

LUXI BIA

AN ARCHITECTURAL PROJECT
IN SOUTHWEST SARDINIA



TABLE OF CONTENTS

LUXI BIA

- The Story
- Origins
- The Village Today
- La Residenza
- Casa Corte/Cubo
- Casa Pretziada
- CRUDO Olive Oil
- Pretziada

GENERAL INFORMATION

- Santadi
- Sulcis
- Cagliari

IN 2013 we found a dilapidated, forgotten property tucked in to the hills at the foot of the Gutturu Mannu mountains. Once a small farming village, it had been abandoned for newer houses along the road that had access to water and electricity.

It took us eight months to find the owners to all of the different patches of land. Some had hillsides, others only one small room. But we had to convince every one of them to sell to us in order for it to make sense. When we began making our rounds in town, enquiring about the owners of the little village we had found, we heard plenty of stories.

Many people tried to dissuade us because they had associated this place with the fortunes of the people who had lived here in the past. There were the elderly sisters who walked to town daily to buy little bottles of perfume, and whose shared beau had tried to sell their house to an unsuspecting local.

There was the man who lived in a one room shack and only wore his clothes once before discarding them in a large pile that eventually covered the entire floor a meter deep.

There was a family that lived in a house that was torn down in the 1800's, where a woman was said to be tormented by *janas* (mischievous Sardinian fairies). She was often found sitting up on the wooden ceiling beams, unable to get down, and coffee would boil up on her stove on its own.

This village was a difficult place even for its happier residents. The houses were built slowly, with great sacrifice. They are simple farmhouses, with no unnecessary details. The people who lived here worked an unforgivingly rocky land. Few fruit trees have survived: a few almond trees, one magnificent native apricot. There were a few oxen that were housed in the large central courtyard. There are signs that the hillside was plowed many years ago. But it's generally clear this was not a place of easy riches.

What made the land hostile in the past is what makes it beautiful today - it is not a place for sowing and reaping. The giant protruding rock overhanging the village, scattered with mosses and prickly pear, is an outcropping of the same shale that was used to terrace the landscape, both in the ancient stone walls lining the hillside, and the newer ones in each of the courtyards. It runs deep throughout the ground here, and almost every place



you see a small gathering of soil with flowers or fruit trees has been created through the heavy work of many hands.

When Ivano's elderly uncle, Attilio, saw the piece of land with its ghostly ruins and unplowable land, he begged us to reconsider. It was difficult for us to explain that we had a different kind of cultivation in mind - less literal, more metaphorical. But perhaps the beauty lies in the truth between our views. Plenty of our planted dreams have failed to flower; others have delivered sour fruits. But every once in a while, there is a singularly beautiful and perfect development, that blooms or grows and is unwavering in its steadfastness.

Living on a property that is hundreds of years old brings with it the responsibility to remember for other people as well. Countless residents of the town of Santadi had forgotten that this small group of houses existed until we moved in. But now, their memories revived, we often receive the gift of their stories. We know who was born in the houses and how they lived. The fights they had, the trees they planted and cut down, where they played as children.

It's hard at times to imagine the changes this village has seen. The olive grove once florid, then burned to nothing, and now reborn. The prickly pear first planted to divide pieces of land, then torn up to reconcile them. Babies born between these ancient stone walls; grazing animals taken off to slaughter; quiet picnics on empty pastures; a full and merry table of reunited friends under the stars. When we write these stories, we do it as a tribute to the families that lived in these houses before running water, before artist residencies and Instagram, and whose name still graces our little village. May they live here peacefully with us from now on.











FURRIAI in Sardinian means to return or to come home and, to that point, a furriadroxu was the place that welcomed home all the members of an extended family at the end of their day. Much of the culture in Sardinia is based around shepherding, which is a notoriously solitary activity. So most men would be out all alone with their goats, sheep or cows for at least a full day and sometimes longer. But the furriadroxu was full of action, with kids (from 7-12 in each family), pigs and chickens running around in the courtyards and multiple families all crowded into the same kitchen. At the risk of romanticizing what was an arduous existence, the furriadroxu was in most ways self-sufficient. Neighbors worked together to divide labor - one would have pigs while the other had oxen, and each week a different family would take turns baking bread for everyone.

The houses themselves were modest and functional. The bases were made with stones and mortar; mud bricks were used on the upper parts of the walls. These would then be slathered with lime plaster where possible. Floors were usually rammed earth. In later years those that could afford it put down cement tiles in red, grey and black; those without the resources poured a layer of cement directly on the dirt, and would draw lines in it to resemble tiles.

Each house began as a simple rectangle that housed one family. As that family grew, they would add first one more rectangle and then another, until a quaint conglomerate of boxes would appear, with small round courtyards for the farm animals sprinkled in between. Because of the time and energy that it took to build each structure, the residents had plenty of time to study the wind and the passage of the sun. As a result, the positioning of the houses follows a successful logic that modern buildings have (unfortunately for their inhabitants) failed to adhere to.

All of the buildings in Is Aresus, new or old, are arranged to maximize the sun during the winter months and protect from it during the summer. The grape vines that shade the windows and patios shed their leaves each winter to let the sun in. The windows are placed to allow the mistral breeze into all of the rooms. The terracing allows the citrus trees to flourish notwithstanding the strong sirocco wind from North Africa that hits at least twice a year.





EDIFICIO A

LA RESIDENZA

EDIFICIO B

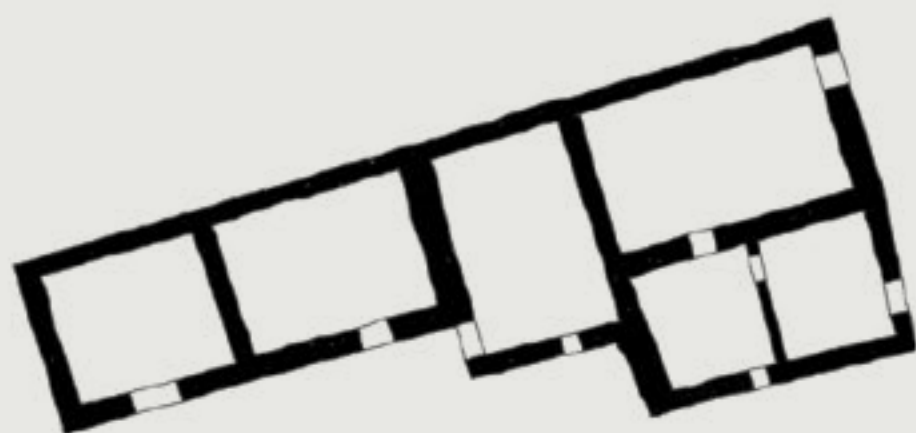
EDIFICIO C

We often find ourselves asked about “respect for tradition” which is a concept we have a difficult relationship with. It’s far too easy to get tied up in knots discussing tradition (or “peer pressure from dead people”, as a friend calls it), most especially when we are ostensibly outsiders from the local culture we work so hard to celebrate.

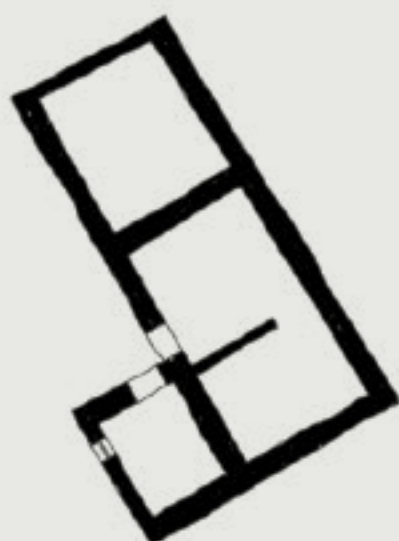
We know of two brothers, for example, who rebuilt a local fishing village using only original materials and techniques that would have been present on the island before the industrialization boom of last century. When they began to realize they would not be able to find the same sorts of mud bricks and tiles that had been used, they built a makeshift oven in the backyard and began producing them themselves. Clearly this was passion (obsession) at work and, while we bow down to their incredible tenacity, producing our own building materials from scratch is not one of our tenets.

So here is our thought process: let’s take the rationale behind the buildings we have on this land and reprocess it. Let’s study the proportions, the use, the entryways and the alignments. Let’s not limit ourselves to thinking as though we were building in the 1800’s, or even in the 1950’s, but let us be guided by the gathered intelligence of those who came before us.

Let us study shape and light, use of materials, the slope of the land, the sun’s path and directions of the wind. Let us listen first, then act.



