more than 18,000 sq. m. of private park: an oasis of greenery and tranquillity that will make your stay even more relaxing.

### **Bicycles**

For those who wish to visit the surrounding area with due calm, some bicycles are available for booking free of charge.

### **Sport fishing**

The piers and terraces facing the sea lend themselves to sport fishing in winter: fishing rods are available for booking free of charge.

### **Internet**

WIFI connection is free. Those who do not have their notebook with them can use an internet point situated on the ground floor of the Hotel free of charge.

### **Heliport**

### **Private parking**

### **Pets**

Small dogs and cats are welcome. A grooming service is available on request.

### **Special offers**

Those who love Villa Las Tronas have the right to special tariffs (very special for the period between November and March). Details are available at the Reception or on our internet site [www.hotelvillalastronas.it](http://www.hotelvillalastronas.it)

### *DRESS*

*Since true elegance is not shown by clothes but by refined ways, we consider that everyone has the right to dress as they wish. One small exception: during the holiday season in all public areas (lounges, billiard room, restaurant, bar...) kindly wear at least a coverup and do not sit down in a wet costume.*

## ALGHERO

### Background history

The city owes its origins to the powerful Doria family of Genoa who, in the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century, had a fishing village fortified, to which they gave the name *Aleguerium* (*S'Alighera* in Sard, *L'Alguer* in Catalan) due to the algae deposited along the coast by high seas. Because of its geographical position, Alghero soon became an important military port, a bulwark of the Doria in the Mediterranean. In 1353 the town was overcome by the Catalan-Aragonese, who, supported by the Venetians, harshly defeated the Genoese at the naval battle of Porto Conte.

In 1354 Pietro IV of Aragon deported the original population, repopulated the town with Catalans and began massive fortification work, after which the town became an impregnable stronghold. Further work was carried out in the following centuries, particularly thanks to the efforts of Ferdinand II of Aragon, known as *the Catholic king* (1452-1516). In November 1511 Ferdinand II signed the Treaty of Westminster with Henry VIII of England, setting out the terms of a military alliance against their common enemy, France. Alghero then became an important cornerstone in strategies to curb French naval power.

From the 16<sup>th</sup> Century onwards, the walls with their vertical profile marked by high, narrow towers were replaced by lower, solid ones with a shoe-shaped profile with interspersed mighty towers on a circular plan. Three forts were built landward – *the Maddalena*, *Montalbano* and the *Sperone*. Finally, in the 18<sup>th</sup> Century building was completed of the most advanced defence constructions: the three ravelins and the moat. After Alghero was eliminated from the circle of military fortresses (1867) between the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> and the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> Centuries, the wall curtains and the front buildings of the land face were demolished, with the aim of enabling “development of the town”. Nowadays, apart from the marine face, of the ancient works only seven towers can be seen: *Porta Terra*, *Sulis*, *San Giacomo*, the *Polveriera*, the *Garitta Reale*, *Sant'Elmo* and *Maddalena*.

### The three forts of Alghero

**The Maddalena fort** has a polygonal structure, like that of the Sperone. Of the three forts of the 1500s it is the only one still existing, though only the perimeter walls and traces of some internal structures remain. After the demolition of the land face fortifications at the beginning of the 1900s, the fort's powerful rampart was emptied. Up until 1970 it was the headquarters of caulkers who built the renowned *Latin sail* sailing boats of Alghero (*spagnolette*). The traces of arches marking the central part are of particular interest; they are probably related to underground spaces now partially filled in. The circular structure along the eastern perimeter of the fort should also be noted, a front building of the fortifications which, not long after construction lost its function as the fort face progressed towards Porta Terra.

The stairway and openings towards the harbour were built during the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century; they separate the eastern part of the fort from the western part, where the Maddalena Tower is situated and some other structures probably connected with the fortifications of the Catalan period.

An open-air theatre was recently built inside the Maddalena fort.

The remains of the **Montalbano** fort, one of the three bulwarks that characterised the fortified circuit of the town where it faced the dry land, are to be found in the area between the Banco di Sardegna building and the Town Market, next to San Giovanni Tower. As can be seen from historic maps, the Montalbano fort had a pentagonal plan, with a rampart in the central zone, a glacis along the perimeter and a courtyard close by the walls.

The structure of this fort came to light during restoration work on the area, which was previously used as a parking lot for Municipal vehicles. After the fort structure was demolished in the early 1900s, the area was used as a courtyard for the Carabinieri barracks, built close by the Via Simon walls. Part of the area was used for stables, as can be seen from the remains of the cobbled paving and the rings for tying up animals found along the wall of the Mercato Civico – which also goes back to this period – and the drinking-trough placed near the two doors built into the walls to ensure a passage between the barracks and its courtyard. The access ramp to the fort was left in use, though the opening to it was widened, new hinges inserted, two side-posts and a threshold in basalt. Nothing remains any longer of the **Sperone fort**: it was demolished at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century. From written and iconographic sources we know it had a polygonal shape, like that of the Maddalena, and that it almost entirely enclosed the tower of the same name, situated at the south-west corner of the fort.

### **The seven towers of Alghero**

**Porta Terra Tower** was built at the beginning of the 1500s in an epoch previous to completion of the curtains and fortresses: the project by Giorgio Palearo Fratino (1573) shows in fact the towers as already existing. Re-baptised "Porta a Terra" during the Savoy period, it was originally called Porta Reial, that is, main entrance to the city, with the coat of arms in stone of the Crown of Aragon once placed above it, now conserved inside the tower. Up until the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century, an epoch during which the city was demilitarised, the gate, which permitted entry and exit to the city towards the interior, was closed at dusk ("*Chi è dentro è dentro, chi è fuori è fuori!*" – "Those who are in are in, those who are out are out!" – the guards would shout). The tower is clearly of the 1500s type, with a portal in well-squared sandstone ashlar and a perimetral structure obtained with the "sack" technique. Its unusual quality consists of having a quadrangular forepart, which probably existed before it was built. Unlike the other towers, the lower floor does not have a ribbed vault, whereas this can be seen on the top floor, where a door opens which led to the communication trench of the curtain. Two other doors are visible on the ground floor; in the one facing the harbour, characterised by the typical Catalan *dovella* pattern, i.e. the round arch in trapezoid ashlar, the war memorial has been placed.

Once called *San Michele* in the 1500s and the *di Mezzo* in the 1600s, **San Giovanni Tower** had an important strategic-military defence function, in that it enabled rapid connection with the Portal Tower (Porta Terra) and with that of the Esperó Reial. Situated close by the impressive Montalbano fort, of which only a few ruins remain today, the massive construction presents a vault with radial ribbing. The tower was initially higher and was most probably made smaller in the 1730s: its entrance doorway was originally at the base of the upper floor, to which access was by a tunnel through the wall of the curtain.

The **Torre di Sulis**, once Torre dell'Esperó Reial, owes its name to the Cagliari paladin Vincenzo Sulis, imprisoned there between 1799 and 1821, accused of conspiracy and treason. It is a building of the 1500s with a circular plan consisting of two large rooms one above the other, covered with vaults with powerful radial ribbing. A spiral staircase cut out of the very thick perimeter wall (6 metres), permits access to the floor above. This tower is enclosed within the perimeter of the Sperone fort, demolished at the end of the 1800s. From it, situated in a corner position, the curtains departed, protecting the south face of the fortifications to link up with San Giacomo Tower and, moving northwards, linking this with the tower of San Giovanni. Traces of these structures were found during the archaeological surveys that involved the area next to the tower during recent restoration. The current gateway was realised on the levelling of one of these structures, visible in perspective, while the original entrance is visible in the opening with a radial arch situated on the upper floor, at the level of the patrol course. To this tower is bound the heroic resistance of the Algherese women, who

enabled the attack of the Visconte di Narbona's troops to be fought off (1412). From this historic deed were born the famous *Cobles* that the people sang as they accompanied the effigy of a French soldier to the stake when they commemorated the victory they had won. With the passing of time the tradition of celebrations linked with this event has been lost; however, during Carnival festivities the French soldier is indeed taken to the stake (such as the *Re Giorgio* in many towns in Sardinia).

Dedicated to *Sant Jaume*, in honour of King Giacomo I the Conqueror, the **Tower of San Giacomo**, with its octagonal plan, dates back to the 17<sup>th</sup> Century. Both the upper and lower floors present a ribbed vault; on the outside Gothic decoration is clearly visible, perhaps the remains of a cornice or free element, similar to the elements that adorn the Santa Maria portal. Typically Catalan elements are the niche, situated at the entrance and the short spiral staircase which leads to the lower floor. A short distance from the tower traces can be noted that were discovered during the course of recent archaeological excavations that involved this part of the town, of the curtain and the two small towers belonging to the defence circuit of the 1500s, subsequently enclosed within the new bastion, which was realised in the 1700s to put an end to the state of degradation into which the walls facing the sea had fallen.

**The Polveriera Tower** was built halfway through the 18<sup>th</sup> Century during the Savoy domination. The tower was destined to be an arsenal for arms and gunpowder for defence against attacks coming from the sea. In the 19<sup>th</sup> Century the armoury of the Royal Savoy Army was built a short distance from the tower on the site of the Isabelline convent, whose structure was discovered during the course of archaeological excavations in the courtyard of the old marine hospital.

**The Garitta Reale Tower** (Royal Sentry-box) had the function of guard's outpost and was built in the zone where the Castellat rose, the bulwark of the medieval defence system quoted in some documents of the 14<sup>th</sup> Century, from where the whole of the gulf of Alghero was overlooked. The oldest evidence of this monument dates back to 1766.