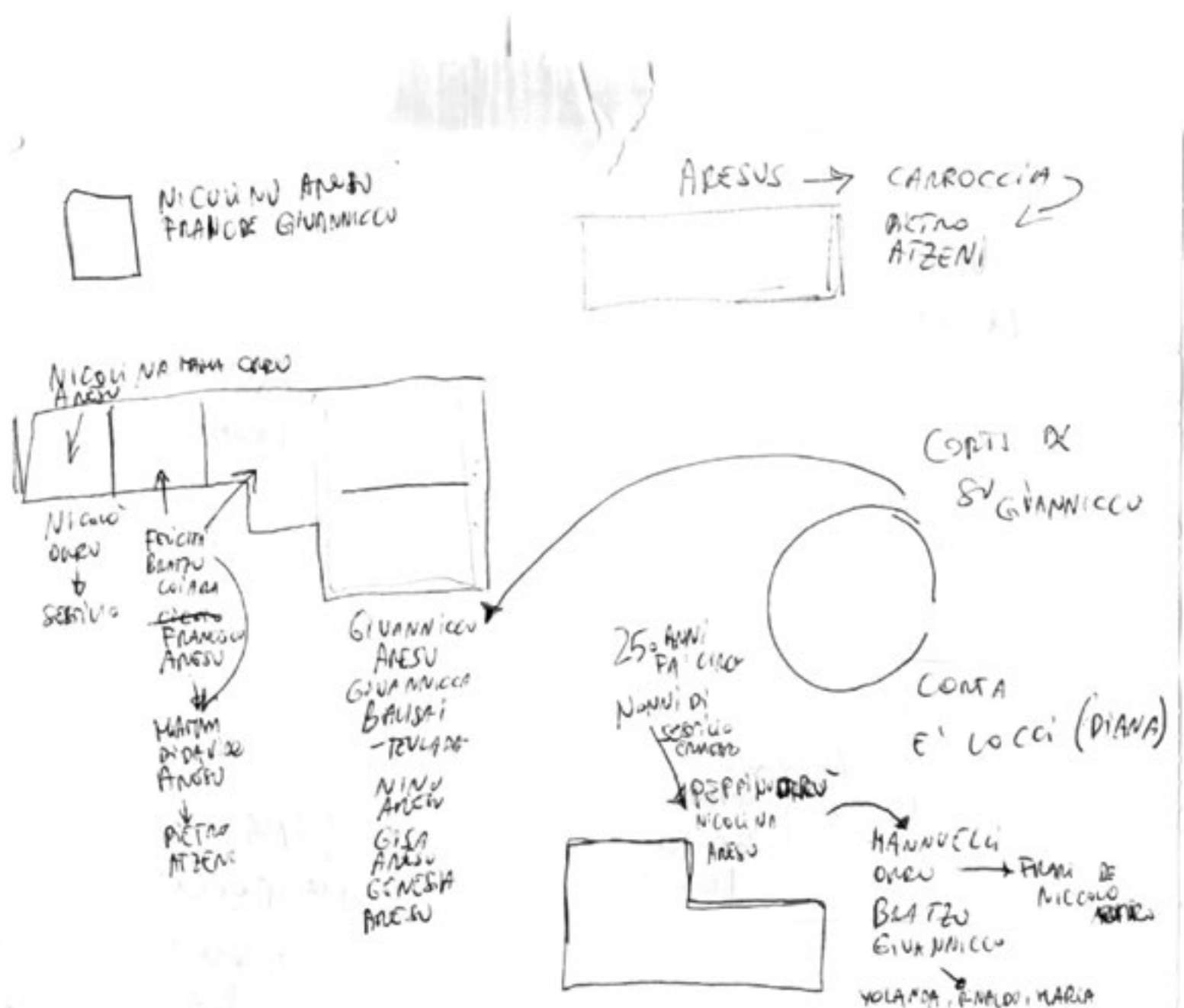
AREA INTERNA 106 MQ
H MAX INTERNA 3.35 M
H MIN INTERNA 2.14



AREA INTERNA 47
H MAX INTERNA 4.15
H MIN INTERNA 3.35



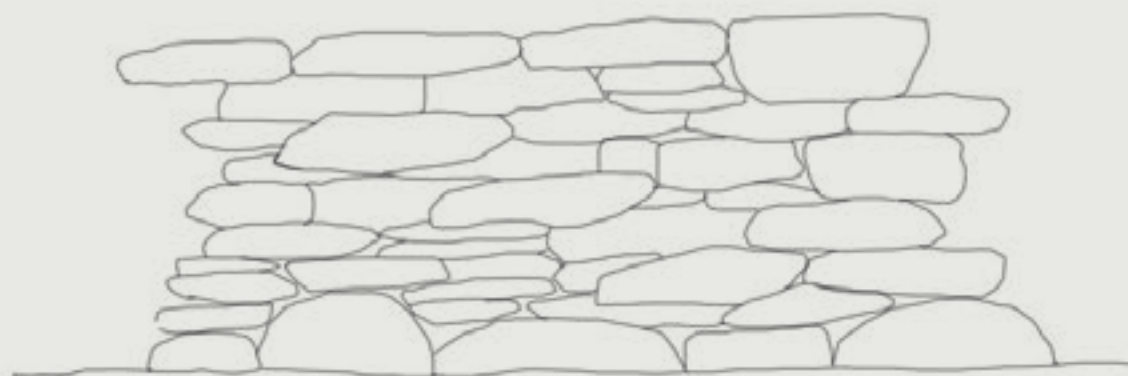
AREA INTERNA 75
H MAX INTERNA 4.90
H MIN INTERNA 2.65



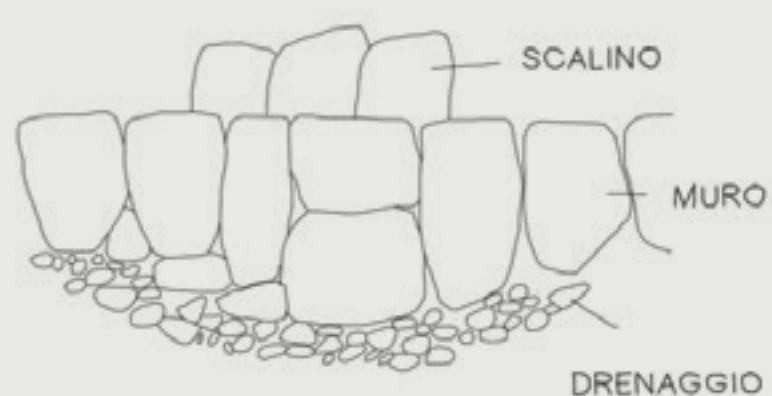
After we had set our hearts on this property, and even before we had convinced all of the owners to sell, we would often come to picnic among the ruins. Most of the times we would run in to Davide Aresu, an 84 year old who had been born in the village and owned a neighboring property. Davide's family had been here for as long as he had known; in fact the town's name, Is Aresus (which translates to «Belonging to the Aresu's») comes from his family name. For around 65 years, Davide had been coming to this valley to tend to his olive trees and building unbelievable stone walls by hand, by himself. He once quipped to us, «If anyone ever wants to buy this property, I'll give it to them for free. I just ask that they pay me for the work I've put into it.»

Our relationship with Davide truly started, though, on the day that Ivano began dismantling and rebuilding the central courtyard wall. He was thrilled and befuddled that these city folk would put the time and energy into rebuilding such a wall, and would occasionally come over to explain to Ivano just how he had been doing everything all wrong. After eight months, and countless visits from unwitting family members pulled into helping us, the courtyard was done. And an obsession began.





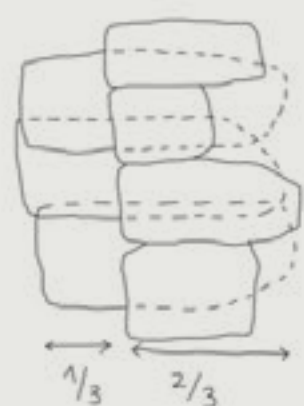
VISTA FRONTALE



VISTA DALL'ALTO

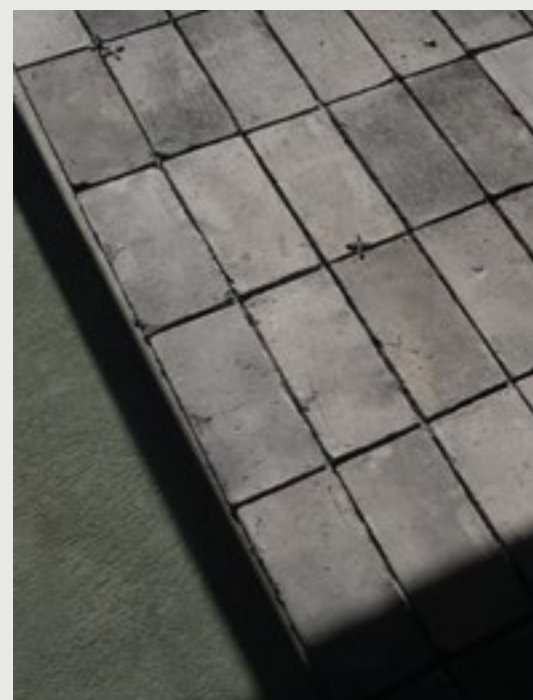


SEZIONE



VISTA DALL'ALTO





39° 5'30.5" N 8° 42'59.1" E







It is fundamental to us that the guests we host absorb as much as possible of the local territory and its heritage. With that in mind, we designed **La Residenza** using natural materials found historically on the island. The caned roof, the thick walls, the stone walls that form the courtyards, and the built-in niches are all components of the original houses that were on the property.