**The Tower of Sant'Elmo**, at right angles to the street that bears its name, is dedicated to St. Erasmus (*Sant'Elm*, in Catalan), "the Navigator Saint", whose worship was probably introduced by the Genovese. The construction is of a circular shape and distinguished by a ribbed vault typical of the 16<sup>th</sup> Century. On the outside the shield of the Crown of Aragon stands out, sculptured in bas-relief. At a short distance from the tower there is the ancient *Porta di S. Elmo*, situated at the end of the street of the same name and now blocked up which, together with the Portal Reyal (now Porta Terra) and the Portal de la Mar (now Porto Salve), was probably one of the entrances to the medieval town.

There was already evidence in medieval times of the name of the **Maddalena Tower** and the memory has been kept alive up to our times, with the adjoining fort of the same name, going back to the end of the 1500s. Also erected in the 16<sup>th</sup> Century, it shows a circular plan with a keystone covering and a central *oeil-de-boeuf*. On the outside can be noted some protruding bodies in masonry, used as channels for pouring oil and boiling water on the enemy. The entrance is still visible on the upper floor and features a round arch. By the door a niche opens up housing a statue, perhaps of Mary Magdalen, which has deteriorated and is no longer clear. Near the door a short spiral staircase, a typical Catalan element, is found, which leads to the upper floor. At right angles to the curtain that incorporates the tower, a wall running north to south begins, which from excavation data proved to date back earlier than the first half of the 14<sup>th</sup> Century. The tower is also called *Garibaldi's Tower*, in memory of the hero of the Two Worlds (1855), who landed in Alghero to save his family from an epidemic of cholera that was raging there.

The towers were linked together by the walls (*the bastions*) which delineated the perimeter of the ancient town as defence against external attacks. During the

course of its history, Alghero was distinguished by its walls. Still today, in spite of partial demolition of them, the walls continue to represent one of the mainstays of the identity of the people of Alghero.

### **The six ancient churches of Alghero**

Another of the main features of Algherese identity consists of devoutness and religiousness.

The town became an episcopal seat in 1503; on that same occasion the construction of the cathedral dedicated to *Santa Maria* was decided upon, though work did not begin on it until 1567 on the site of a previous church named after the Virgin; it is found in Piazza Civica, in the heart of the old town. From its bell-tower, open for visits in the summer months, the charming panorama of the town of Alghero and its bay can be admired from a unique viewpoint. In the central Via Carlo Alberto the church of *San Francesco* rises, with its origins going back to the 14<sup>th</sup> Century. Partially rebuilt following a collapse, it juxtaposes typical Catalan-Gothic forms with Italian Renaissance style; it is impossible not to fall under the spell of its splendid cloisters and bell-tower.

Still in the same street, the church of *San Michele* (17<sup>th</sup> Century), dedicated to the patron saint of the town is notable with its characteristic multicoloured dome.

The *Misericordia* church, built during the 17<sup>th</sup> Century, protects the precious *Santcristus*, a wooden simulacrum coming from Spain. Over time it has become the symbol of the *Setmana Santa*, a period during which the people's devotion culminates in the earnest participation of the whole community in the traditional processions.

The 16<sup>th</sup> Century *chiesa del Carmelo*, with its characteristic domical vault and vestibule, overlooks the bastions opposite the Tower of San Giacomo. It was flanked by the Carmelite convent, now transformed into private houses.

A compulsory destination to understand the spiritual nature of the place is a visit to the ex-church of the *Madonna del Rosario*, an ancient patrician house subsequently transformed into a church and since 2000 the seat of the *Museo Diocesano d'Arte Sacra* (079 9733041), which offers the public valuable paintings, silver and marble works and simulacra.

### **The ancient dwellings**

The historic centre of Alghero contains some fascinating historic buildings and ancient dwellings. The Gothic, Renaissance, Baroque and Neoclassical styles indisputably dominate the *ciutat vella*.

An example of civil Gothic architecture with single and double-light windows is the *Palazzo de Ferrera*, which hosted the Emperor Charles V in 1541. As the crowd cheered, the sovereign looked out of the window and defined the town as "*Bonita, por mi fé, y bien assentada*" ("Beautiful, in faith, and well-defended"). Admiring the courage shown by the people of Alghero, he said to them in a loud voice "*Estade todos caballeros*" ("You are all cavaliers"). But immediately afterwards, irritated by the argumentative, envious character of his subjects, he turned to his retinue and quietly stated "*Pocos, locos y malunidos*" ("Few, mad and disunited"). Some examples of the Catalan-Gothic and Late-Gothic double lights or traces of these are visible in the façades of the *Palazzo del Pou Salit* and the *Palazzo Peretti*, which also presents three wide, lowered round arches, now blind, on the ground floor. There are also some splendid rectangular windows that are Gothic, with a lintel embroidered with open-work in the *Palazzo Guillot*, the remains of three Catalan-Gothic double-lights and the doorway of the *Palazzo Carcassona*, as well as a lovely window in the *Palazzo Arbosich*, which incorporates the family insignia, depicting the strawberry-tree plant (*arboser*).

Finally, the wonderful decorations of *Palazzo Machin* are surprising for the harmony created between the Catalan-Gothic and Renaissance motifs; Gothic are the rich decorations of the windows, one different from the other, whereas the entrance doorway displays Renaissance work.

Baroque and Rococo examples, together with Neoclassical motifs typical of the Savoy architecture of the last century cohabit harmoniously in the *Palazzo Serra*. Numerous public and private buildings present Neoclassical forms, such as the *Palazzo Lavagna* and the *Palazzo Civico*, the *Teatro Civico* in the square of the same name, *Palazzo Balata* and *Palazzo Simon*, where the remains of a Late-Gothic doorway are still visible.

The *Teatro Civico*, initially the seat of the ancient Jesuit college, was built at the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century and then enlarged between 1858 and 1862 with a project by Franco Poggi.

Outside the ancient walls some examples of late eclecticism can be seen, such as the *Mercato Civico*, the *Scuola Elementare del Sacro Cuore* and the *Palazzo Chiappe*, which has friezes similar to those of the façade of Palazzo Carcassona high up on its façade. Finally, the elegant Liberty-style villas facing the sea are worth more than one glance, such as the *Villa Sella* and *Villa Las Tronas*, now a "five-star" hotel but once the home of the Count of Sant'Elia, who often hosted House of Savoy royalty.

Evidence of the four centuries of Catalan-Aragonese domination is found in the language more than in the architecture of the churches, buildings or fortifications: for a variety of ancient Catalan is still spoken in Alghero.

History and charm pursue each other between the old town and the territory. It is like a large open-air museum to be lived in and freely explored, walking through the oldest streets and alleys of the walled town, which still maintain their highly personal, original appearance.

The visitor can undertake various fascinating itineraries based on themes: the "Via delle Torri", with the powerful fortifications and remains of the ring of walls bearing witness to the important role as military stronghold; the "Via Sacra", with the lovely churches and the Museo Diocesano d'Arte Sacra (079 9733041); the "Via Catalana", with the Teatro Civico and the ancient houses in Catalan-Gothic style.

But to fully enjoy the fascinating architectural monuments, the archaeological areas and enchanting views and panoramas, it is best to let yourself be guided by the experts of the museum system, contact details for which are given below:

Comune di Alghero (Alghero Town Council) Ufficio Servizi Culturali - Territorio Museo (Office for Cultural Services – Territory Museum) Viale della Resistenza 17 - 07041 Alghero Tel. +39 079 997558 - +39 079 997559 e-mail: <a href="mailto:territoriumuseo@comune.alghero.ss.it">territoriumuseo@comune.alghero.ss.it</a> <a href="mailto:territoriumuseoalghero@comune.alghero.ss.it">territoriumuseoalghero@comune.alghero.ss.it</a>	-
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Alghero is today the seat of the Faculty of Architecture of the Mediterranean, collaborating with the Universities of the Balearics and Corsica.

## To be visited

### The most ancient monuments

During the Neolithic age, over 6,000 years ago, some extraordinary monuments were erected in the territory surrounding the Alghero of today, which we recommend you visit: the pre-nuragic fortress of *Monte Baranta*, the underground necropolises of *Santu Pedru* and *Anghelu Ruju* and the nuragic villages of *Palmavera* and *Sant'Imbenia*.

**Santu Pedru** necropolis (3500–1800 B.C.), an important site of the pre-nuragic period located along the road to Ittiri, consists of some ten tombs decorated in various ways; the "tetrapodal" vases found there are of particular interest and are unique findings in Sardinia, now displayed at the Museo Sanna in Sassari.

The **Anghelu Ruju** necropolis (3500–1800 B.C.) is made up of 38 underground tombs on which sacred funeral decorations can be admired.

The pre-nuragic **Monte Baranta** complex (2800-2000 B.C.) lies just before Olmedo. Difficulty in finding the site and the effort to climb the sharp slope are compensated by the great archaeological interest of the monument and impressive proportions of the ruins. The complex goes back to the Neolithic culture of Monte Clero and it rises in an enchanting position on the edge of the plateau overlooking the plain between the Cuga valley and Alghero. The settlement is composed of structures of a civil, military and religious nature, among which a horse-shoe enclosure stands out which recalls in its architectural features the corridor nuraghi of a later epoch. The enclosure, formed by two lateral walls in blocks of trachyte filled with stones, incorporates two corridors with flatband vaulting and a semi-circular courtyard. The whole is completed by a megalithic circle, originally formed of stone slabs and menhirs and a gigantic defence wall some 97 metres long, near which the remains of numerous rectangular huts containing several rooms may be noted. The settlement is clearly related to the megalithic wall of Monte Osoni at Castelsardo.