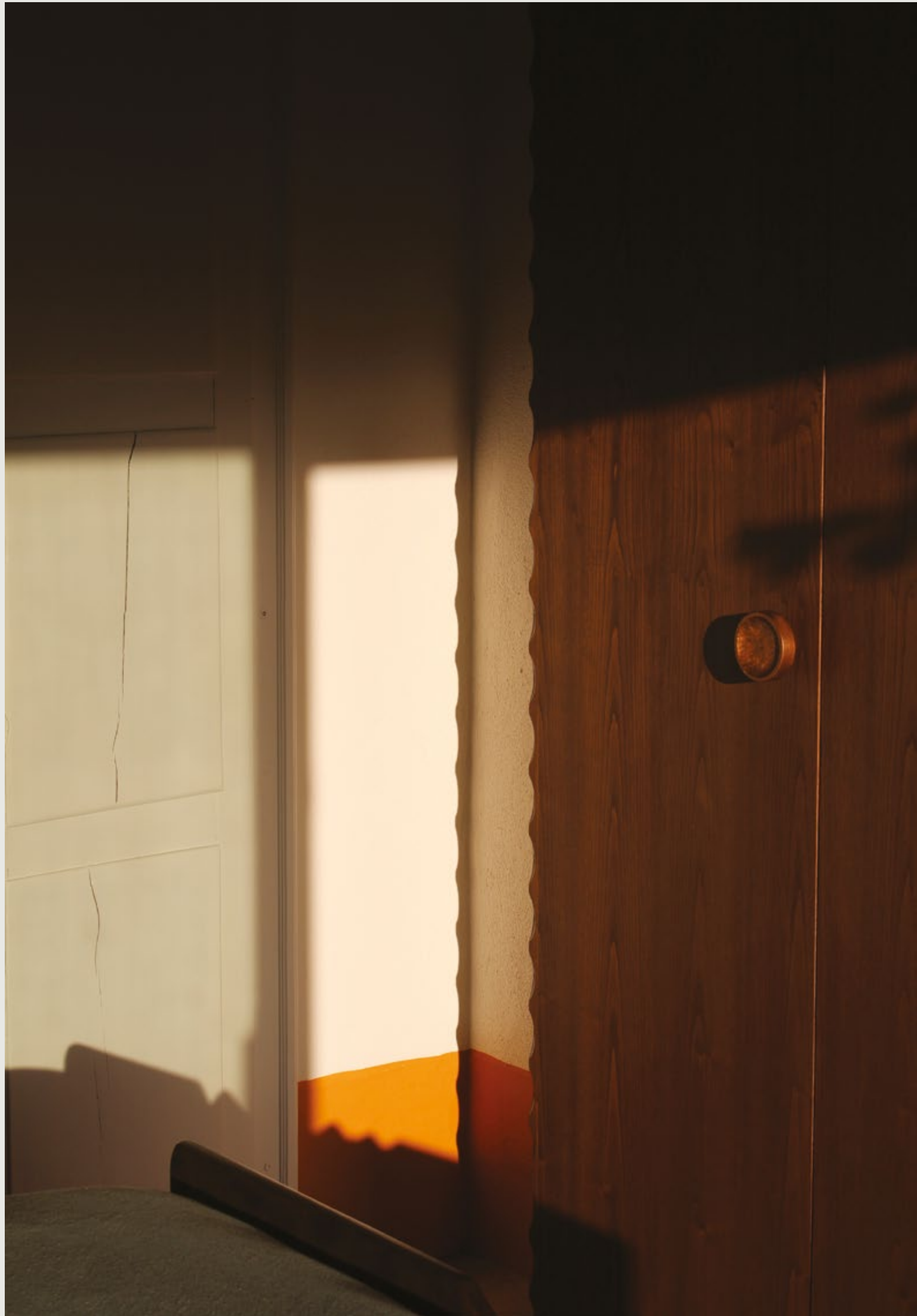
We were lucky to be joined in this endeavor by an exceptional group of artisanal Italian producers. Terracotta floors and tiles are all handmade by **Fornace Brioni**, with a technique in which they suffocate the flames baking the bricks in order to achieve a rich, gray finish. All lighting is from the family-owned, Le Marche-based company **Tooy**, whose minimal lines and references to nature align beautifully with our own ethos. The local company **Calcidrata** furnished the all-natural, locally sourced and produced lime plaster for both interiors and exteriors. Vimar's vintage line of switches and outlets are classic but minimal, while **RubINETterie Stella** contributed with a timeless set of taps designed by **Michele De Lucchi**. Select pieces from **Tacchini's** refined furniture line are combined with objects from our own collection and the occasional local antique.

Additional pieces were produced by **Pretziada's** team of local artisans having been designed specifically for the space.

Both the molded bed and boxy armoire were made from chestnut wood by **Pierpaolo Mandis**, as well as the sculptural cabinet in the dining room. The kitchen was custom-made by **Falegnameria Pisu** with unstained oak wood, while the countertop was produced with Marmo di Orosei (a local marble with occasional shells and stones trapped inside) by **CP Basalti**.

Therefore, using the same concept we apply to Pretziada, we aimed to build a contemporary, rural and Sardinian home. Our *furriadroxu* honors the heritage of the island by giving it new life, free from dusty paradigms, incorporated into the community of which we are an intimate part.









This house was originally split up into three separate residences. Although the families that owned them could trace back to the same ancestors, the Aresu family, they had splintered and remarried over the years and did not know each other well. The divisions were less than logical, with one group owning a single room as well as the courtyard behind the house, and others that had a strip of the hillsides and pieces of two separate buildings.

Because none of the constructions had any kind of foundation, we had to demolish this house completely, but we rebuilt on the exact perimeter of the original. The different floor levels found inside **Casa Corte** also belong to the initial floor plan. Windows and doors were adapted to the new divisions (now two homes instead of three), but we kept the same logic as far as use and proportions.

Floors are Sardinian, handmade terracotta tiles; the roof has the same traditional caning as well as recuperated juniper crossbeams that came from the structure pre-demolition. The roof tiles are also original.

While the layout is completely redrawn, the “cube” in **Casa Cubo** that contains the bathroom, kitchen and closets is an homage to the simplicity of the first layout in which none of these services would have been present. Lastly, a hand-dug stone well that used to provide all of the water for these inhabitants is preserved on the patio of Casa Cubo.









When we found the map to this area in the town registry, it had last been updated in 1939. It omitted some parts of buildings that had been constructed since then, but more interestingly, it showed a few that had been demolished or abandoned until only a few small piles of rocks were left. One of the former - a small two room home that had been knocked down by its owners - stood on the top of the hill, above the circular courtyards and a few olive trees.

We decided to make this the site for an ex-novo building that would honor the concept behind the furriadroxu while being designed from scratch. Both of us had a special place in our hearts for the architecture of the southwest of the US, and we wanted to make a Sardinian version of a modern building, using the logic of the ruins as a guide. The result is a series of aligned boxes, with the typical Sardinia roof tiles, separated by three large dividing walls that protect the house from excessive heat in the summer and humid cold in the winter.

The walls also give the house a stark frontal appearance which disappears upon entering the “casette” contained inside. The large veranda on one end is a typical Sardinian lolla - a veranda that provides a secondary outdoor living and dining room, often used for gathering and countryside activities like shelling almonds, or making mirto.

In 2020, this building won an award from InArch, the national architect’s association, as the best project on the island in the previous 5 years. The award stated, “this work interprets, through a contemporary lens, the most significant themes of the scattered rural habitats of Sulcis with two separate intentions: the first is a complex act of both revitalization and restoration of meaning to a furriadroxu; the second is the introduction of a wholly contemporary furriadroxu that embraces and redevelops the concepts of living and building locally.”



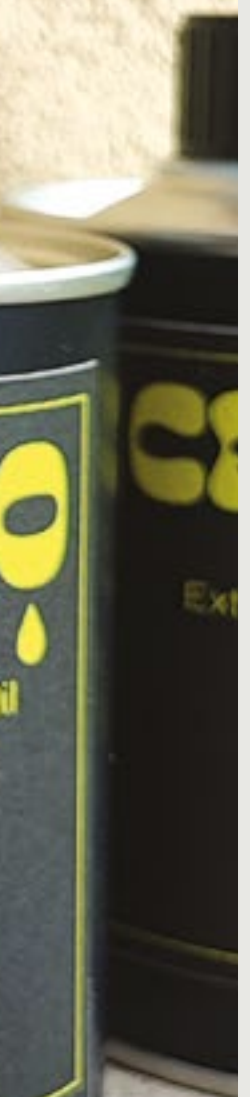




Once we began cleaning up the hillside from the overgrown brush and prickly pears, we found the charred roots of an ancient olive grove which had burned ten years earlier. The trees had been huge, some as large around as a bathtub, but the fire had reduced them to nothing. They had each sprouted dozens of wild olive shoots which at first glance had made the land seem worthless, covered only in shrubs.

Over the next two years we took every free moment to come clear out the hillside, cut down the thinnest trunks and finally graft the remaining wild olives into producing trees. It was drastic at first -it felt like destruction cutting the bushes down to one scrawny trunk, removing the surrounding scrub to give the trees room to breathe. Any good gardener knows that they are in a battle with a mighty foe -nature will always have more time and patience than we do. But today we have hundreds of beautiful olive trees that have begun to slowly produce, and a hillside that has revealed its potential.

CRUDO (which means raw in Italian) is the oil that we produce from these trees. The harvest is completely manual and takes place over a few weeks anytime from late November to early January. Our trees are a mix of Paschixedda (found primarily in Sulcis), Semidana, Bosana and Oria Bianca olives. It is smooth and intensely green when pressed, with a hint of artichoke and a spicy finish. You will find a small bottle in your apartment for you to taste -pay attention to the name! We call it Crudo because it is so fresh and flavorful that it should never be used for cooking but only raw to dress finished dishes.



For ten years, after we bought this property, but before we transformed it into Luxi Bia, we ran a small design company called Pretziada. Pretziada, which means precious in Sardinian, was a collective effort - we invited designers to come stay with us and ran short but intense, tailor-made residencies. They would visit shepherds in the mountains, swim in natural springs, visit archeological sites and museums, and generally learn about both the long history and the complicated present of the island.

After a week of traveling through Sardinia with us, they would return home and design an object as an homage to the territory. We would find a local artisan to produce the piece, and would sell it exclusively through our network of stockists located from Los Angeles to Munich to Tokyo. After ten years of beautiful interactions on all sides and inspiring collaborations, we decided to close the company in 2026 to focus more fully on our work within the territory.

Like with any labor of love, many connections remain from this unique project. And Luxi Bia, both practically and metaphysically, would never have had the same depth or singularity without the ground work that was laid with Pretziada. As you spend your time in these homes, know that the objects surrounding you were the product of many minds and many hands at work. They are contemporary pieces of design, but are also ruminations on a millennial culture that unites the entire Mediterranean. They continue, with their existence, to bring Sardinia and its histories to life.









SARDINIA is both a huge and a small place. There is only one highway that crisscrosses the island and all other roads are going to be small and probably curvy. This means that a look at the map makes it feel like everything is close by, but driving anywhere is going to take longer than you first think.

Oftentimes it seems faster to take a back road. However, there are lots of mountain chains so that is never a good idea if you want to spend less time in the car. It is always a good idea if you want to stop off and explore smaller towns.

Additionally, public transportation is not very well developed, so having a car is pretty much a must. Luckily the landscape is pretty stunning everywhere so, if you don't mind experiencing it from behind the wheel, there are very few boring drives. As far as services, keep in mind that you are on an island in the Mediterranean and, as such, almost every store will shut down from around 1-5 pm every day (the winter midday break is much shorter than its summertime counterpart). Restaurants will generally be open only from 1:00-2:30 pm and from 7:30 pm on.

There is a HUGE amount of prehistory in Sardinia. Nuraghes are the main stone structures that you'll see (there are more than 7000 on the island) and you have to visit at least one. The most famous and well-managed is Nuraxi Mannu in Barumini. There are also Domus de Janas, Sacred Wells and Tombe dei Giganti in most areas, which are ancient burial grounds and usually really impressive. Honestly almost all of these sites are worth visiting.