Along the road from Alghero to Porto Conte bay, where the Park of the same name was established with the protected area of the Marine Reserve, the **Palmavera** (15<sup>th</sup> – 8<sup>th</sup> Century B.C.) nuragic village lies, composed of a central body and two towers around which were placed at least 150 huts of various dimensions and functions.

The great refuge the gulf of Porto Conte naturally offers against breakers explains why various settlements have been located there over the course of time. The nuraghe village of **Sant'Imbenia** (15<sup>th</sup> – 6<sup>th</sup> Century B.C.) consisted of a single central body with a quadrangular shape; around the tower various huts of different dimensions rose up, destined to be used for work. In the 9<sup>th</sup> Century B.C. a small community of Phoenician merchants became established at Sant'Imbenia. A Roman villa was built there in the 1<sup>st</sup> Century B.C. with the aim of exploiting the rich agricultural and marine resources of the place; this villa, the ruins of which can now be visited, was still used up until Late Antiquity. It was made up of two separate rooms: the first, a residential building, richly decorated with frescos, stuccos, mosaics, marble-covered; the second, a more modest building destined to be a warehouse, with rooms for servants and kitchen. The precious materials that were recuperated during the excavations are currently found in Sassari at the Museo Sanna.

In the Roman age, lead was mined at the *Calabona* mines, where the bronze statue of Lupa Capitolina was also forged. Placed in a well-temple of the nuragic era, dedicated to the water cult, the *Purissima*, or holy Roman sanctuary, is part of an inhabited area of the 1<sup>st</sup> Century B.C., the lost city of Carbia.

## **The beaches**

Near Palmavera Nuraghe are to be found the best-known beaches of Alghero, the Bombarde and Lazzaretto. Continuing towards Capo Caccia the Mugoni beach is encountered with its pine-forest, Tramariglio beach and Cala Dragunara.

From the historic centre of town it only takes a few minutes to reach Alghero Lido with its bathing facilities. On each side are the beach of San Giovanni and Maria Pia pine-forest with the respective beach that extends as far as the hamlet of Fertilia. On the right, just before Fertilia, the Calich lake and the remains of a Roman bridge can be noted.

Some ten kilometres south of Alghero we find the Speranza, 'Hope', beach (thus called because it is the last safe landing-place before Bosa), which stretches for a few kilometres alternating between beach and rocks.

### **Fertilia**

Fertilia is a district of Alghero and is 7 kilometres away from the town; it overlooks the sea and has a small canal-port. It was founded in 1936 by Mussolini as part of the reclamation of the Nurra, at that time marshy and malaria-ridden; it was populated by farmers, first from the Ferrara area, then from Giulia-Dalmatia.

The hamlet developed around the street that links the Torre Littoria, once the seat of the Town Council, with the Parish Church of San Marco, in which can be found a mosaic by Giuseppe Biasi depicting the resurrection of Christ.

### **Capo Caccia**

Capo Caccia is the formidable cape enclosing the gulf of Alghero in the north-west. It is approximately 25 kilometres from the town. From it can be enjoyed one of the most beautiful and fascinating panoramas of the whole of Sardinia, the entire view of the gulf of Alghero and the nearby island of Foradada. Capo Caccia owes its name to the hunts that took place in the surrounding area: they were so impressive as to give this name to the zone. Indeed to protect the animals, the area, already the seat of the "**Arca di Noè**" **Forest Reserve**, has been declared a permanent oasis for the protection of fauna and has become part of the much larger Porto Conte - Capo Caccia Nature Park. The protected area currently covers an area of approximately 5,600 hectares. This has been an advantage for the various species present in the zone; the Barbary partridge, Bonelli eagle, Peregrine falcon, the herring-gull and Audouin's gull, the goshawk, the griffon (whose wingspan can reach 3 metres), but also the fox, the ferret, hare, wildcat, the wild boar, *mouflon*, Giara pony. The popularity of Capo Caccia is, however, due above all to its grottoes, among which those dedicated to Neptune, God of the sea, are particularly well-known; they feature columns of stalagmites more than 15 metres high and splendid concretions. Access to them is by sea, in boats that leave from Alghero harbour, or by land, down the 656 steps of the *scala del Cabirol*.

In the promontory is found, moreover, one of the largest subterranean lakes of Europe and other grottoes, totally or partially submerged. Among them is the Grotta di Nereo which was discovered in the 50s and considered the largest submerged marine cave in the Mediterranean. Skin-divers who risk exploring the long winding branches can still admire whole walls of rock covered with red coral and swarming with really extraordinary marine fauna. At the moment, the zone being within the "Area Marina Protetta di Capo Caccia e Isola Piana", it is no longer possible to remove anything or fish here.