Sardinians stare which can make them seem inhospitable, even though the opposite is true. They just stare -it's not culturally inappropriate. Just ask if you need help in any way. If you do start a conversation with them, even to just ask for directions, you will discover that they are very curious about you, where you come from and how you are liking Sardinia.

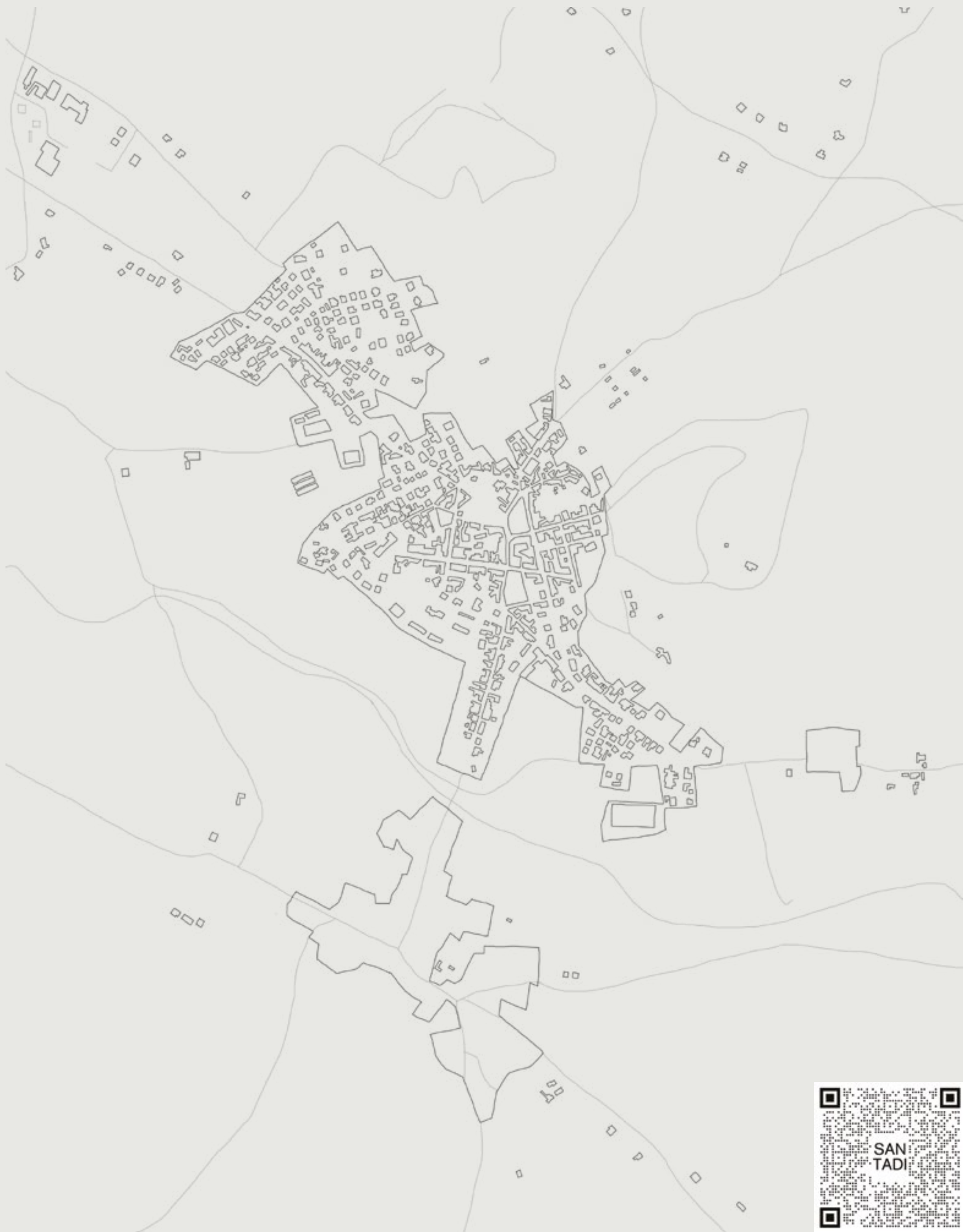
One note for summertime is that almost all of the beaches have a fee for parking in the lots. It isn't a great idea to try to avoid this as tickets are pretty frequent.

The tourism sector is not well-developed in Sardinia. So be prepared to have little annoyances like not finding food when you need it, or archeological sites having very short hours. However, it is an extremely authentic and fascinating place. You may not always have the easiest vacation, but it may possibly be the most interesting and rewarding one you've ever taken.

43

SANTADI

39° 05'37" N 8° 42'54" E



The south of Sardinia was one of the earliest to be inhabited in prehistory, with constant incursions from the rest of the Mediterranean (primarily from North Africa and the Middle East). As such there are numerous archeological sites throughout the region, some of which have ticket booths and guides, others of which are scattered throughout unassuming fields and perched atop quiet hillsides.

The easiest to visit in this area are **Pani Loriga** and **Montessu**, which are each within a 5 minute drive and are easily accessible by car. Pani Loriga is a settlement from around 700 BC that includes a village, a burial site and an early nuraghe. It was apparently a very large town that was abandoned for reasons still unknown. There is a bar/restaurant on site as well as a very small museum/bookshop.

Montessu is a giant necropolis that has been only partially uncovered. It is a steep climb, but it is often possible to park at the top if your group isn't into hills. The view from this horseshoe-shaped valley is really beautiful, and the tombs are large enough to explore both inside and out. As with all archeological sites in Sardinia you should definitely check the websites before going, especially if you will need an English-speaking guide.

Another stunning place to visit in Santadi is the **Tomba dei Giganti**, called **Sa Fraigada**. It is in the foothills leading up to the Gutturu Mannu forest. The asphalt ends as you get closer to the site and the dirt road can be adventurous at times. Once arrived at the parking spot there is an easy and fun one km hike up to the site. This is an incredible place to enjoy the view and the beautiful pink granite boulders. It's a good spot to stop and have a casual picnic in the middle of nature. Please don't crawl inside the tomb.

A newer site which is interesting and run fully by volunteers is Sa Marchesa which is a funny little spot with a great view, a cool cave (also apparently a prehistoric tomb; the dig and research is ongoing) and a little museum dedicated to the mining history of the area and the caves of southern Sardinia. Tickets are pay as you wish.

Further on is the **Miniera di Rosas**, which is an old mining town that has been partially renovated into a museum and vacation houses. This is a great area to go exploring and have a picnic. There are various tables and barbecues throughout the area. You can visit the mines and also see the ruins. If you keep driving up



the road you reach various goat sheds and have a view of all of Sulcis.

In the other direction, towards Teulada, are the Grotte di Is Zuddas, which are very pretty and always a stable 18° (65°F) in winter and summer alike, making them a great break during windy, rainy or hot days. There is a café and restaurant here, as well as a small grassy area and a playground.

Once back in town, you can visit the two museums which are both run by a cooperative of archeologists and historians. **Sa Domu Antiga** is a typical Sulcitana house that was completely furnished with donations from the local community. It will give you an idea of how the traditional Sardinian household was set up and run. The Museo Archeologico, instead, showcases ancient objects found in the surrounding area, including at an important find called the Grotte del Tesoro, very near the Grotte Is Zuddas. Although many of the more important pieces were moved to the archeological museum in Cagliari, there are some beautiful urns and vessels from the territory.

Additionally, the surrounding area is full of beautiful natural places to explore. The Gutturu Mannu mountains are endless and varied. There are numerous trails but, because they were created over centuries for logging, hunting, etc, they are not always cleared and are rarely marked. You can explore all of them (even the ones that have a closed metal gate) but be very careful to mark your way so you don't get turned around. Please remember that phone service is not reliable in the mountains and natural areas. It is very easy to get lost in the mountains and very common for people to remain stranded for days, so please be VERY aware of where you are going if you take a side path.

EASY PLACES TO REACH ARE:

Is Figueras, a lovely, shaded, busy-on-the weekends picnic spot with a natural spring

Sa Spindua, a natural swimming hole right off the road which is popular with locals

Is Fenabas, at least 20 minutes along a beautiful but at times rough dirt road, is a great series of swimming holes with picnic tables and a natural spring. It can get very busy on weekends.

Giradroxu, also about 20 minutes on a dirt road, with a beautiful two km downhill hike (matched by its uphill return route!), is an old sheepfold that perches on a small outcropping. If you are feeling courageous, you can climb down to the beautiful pools.

All of the swimming holes will dry up at some point during the year -when depends on the rainfall from that winter but June is a good guess. For more adventurous exploring, just ask us and we will be happy to give you some ideas of walks and hikes.

For a more sedentary pleasure, there are numerous wineries in town, all of which produce excellent wines. Their tourist services are still in development but, in exchange for polish, at least you'll receive a genuine look into local wine traditions. Cantina di Santadi is the local cooperative which had the fortune to work with a renowned Tuscan winemaker, **Giacomo Tacchis**, at their beginnings.

His famed Terre Brune is an intense Carignano wine known throughout the world. Tachis then founded Agripunica as a private entity, which collaborates with the cooperative. Both of these wineries sell their products at the Cantina di Santadi shop at the entrance to the town. Lastly, **Cantina Taris** is a small, family-owned winery that organizes tastings right in town.

Santadi is a small town but, luckily, has excellent food. You're pretty safe buying groceries from anywhere you find open but the following are our go-to places. Most shops have a little of the basics too so you don't need to run to the supermarket if you're looking for something small like tomato sauce or beans.

FRUIT AND VEGGIES

Marco and Melania are friendly and energetic and have great produce. They do their best to buy local or at least have local options.

MACELLERIA PIROSU

This butcher shop can be a little pricey at times (at least by local standards) but they have incredible quality meats. It isn't easy to find specific cuts of meat in Sardinia, but Paolo will do all he can to help you find what you're looking for. They also have a great selection of cheeses, including some hardcore homemade ones from Zia Maria. Their wine selection is also generally more upscale than the other places in town. Lastly, they make really delicious maialetto arrosto (Sardinian suckling pig) to order. You have to call a few hours ahead of time to reserve it - the smallest portion available is a quarter piglet, which is enough to feed at least four people.

MACELLERIA DANIELE

Another butcher shop with really great quality meat.

PASTICCERIA PAOLA & PASTICCERIA TINTI

Pasticceria Paola is a great place to have a little sweet and a coffee. They make all of their croissants from scratch, their own chocolates (except during the summer), and a selection of classic Italian sweets. They also make cakes for special occasions and tend to always have something ready. If you are looking for traditional Sardinian sweets, though, Tinti is a great stop and they are also open in the afternoons/evenings which is helpful if you need a last minute dessert.

PANIFICIO BONACCORSI, PILLONI, OR SAIS

All of the bread shops have their specialty and you can't go wrong with any of them, especially when buying one of the excellent little flavored breads (onion, olive, «gerda» which is basically lard, or ricotta). We have a soft spot for Bonaccorsi because they are one of the few that uses a wood-fired oven. The classic breads from this area are called either cifraxiu (the larger round loaves) or coccoi (usually curved loaves with decorative little spikes), and you should try both.

One of our favorite traditions in Santadi is that every Friday night the bakeries stay open late and do a bake in the evening. So Friday night is usually warm bread and salad night at our house. We highly recommend it.

There are only a few restaurants in Santadi but they are pretty reliable.

Licu e Giuanniccu is a family run place in a quiet piazza that is good for both pizza and traditional dishes. For meat eaters, they always have some sort of slow-braised plate of local meat. They also carry a small but good selection of wines.

Up in the old town, there is also **Cibus** which has a really beautiful garden. We generally suggest sticking to the simpler dishes and the first courses, but the atmosphere is excellent.

If you're in the mood for something more casual and lively, **Expecto**, in the piazza, has a limited menu of antipasti as well as surprisingly good hamburgers and homemade fries. Though the indoor lighting/atmosphere can be a little intense, in warmer months they set out tables in the piazza.

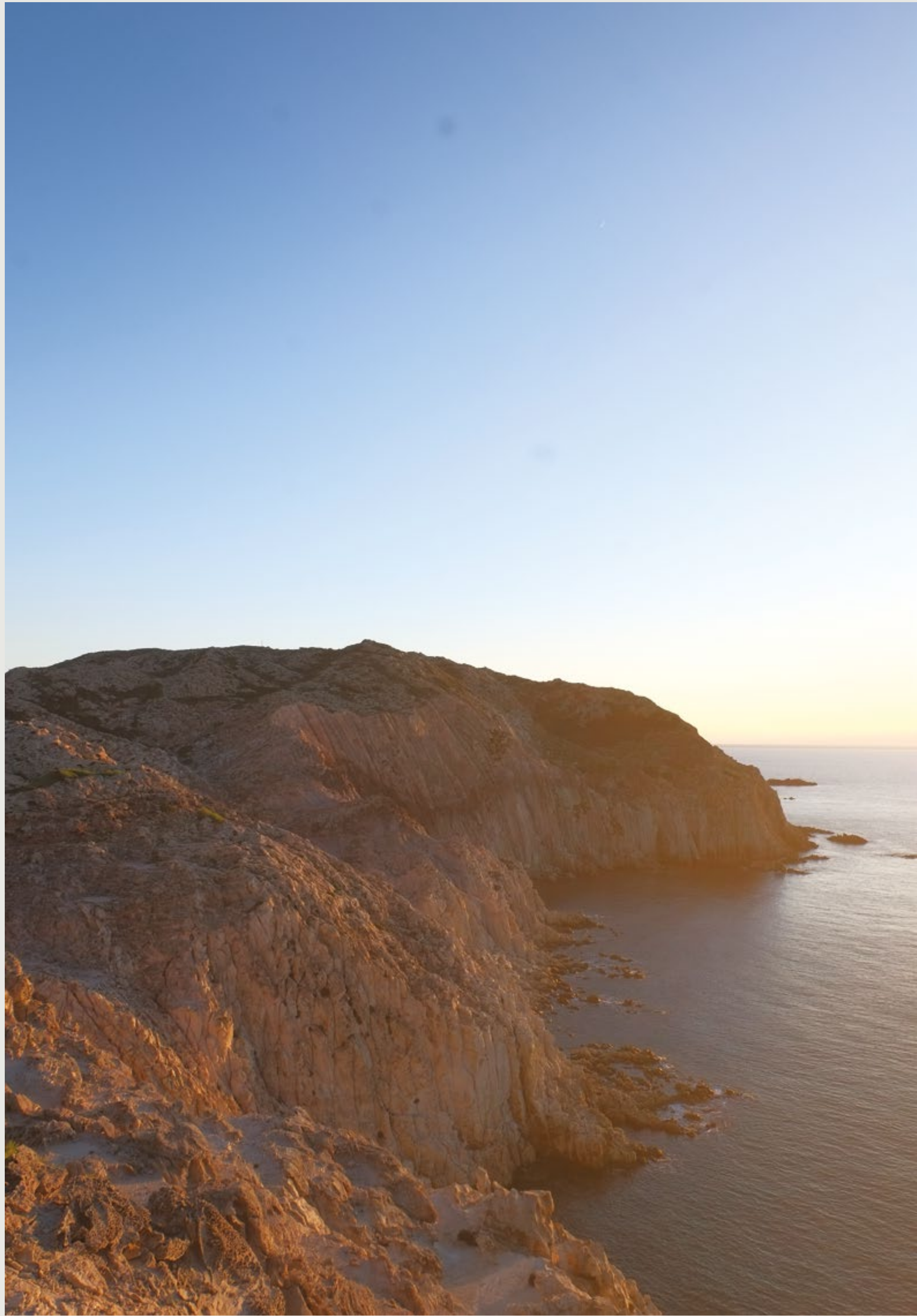
Both five minutes away, though in separate directions are **Villa Inn** and **Le Grotte di Is Zuddas** which are both reliable and have various local dishes on the menu (Villa Inn also makes pizza).

Lastly, the agriturismo **Grotta del Tesoro** is about ten minutes away and serves a enormous amount of food in a fixed menu. They raise their own animals and it is all delicious, but make sure you are very hungry.



WHERE WE ARE





The area of Sulcis is not only authentic and wild but also quite vast so, while things may look close by on the map, make sure to check the distance before deciding to just head off. Infrastructure and services can be lacking, but the payoff is that you really can feel the rural, genuine quality to the land. There are no real cities in the province (aside from Carbonia which - apart from its rationalist piazza and the fascinating, if spooky, **mining museum** - is completely lacking in charm).

Starting from the breathtaking coastal road that leads to Santadi from Cagliari, there is a stunning site that showcases the ruins of the Roman city of **Nora**. There is a Michelin-starred restaurant here, **Fradis Minoris**, that bases their menu on seafood and vegetables. With views over the sea and the lagoon, it is very special.

Further along the route, there are loads of beaches and coves, so just pull off wherever you can. Some of the beaches are quite famous (like Tuerredda) and get really out of control during the summer, but are gorgeous at any other time of the year.

Closer to Santadi is **Sabor'e Mari**, another seafood restaurant that has been recently taken over by the original owner's daughter, to rave reviews.

The town of Teulada has a beautiful little center with a few good restaurants. An easy place for a drink and a simple meal is **Tirovino**; a more upscale stop with a nice garden is **Ristorante da Stefano**.

Some great beaches here are **Porto Tramatzu** and **s'Ottixeddu** (also known as Spiaggia degli americani or the American's beach because it was once used exclusively by the surrounding NATO base). Tramatzu has a bar/café, bathrooms and motorboats for rent but still manages to feel pretty low-key. It's not a bad idea to rent a motorboat and head west - there are a few beaches that can't be reached by land in this direction. S'Ottixeddu has no services at all, and a great spot for cliff-jumping off to the left of the beach. Right before either of these is the pretty, though small, beach of Torre del Budello.

On the opposite side of the base is Sant'Anna Arresi, a small town that provides most of the services for the beaches in this area. In town, there are a couple of places you can stop to eat or shop for food: **I Pirati Sardi** is a fishing cooperative that has really fresh

seafood (it's a cooperative). Prendas Antigas is a good spot to buy some local wine, cheeses, salumi. **Vinicio** (the sign outside just says Pizzeria Gelateria) offers better ice cream than any other gelateria in the area - the fruit flavors are all made with real fruit. But in general Sant'Anna Arresi is really just the town you pass through to get to the beaches of Porto Pino.

Porto Pino, in fact, is the most famous beach in this area. It is a four km stretch of sandy beach, peppered with bars and kiosks and beach umbrellas. At the farthest edge is **Le Dune** (also known as Is Arenas Biancas), beautiful sand dunes that border a juniper forest on the edge of the military base. You can either get here by taking a left through the marshes (there's a small sign saying "Dune parcheggio") and then walking about a kilometer, or else park at Porto Pino and walk down the three or so kilometers to get to open beach. Other nice beaches around here are **Porto Pineddu**, **Spiaggia dei francesi** (otherwise known as Punta Sa Bua) and **Portu su Trigu** - all of which are smaller and more intimate beaches and most of which don't have any services. The coastline is heavily modified each year by the rains, so on all of the beaches there may be more or less sand, more or less seaweed every season. You can ask us which ones are looking good this season.

A cool beach for more adventurous swimmers is **Candiani**, which can be reached by car by passing Porto Pino and continuing on the rocky road into the pine forest, or by walking along the coast from the port and following the signs to Grotta dei Baci. From this beach you can also climb up the cliffs and enjoy an incredible 270° view of the ocean before stumbling upon a spooky and intriguing group of tunnels and bunkers used during the Second World War.

This is a great loop during the cooler months that then takes you down to Porto Pineddu, where you can head back towards either the port or Candiani (depending on where you started). As you take the pathway near the port pay attention to the shallow water near the coast where there are long straight blocks that sometimes rise up over the water. These are the remains of an ancient Phoenician port (now partially obscured by docks). As you get to the end of the promontory, you'll see a low line/square of rocks in the sand to your right; this was once an old Spanish tuna fishery. There isn't much to see nowadays, aside from the spectacular views of the water, but it is fascinating to imagine the transformations that this strip of land has undergone through the centuries.