Capo Caccia rises 168 m above sea level; from here towards the west a spectacular sequence of steep walls begins with Punta di Terra Ruiu, the Torre della Pegna, Punta Carone, Punta del Leone and between the last two Punta Cristallo: the highest which falls perpendicularly for 326 metres.

From the promontory the beautiful, fascinating Foradada Island can be glimpsed (i.e. "perforated" because at sea level the Grotta dei Palombi cuts through it). Further north appears the inaccessible Cala d'Inferno with its rugged cliff consisting of yellowish calcareous walls incredibly shaped by erosion; then Isola Piana with its characteristic table profile.

The main high parts of the zone should be mentioned, Monte Doglia and Monte Timidone. These two peaks permit a beautiful panorama over the whole of the Nurra and the sea: from Porto Conte to Punta Giglio, as far as Capo Caccia, to Alghero and Capo Marargiu.

### **Santa Maria la Palma**

An agricultural hamlet situated at the foot of Monte Zirra, Santa Maria La Palma was inaugurated in 1954 by Antonio Segni, then Minister of Agriculture and later President of the Republic. The winery cooperative of the same name has increasingly gained importance; there are visits to the cellars and wine-tasting. In recent years 'agriturismi', rustic restaurants using local produce, have grown up.

### **The Sella & Mosca Estates**

Along the SS 291 route in the direction of Porto Torres, the Sella & Mosca Estates can be visited at the I Piani site, over 500 hectares of vines where precious wines are produced that are among the most famous in Sardinia. The company was founded by two winegrowers from Piedmont, the engineer, Sella, nephew of the Statesman Quintino Sella, and the lawyer, Mosca. It produces a variety of D.O.C. wines. The cellars can be visited and the wine tasted.

### **Local restaurants and bars**

There are numerous restaurants where you can try typical dishes in the Algherese tradition, based both on meat and fish, such as suckling pig, barbecued lamb, lobster *all'algherese*, spaghetti with sea urchin.

In the old town there are endless shops where you can buy all sorts of things, from clothes to jewels, as there are, too, trendy places, bars and pubs where young people meet up in the evening to enjoy themselves.

## DISCOVERING THE TERRITORY

Sardinia has a shape similar to that of a sandal (the ancient Greeks called it Sandalia), with its main axis going from north to south. Although it is the second island in the Mediterranean in surface area, the distances between the most important centres are not great.

- Alghero airport is about 10 km from Villa Las Tronas and can be reached in approximately 25 minutes by car, taxi or shuttle service with its terminus in Piazza della Mercede, opposite the church of the same name;
- Olbia is about 150 km away (approximately 2 hours' journey by car);
- Cagliari is about 230 km away (more or less 3 hours' journey by car).

## RECOMMENDED TRIPS

**Villanova Monteleone** – This stretches to the west of the Comunità Montana, between the municipalities of Alghero and Bosa. The territory reaches its greatest height (718 m) with the peak called "Pedra Etori", "Victory Stone", in memory of a victorious battle of the inhabitants of the place against Turkish predators; the zone is also called today "Pigada de sos Turcos" (Slope of the Turks). Other hills worthy of note are Monte Fulcadu, Monte Cuccu, Monte Rujù and above all Monte Minerva (644 m), an impressive bastion with a flat top, high, steep walls of trachyte, with interspersed softer tufaceous formations, completely isolated on a vast plateau spreading eastward. An excursion in these hills permits delightful natural beauties to be discovered, uncontaminated corners rich in springs, and the gastronomic specialities to be tasted of the numerous local rustic restaurants using local produce. Many of these springs flow into the Temo River which originates on the Pedra Etori mount, crosses this territory to almost touch the inhabited part of the village, then turns southwards to flow into the sea at Bosa. The road that leads from Alghero to Villanova is called "Scala Piccada"; a motor race is run up it each year. From the road-man's hut near La Siesta discotheque, the panorama over the whole Riviera del Corallo can be enjoyed. Especially at dusk, the view is really enchanting and has a strong emotional impact.

The territory of Villanova was inhabited much earlier than when the urban centre was born. In fact, many archaeological sites going back to the Neolithic epoch are present.

**Bosa** – Resting on the valley bottom, a short distance from the crystalline waters of the sea, overlooked by the Malaspina castle, around which the high houses of the medieval hamlet huddle spreading down to the banks of the Temo, Bosa is situated on the north-west coast of Sardinia, in a zone populated by a number of small agricultural towns worth visiting, Planargia, of which it has been the chief town and reference point throughout the past. Its origins are documented by a Phoenician inscription of the 9<sup>th</sup> Century B.C., but the most consistent evidence goes back to the Roman age, when Bosa Vetus arose where the current church of San Pietro is, a pleasant example of Romanesque architecture, built in 1062, still along the river's course, but further inland compared with its location today.

**Porto Torres** – A commercial port in north-west Sardinia, it is the departure point of the "Carlo Felice" State highway (SS 131), the main means of communication which runs from north to south across the whole island. Founded by the Carthaginians, it was called *Turrìs Libyssonis* in the Roman period and from 46 B.C. onwards became one of the most important sea-ports of the island. From its harbour the grain and agricultural products were embarked which were to feed the market of the capital.

On leaving the commercial port the well-conserved Torre Aragonese can be admired. The following should also be visited:

- the lovely San Gavino Basilica, the largest Romanesque monument of Sardinia;
- the remains of the Roman bridge over the River Mannu;
- the Antiquarium Turritano, the archaeological museum which groups together the most significant relics of the Roman age.

Going back along the coast towards the centre, before reaching the station we find the Roman town of Turris Libyssonis. There are remains of thermal baths on this archaeological site, too, known as the Palazzo del Re Barbaro, for according to a legend the palace of the Emperor Diocletian arose here.

The beaches of Porto Torres: the Scoglio Lungo beach just where you leave the town, is made up of reefs with small sandy stretches. The beautiful beach of Balai, overlooked by the country church of San Gavino a Mare at Balai and the Scoglio Ricco beach.

**Monte d'Accoddi** – This is a pre-nuragic sanctuary that is one of the most interesting sites of ancient Sardinia.

The only known example of a megalithic altar in the whole western basin of the Mediterranean, its construction goes back to the Age of Copper (2450-1850 B.C.) and it has the shape of a truncated pyramid with a trapezoid base supported by walls made of stone blocks. On the southern side a ramp rises to the summit, a few tens of metres high, while the base measures 30 m by 38. Around the mass of the altar there are a number of foundations of huts, some sacrificial tables and fallen menhirs. A group of *domus de janas* (not easily reached) was part of the complex. The materials excavated in the zone – ceramics above all – are kept in the Museo Nazionale in Sassari.

From Porto Torres follow the SS 131 towards Sassari: shortly after the turning for Platamona (at km 222.300) a dirt road leads to the entrance to the archaeological area.

**Stintino** – This is undoubtedly one of the most famous places in the island. It was born as a small fishing village in 1885, when the prison was built on the Island of Asinara and 45 families of Sardinian farmers and Genoese fisherman who had lived there up till then, had to leave their old houses and build new ones on Capo Falcone. Stintino is one of the most famous tourist spots in Sardinia, appreciated above all for the incredible colours of its sea and the beauty of its beaches.

The Pelosetta beach and, a little further on, the Pelosa beach, constitute a single shore with very fine white sand.

Just opposite there is the island with the 16<sup>th</sup> Century Aragonese tower of La Pelosa. The two beautiful beaches are protected by the stacks of Capo Falcone. The rocks flanking the beach host a large number of cormorants.

**L'Asinara** – Protected nowadays by a natural park, the island was known almost solely as the seat of the prison of the same name. Access to it is by boat with a service from Stintino to Fornelli, right opposite the buildings of the ancient penitentiary, but only guided tours are possible, to be booked somewhat in advance. The flora and fauna are of rare beauty.

**Castelsardo** – Placed on a rocky promontory dropping abruptly into the gulf of Asinara, still surrounded by ancient walls, the town was founded by the Doria in the 12<sup>th</sup> Century. It was first called Castel Doria then, having come under the control of the Aragonese (15<sup>th</sup> Century), Castel-Aragonese.

The historic centre still has its characteristic appearance today, with narrow alleys and stone pavements. The Cathedral of Sant'Antonio Abate, with its lovely bell-tower in Aragonese style, and the church of Santa Maria, which still bears the signs of an attack from the sea on its walls, are worth visiting. The church has an

unusual structure, formed from the development of an archaic nucleus which, branching into large and small arches, flowers, a corolla of white ribbed vaults, creates a holy place throbbing with magic.

Not very far from Castelsardo there is a "Domus de Janas" (literally "house of fairies" – the Sard name for the underground Neolithic tombs), known by the name of *Roccia dell'Elefante*, created within an enormous trachytic mass that has strangely taken on the shape of an elephant due to natural erosion. Inside the tomb there are sculptures of taurine protomes of the Neolithic epoch.

The *Basilica di Nostra Signora di Tergu*, with its Pisan-Romanesque plan, is all that remains of the powerful Abbey of Tergu. It is some ten kilometres from Castelsardo.

**La Valle dei Nuraghi** – This archaeological zone spreads over an area of 37 sq.km., where the remains of at least thirty nuraghi and ten "tombe dei giganti" are present. This exceptional concentration of prehistoric evidence can be observed from the Reggia Nuragica di Santu Antine, the nuraghe complex of extraordinary importance which constitutes one of the greatest megalithic monuments of the Western Mediterranean. The complex lies at a distance of one kilometre from the "Carlo Felice" (SS 131): at km. 172 you take the turn-off for Thiesi and turn right at the end of the ramp.