Even if you decide for another beach for your daytime swimming, there are two valid restaurants here at Porto Pino. (Both have charming outdoor patios but the indoors are questionable, so we would suggest them only when it's warm enough to eat outside.) One is Blu Marlin, which is a real shack with no trimmings. Make sure to order the polpo alla diavola. The other, La Pescheria (also known as Da Basilio) is a little more upscale, but still relaxed. Here the antipasti are the stars - incredibly fresh fish in simple but unusual dishes.

Another beach nearby is **Is Solinas**, which can be frustrating for anyone intent on real swimming because of the long, shallow seabed. But this area has loads of beautiful roads leading through the countryside that provide for great flamingo-watching and offer plenty of stunning views of the Carignano vineyards overlooking the seaside.

Interesting fact: in the late 1800's, the Phylloxera (known colloquially as the vine louse) made its way from the America's to Europe and decimated vineyards all over the continent. Luckily, it was quickly understood that the American grapevines were more resistant to this pest and they were therefore planted en masse throughout Europe, with the original varieties grafted on to them. This technique saved countless European varieties from extinction. However, the phylloxera cannot reproduce well in sandy soils, so the area around Is Solinas is one of the very few in Europe to still have its original plants on original rootstock. This type of ungrafted grapevine is called "piede franco".

Other places to explore nearby are the ghost town of **Tratalias** which was restored by the region in the mid 2000's. There is a beautiful piazza here surrounding the striking Romanesque church. The term ghost town isn't exactly appropriate since Tratalias was happily inhabited until the government built a reservoir nearby in the 1950's to assist local farmers. That same reservoir began to periodically flood the town and in the 1970's the population was moved to a planned community on higher ground. The majority of the town was razed but the area around the church was left to slowly decay. In the mid-2000's, the town renovated the remaining buildings with the idea of creating a cultural center. Sadly, the operation was never much of a success, leading to a second abandonment of the same area. It is still a very beautiful place to wander around and get the feeling of an original Sardinian town, and you can have an open-air aperitivo at the restaurant here, **Cortile Santo**.

On the way west is San Giovanni Suergiu, where you can book



a tasting of locally produced natural wines with **Riccardo and Maura**, whose beautiful bottles (Tiau, Rajosa and Fogu) you will most likely have noticed in your apartment. They will be happy to prepare a little aperitivo for you in the charming town of Is Locci Santus and explain all of the particularities of the uber-local varieties they grow. You can book directly with Maura (+39 379 238 6561), but it's a good idea to say you're staying at Luxi Bia.

Further along is the once-island of **Sant'Antioco**, which is one of the oldest settlements on the island (and therefore in Western Europe). Located just off the coast of Sardinia, it has been connected with a bridge for centuries; pay attention as you are about to drive across and you'll see the original Roman stone bridge on your right. Rich with ancient history, Sant'Antioco is also a charming seaside town for a walk, a drink or an ice cream. There are some cool caves you can visit, called the **Villaggio Ipogeo**, that were once used as tombs and then transformed into shelters where a few local families lived until the 1970's. The town also has a Byzantine church where you will find the remains of Saint Antioco the Martyr (originally from North Africa, he was sent to work the mines in Sardinia as punishment and died praying for the pagan locals in 127 AD).

A bit outside of town but definitely worth getting back in the car for is **Rubiu Pizzeria**, where they make all sorts of delicious pizzas and brew their own artisanal beer. You definitely need a reservation, though luckily you can easily book online.

Although it is tiny, the island of Sant'Antioco has a lot to explore if you don't mind a little more time in the car. The beaches are all located outside of the main town and are generally beautiful all around. **Maladroxia** is a funny little ex-fishing village with a river running on to the beach. This is a popular beach, but has a nice little kiosk and is popular with the locals.

Further to the south is **Coaquaddus**, a larger cove with some black sand. To the west of here there are some nice little coves, if you're in the mood to explore and climb for some privacy. If instead you go straight rather than turning left for Coaquaddus, you cut across the island to the western coast. Here there are some really cool, rocky beaches that are a little bit trickier to get to. **Cala della Signora**, **Cala Lunga** and most especially **Punta di Caragoli** (with a natural swimming hole in the rock!) are some of these. If you don't feel like climbing, **Cala Sapone** can be really nice when it isn't too busy and has both sand and cliffs. There is some paid parking further up the hill and you should absolutely avoid the urge to park illegally unless you don't mind dealing



with the parking ticket after the fact. There is a great little shack to eat at here, called Mario & Pinella, where you have to be a bit flexible and a bit patient -i.e. DON'T wait until you're very hungry. But the food tends to be good and fresh and there's nothing like eating some simple food with a carafe of table wine under the shade right at the beach. If you walk along the southern side of the beach you will reach the beachside bar of Tonnara Camping, which is a really lovely place to have a local and/or organic aperitivo with an amazing view.

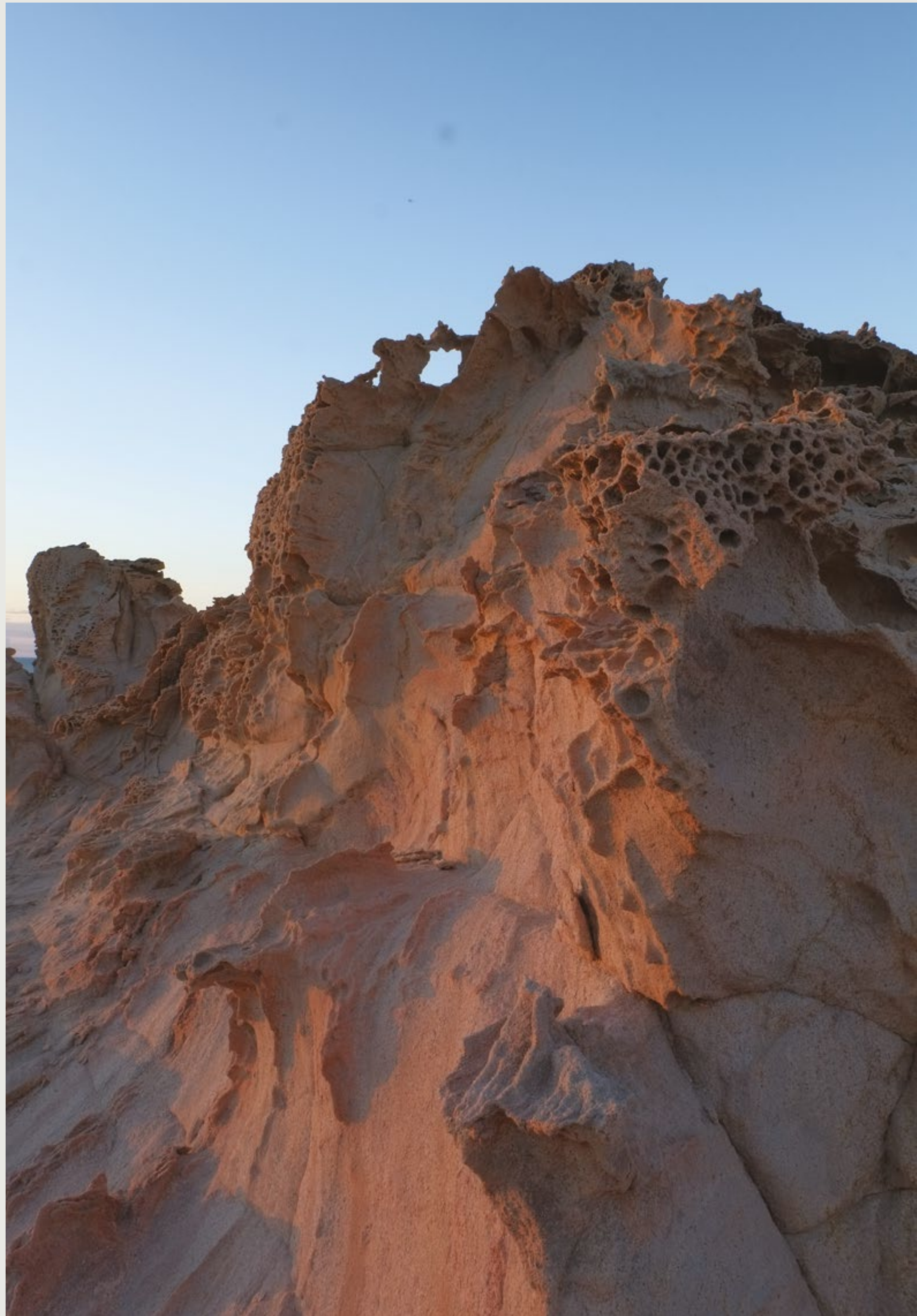
Just a bit north from Cala Sapone is the charming town of **Calasetta**. Because it was founded by a group of Genoese sailors, it is one of the few original settlements in Sulcis that is right on the water. Its story is fascinating and a bit convoluted: in the 1500's a group of fisherman from Pegli in Liguria were sent with their families to occupy a peninsula in the north of Tunisia called Tabarka and set up a coral fishery. After 250 years there, the coral began running low and the relations with their neighbors began to sour.

So they wrote to King Carlo Emanuele III asking to be resettled in Italy once again. In 1738, the king gave them the uninhabited island of San Pietro, where they founded the town of Carloforte (Carlo the Strong, or Carlo's Fort). A few decades later, as more "tabarkini" arrived, they founded the second village of Calasetta.

The building style in these two town differs substantially from the rest of Sardinia, with Calasetta being a typically Mediterranean, whitewashed town of low two story houses and plentiful gardens. There is a modest but interesting museum here, called Fondazione MACC, whose collection is based on the private collection of Ermanno Leinardi, an artist who lived in the town until his death in 2006. There is also a Spanish tower open, at times, to the public, and some great piazzas.

From Calasetta, you can also grab the ferry to **Carloforte** itself, either on foot or with your car. Either way, make sure you check the ferry schedule before you set off to enjoy the island as it can be a little erratic.

If you bring your car you can explore the entire island which, although tiny, has some interesting things to see outside of the town itself. A beautiful place to explore is the LIPU oasis: a lunar landscape where the Eleonora falcon nests every summer. They give tours during most of the season and, even when the falcon isn't around, it is truly beautiful. There is also a lighthouse on the cliffs, a couple of small nuraghes, some beautiful beaches,



and an old tuna fishery. In town, you will find a slightly higher level both of tourism and touristy spots.

There are plenty of great places to eat and drink, although the Carlofortino menu is really centered on its roots, which can be simplified down to pesto and fresh tuna. This town and its inhabitants are full on islanders and still speak their own language (which is basically a dialect of 16th century Genoese). They are also big on variations of the Genoese classics: focaccia and infarinata. There is a good artisanal ice cream spot here. If you're into tuna, we recommend trying the tasting menu at Tonno di Corsa, an old classic with courses that include parts of the tuna you will never have tried before.

If you came in your car you have the option to take the other ferry to Portovesme, which is...some sort of a factory/refinery metal producer? Whatever they really do there, it is a monstrous industrial site right on the coast. If you're in to decrepit old factories, it is fascinating. And it is also the only other place to catch a ferry from Carloforte, in case the timing is better for your trip. (The total time driving from Santadi + ferry to Carloforte is the same from Calasetta or Portovesme).

North of desolate Portovesme, though, is the stunning coastline of the area that stretches from Gonnosa all the way to Fluminimaggiore. The roads here are long and winding, so it's really best for a full-on day trip. But there is lots to see.

Seruci is a beautiful example of a smaller nuraghe in a gorgeous panorama. The Tonnara of Porto Paglia is a charming little outcropping above a long beach called Fontanamare.

Further on, is the fascinating Porto Flavia where you walk through old shafts built in the mountain to load out mining materials. It has a very interesting story and the view is breathtaking. If you keep driving north you can visit the lovely beach of Cala Domestica, nestled in along high cliffs. The towns in this area (Nebida, Masua, Buggerru) don't have much to offer, but the nature is stunning.

If you like rock climbing there's a lovely couple, Marco and Tiziana of Arrampicata Sardegna, who can take you to some beautiful spots in this area, and even provide equipment to those traveling light. Above this area is another long stretch of beach called Portixeddu and, while the spectacular coastline just continues for miles to the north, this is probably the farthest you want to go if you're heading back to Santadi the same evening. From Portixeddu you can reach the small town of Fluminimaggiore



which -while not exactly brimming with things to do -does have its charm and plenty of spots to stop for a drink and a slice of pizza.

From Fluminimaggiore, you can head back through the forest towards Iglesias, which is a beautiful drive in and of itself. Iglesias, so-called because of its many churches, was once a florid center of mining and mining wealth. You can see from the tiny but beautiful center and the intermittent medieval walls how important it was in the past. There is a great, chill place called **La Paninoteca** that serves a big selection of artisanal beers from Sardinia, Italy and the world, as well as an atypical menu for Sulcis (think sheep burgers, burrata-stuffed ravioli and more than one (!) vegan option). There's also the utterly cool **Osteria Futura** which makes outstanding pizza and simple plates out of underused local ingredients.

One small but compelling detail of the town of Iglesias is the existence of a book from 1327 called the Breve that is kept in the modest town archives. It can be visited in the library in via delle Carceri, although opening hours can change without much notice. This book contains the laws and accounting for the town at the time and, as such, is a pretty incredible document that provides a rare glimpse into life in what was then a Pisan outpost.

Also in the town of Iglesias, you can visit the mining complex of Monteponi, which seems like an interesting center, although it's sort of DIY so may leave more questions than answers. Then there is the Grotta Santa Barbara which includes barite crystals that grow between rock walls from 500 million years ago. Nearby is s'Ortu Mannu which is basically just a little park with around 700 of the biggest and oldest olive trees on the island (at least 1000 years old).

Not too far from this area is the winery of Enrico Esu in Medau Desogus. Enrico makes only three wines - white, rosé and red - all under the name Nerominiera. He doesn't do official tours, but is happy to welcome visitors with prior notice.

Once in the area of Carbonia, it can be interesting to visit both Monte Sirai, a large archeological site that includes various ruins from the times of the Nuragic population through until 700 AD. It includes a town, a necropolis and a Punic sanctuary called a tophet. Carbonia also has the engaging Museo delle Miniere for which they bring you a few kilometers underground to show you the extensive coal mining tunnels from the town's Fascist history.

On the way back to Santadi, a good walk, when it isn't too hot,

is up to Monte Narcao. This will give you a view of some nice vineyards and the surrounding area below and leads to a little heartfelt altar for a Black Madonna.

Heading back to Cagliari from Sulcis along the inland road, you will see the **Castello di Acquafredda** which has a fascinating story. The very steep hillside is filled with ruins of the town that once existed here and the picnic benches at the bottom are a great place to rest and recharge after the small hike.

OTHER THINGS TO PLAN IN ADVANCE:

Xardinia organizes kayak tours for all levels leaving either from Cagliari or Chia.

For a raucous and casual experience, there are numerous fishing boats that will take you out for a day on the boat, exploring the coastline and then cooking you a fish lunch that they catch while you swim and lounge. These are full day excursions so bring your sunscreen. One reliable one that leaves from Teulada is **Pescoturismo Celeste**. Another great one is **Nuova Antonina** in Sant'Antioco, although they don't speak English, so it will give you a chance to speak with your hands.

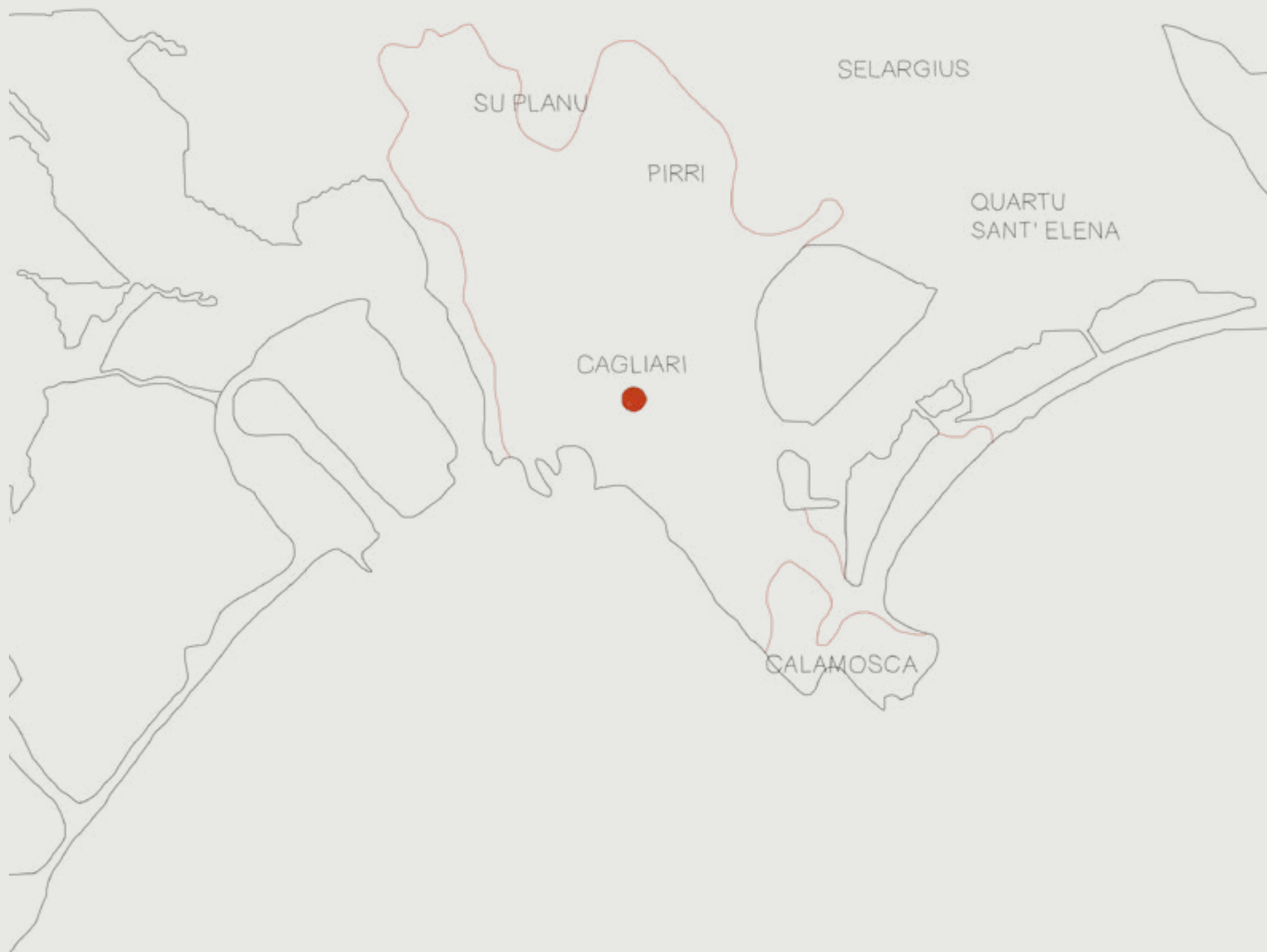
Various ranches offer horseback rides in Sant'Antioco or San Giovanni Suergiu. Carolina Ranch and Maneggio Sulcis are reliable.

66

CAGLIARI

48° 51'45" N

2° 17'15" E





Arriving into Cagliari from the southwest, you'll most likely drive right past the port, with Via Roma facing you head on. It's a beautiful view of the city - a long straight row of buildings that are both graceful and resolute, with their flirty, carved balconies, their proud, wide columns and a row of palm trees before them, blowing in the breeze.

This area is very representative of the city, in the sense that it has two personalities that co-exist side by side. The porticos, in fact, so lovely from afar, aren't filled with much more than garish signage, plastic chairs & tables, and plenty of cheap and easy souvenirs. And yet. **The Marina**, as this area is called, is also very characteristic - there are some great restaurants (more on this later), a mishmash of cultures, and those winding port city streets.