The monument is one of the main nuraghe complexes of Sardinia and is manifest in the large central tower and the trilobate bastion which links the lateral towers enclosing the courtyard. The most majestic part of the complex is undoubtedly the central tower, today 17 metres high, originally 25 metres.

Abundant water, the mild climate and fertility of the land favoured anthropisation here from Neolithic times. The first evidence goes back to the Recent Neolithic (3500-2700 B.C.) as the underground "domus de janas" of Su Siddadu and Santu Jorzi show, dug into a calcareous ridge near the "Carlo Felice" (SS 131) and those of Nughedu, situated below the plateau of San Pietro di Sorres. The Dolmen Su Crastu Coveccadu near the Rio Tilchiddeu is also of the same period. The most prestigious areas are, however, those of the Nuraghe Period placed between the Middle Bronze Age and the beginning of the Iron Age (17<sup>th</sup> – 18<sup>th</sup>/17<sup>th</sup> Century B.C.).

The Museum of the Valle dei Nuraghi (079 847298) is found at the southern end of the town of Torralba.

At Bonorva the town museum (079 867894) has its seat in a wing of the ex-convent building annexed to the Church of Sant'Antonio. It displays a collection made up predominantly of stone material: betiles (small menhirs), grindstones, milestones, sepulchral cippi (boundary stones) and some decorated steles. The programme of the museum's exposition is articulated in a "virtual" trip, backward through time, through the territory of the Valley of the Nuraghi.

**Burgos** – The village was founded in 1353 by Judge Mariano IV of Arborea at the foot of the pre-existing Castello del Goceano, built in 1127-29 by Judge Gonario di Torres. The remains are left of the three surrounding walls that defended it, a cistern in the courtyard, and at the centre the main tower, 10 metres high, that has been restored.

The narrow streets leading up are characteristic, as are the brick houses with a double slope on the roof and the alleys with their medieval appearance in the historic centre, which give access to the citadel.

From here you can gaze over the whole plain and surrounding mountains: the panorama is splendid.

In the zone of Foresta Burgos, a short distance from the village, important remains are kept of the ancient mountain forests of central Sardinia, consisting of Downy oaks and holm-oaks well adapted to the cool, damp climate, but unfortunately hit by indiscriminate felling during the last century.

In the woods there are numerous small Sardinian boars, the great spotted woodpecker and the marten.

If arriving from the "Carlo Felice" (SS 131), access is by the roads leading from Torralba and Bonorva to Foresta Burgos-Bono.

## **MUSEUMS OF THE PROVINCE OF SASSARI**

### **Museo Nazionale Archeologico ed Etnografico "Giovanni Antonio Sanna" Sassari - via Roma, 64 - Tel. 079 272203**

Museo del Tesoro del Duomo  
Sassari - Duomo di S. Nicola, piazza Duomo - Tel. 079 233166 (Curia)

Museo Etnografico "F. Bande"  
Sassari - via Muroni, 44 - Tel. 079 236572

Museo Storico della Brigata Sassari  
Sassari - Caserma La Marmora, piazza Castello, 9 - Tel. 079 233303

### **Antiquarium Turritano Porto Torres - via Ponte Romano, 89 - Tel. 079 514433 – 079 514189**

Museo Diocesano d'Arte Sacra  
Alghero - Piazza Duomo, 1 - Tel. 079 9733041

Museo Archeologico  
Bonorva - piazza Sant'Antonio - Tel. 079 867894 (Town Council)

Museo Mineralogico  
Bortigiadas - viale Trieste, 30 - Tel. 079 627064 (Town Council)

Museo dell'Intreccio Mediterraneo  
Castelsardo - Castello dei Doria, via Marconi - Tel. 079 471380

Museo Archeologico ed Etnografico  
Ittireddu - via S. Giacomo, 3 - Tel. 079 767623

Museo Navale Archeologico "N. Lamboglia"  
La Maddalena - località Mongiardino - Tel. 0789 790660

### **Museo Nazionale Garibaldino La Maddalena - Isola di Caprera - Tel. 0789 727162**

Museo Etnografico Galluras  
Luras - via Nazionale, 35/a - Tel. 079 647281

Civico Museo Archeologico  
Ozieri - piazza Canonico Spano - Tel. 079 787638

Collezione Archeologica Comunale  
Padria - via Nazionale - Tel. 079 807018 (Town Council)

Museo Etnografico Archeologico  
Palau - via Nazionale - Tel. 0789 709501 (Town Council)

Museo Civico Archeologico e Paleobotanico  
Perfugas - via Nazario Sauro - Tel. 079 564241

Esposizione "B. de Muro"  
Tempio Pausania - Biblioteca Comunale, Parco della Rimembranza - Tel. 079  
671580

Museo Comunale della Valle dei Nuraghi  
Torralba - via Carlo Felice - Tel. 079 847298

Museo Comunale Archeologico  
Viddalba - piazza Angioj - Tel. 079 580514