As this neighborhood shows, Cagliari is fascinating because of its extremes. It is lustrous yet dirty, touristy yet authentic, intellectual and common, polished and exuberant on one block, rough and abandoned around the corner.

Though the city, like all metropolises, is surrounded by the whizzing of cars, it is inevitably better explored on foot, with patience and determination. Cagliari, after all, is a city whose charms are small and human in scale: an artful balcony, a curious storefront, the rough, varied pattern of the stone streets. Occasionally, and without warning, you find yourself before an unexpected, stunning view of the wide expanse of deepest, flat sea, of the plains fading away into northern rolling hills, of a patchwork of factories and seaside industries, of the marshes studded with flamingos. It is likely that, after walking all day, you'll stumble back into the same piazza where you started and muse over the tininess of this city. The next day, sure to have conquered the town's layout, you find an entirely new corner that you hadn't realized existed.

In fact, Cagliari's urban planning is tremendous, if not wholly non-existent. The city was built over and upon itself for millennia, and current administrators seem happy to continue effortlessly along this bumpy path. Ghettos arise like cement skeletons just blocks from the city's only beach, gracious townhouses give way suddenly to crumbling warehouses, the island's most prestigious tailor shares the same sidewalk as chain stores selling bulk candy and cell-phone covers.

The two best places to park are marked on the map: either at the

Bastione di Santa Croce (uncovered paid parking) or the **Regina Elena** parking lot (covered multi-level paid parking). Both of these spots will position you about halfway up the steep hill that the historic center is built on so, while you will still do a lot of climbing up and down, you will at least be able to break it up.

The **Castello** neighborhood at the very top of the hill is a great place to start. It is considered the very heart of the historic center and most of the city's museums are located here. While always a seat of power, it was built by the Pisans and for many years native Sardinians were kicked out of the city walls every night.

You can visit the **Museo Archeologico** at the very end of Castello to get an idea of the very long history and rich archeological treasures of the island. The **Palazzo di Città** is a small museum in the main piazza of Castello that sometimes has charming (generally Italian) photographic or art exhibitions. Otherwise, this area is just nice to walk around. You might see the remnants of destruction from bombing during the Second World War, the renovated ghetto, the cathedral, and/or the various towers from the old walls.

You will eventually probably end up at the **Bastioni**, which is a giant, empty piazza with marble steps that leads you down to the main crossing of Piazza Costituzione. Either direction takes you down the main shopping strip of the city - in one direction you head down Via Manno and eventually Corso Vittorio Emanuele. The other direction is Via Garibaldi. Both directions are the busiest and most commercial strips of the city. However, if you duck off onto the side streets you will quickly end up in nicer neighborhoods.

If you want to visit the beach, you will need to either drive or take the bus. Poetto is the real city beach, with a long boardwalk for running or strolling and an endless sandy coast with little bars, restaurants and beach clubs. It is charming on a sunny day. Considering the fact that you're either about to or just did spend time on the wild seaside of Sulcis, it's something to experience, but not a place to spend the whole day. A small cove beach called **la Spiaggiola** can also be found near the restaurant Lo Scoglio. This is more of an anthropological experience.

Feel free to ask us for more tips on things to see in the city, based on your interests.

Cagliari really goes above and beyond when it comes to food. You will eat plenty of typical Sardinian dishes once you're out of the city, so our suggestion is to really lean into these more cosmopolitan restaurants when in the city.

There are lots of really scenic places for an aperitivo, but we personally favor two different spots. **Piazza San Domenico** is a charming pedestrian piazza with plenty of options. It has everything from fancy cocktails to natural wine bars to jugs of table wine and bottled beer, and the clientele to match - you'll see well-heeled hipsters with their kids and dogs, scruffy guys who look like they've been on the benches for days, university kids, and tourists all mixed in together. Take a walk all around the perimeter and then choose the spot that feels most like yours. If you suddenly realize it's gotten late and you haven't booked a place to eat (it happens), you can always get some small plates from **La Vineria di Villanova**.

The other place we love is an unassuming block just south of hectic Via Manno. There are two bars right next to each other - **La Mole** and **Rainbow** - both of which have seating outdoors. Both have great drinks (Rainbow has an interesting cocktail menu while La Mole has a small but excellent selection of artisanal beers). It feels like half of Cagliari drops by at one point during the night so it's a nice place for people watching.

As for dining, here is a quick run-down of our favorite places. They all use local ingredients and flavors, many have natural wines and the staff at most of these places are extraordinary. You're better off making a reservation on weekend nights or during the summer.

BAR PIPETTE

owned by the guru of natural wines of Sardinia, this little spot is welcoming, chill and very European.

SABORES

a contemporary Sardinian bistro, with strong flavors and attitude.

PESTAPEPE

our favorite neighborhood spot, in the residential area of San Benedetto, Luca experiments enough to be pleasantly surprising, but still feels like a real meal.

SALSAMENTERIA

this is a good lunch place. Doubling as a grocery store for excellent Italian goods, they concentrate more than anything on quality ingredients.

AUREA OSTERIA

outside of the center, this restaurant has been making waves for its high cuisine vegetables and seafood menu. Lovely atmosphere.

GAIJIN

Japanese-Sardinian fusion (yes, we know how that sounds). You'll need to book about a month in advance.

IMPASTO

this place is specialized in making their own pizza dough, bread and pasta so it is a carb-heavy menu, but completely worth it. Although it can get packed with tourists, the quality of wine, food and service makes it one of our favorites. They also open early and close late.

TRATTORIA LILLICU

a totally different vibe here, with a classic style and raucous local atmosphere, they have some of the freshest fish we've seen in Cagliari.

CHIAROSCURO

this place is a little less relaxed, but the food is excellent and the chef centers on harder to find ingredients from her hometown in the north of the island.



CAGLIARI 1920



WHERE TO EAT ICE CREAM

Does it seem like this doesn't need to be its own section?
Of course it does.

I FENU

if you have ever wondered what fig leaf or avocado-blue cheese ice cream might taste like, you have to stop by this popular, gourmet ice cream spot.

PETER PAN

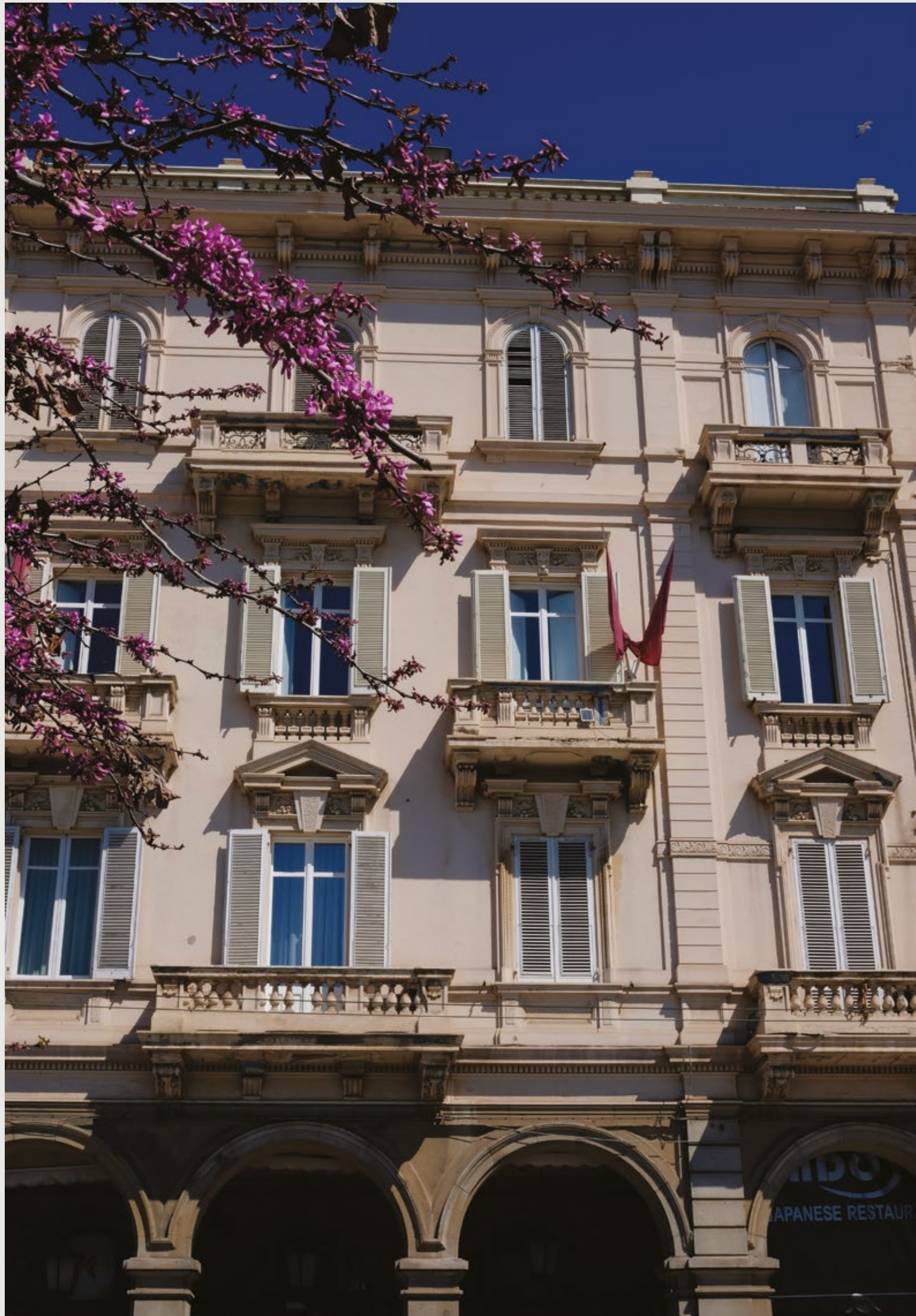
plenty of flavors and two different locations, this is a good standard spot.

VANIGLIA E PISTACCHIO

this tiny place in the Marina has a smaller but really great selection.

BOBOCONO

with a location in the center and at Poetto, this shop has all the classics and then some.



GRATZIASA MERA / THANK YOU