

## THE 'OTHER' EMERALD ISLE DISCOVERING SARDINIA

WEDNESDAY 10 – WEDNESDAY 17 APRIL 2019 (8 DAYS)

LECTURER: CHRISTOPHER SMITH

£2485

- Discover Sardinia's stunning coastal & rural scenery
- Explore remarkable ancient sites from the Bronze Age & Roman periods
- Visit Sardinia's best medieval & renaissance churches
- Trace the unusual use of Spanish & Italian artistic ideas from the renaissance & baroque periods
- Comfortable 4\* hotels in excellent locations in Alghero in the north & Cagliari in the south of the island



Tharros, The Sinnis Peninsula, Sardinia

### OVERVIEW

Long coveted for its strategic position in the western Mediterranean, natural resources and stunning beauty, Sardinia is an emerald isle set in a deep blue sea. From the ancient Phoenicians to the more recent 'jet-set', it has drawn a range of peoples to its shores and given of its riches with unstinting generosity. Join us as we explore this 'treasure island' full of ancient ruins, medieval churches and the later imprint of Spanish and Italian involvement.

Not many will have heard of the *Nuraghe*, Bronze Age cone-shape buildings, indicators of a sophisticated local culture from c.1600 BC. Widespread trade linked the island with the Aegean world and the sophisticated Mycenaeans, shortly followed by the arch-traders of the ancient world, the Phoenicians. Drawn by the large quantities of metals in the mountains, their control of the island passed to the Carthaginians, who developed the already established trading links across the Mediterranean world.

When Rome defeated Carthage in the Punic Wars, Sardinia fell into Roman hands, and as with Sicily, the island became another major supplier of grain. The cities and ports developed by the Phoenicians were all upgraded and the island became a major part of the vast sea transport system which sustained the Roman Empire. It was not to last. After Rome's decline, the Vandals conquered the island, succeeded by the Byzantines. Isolation followed, partly due to its distance from Constantinople, partly due to the growing power of the Muslim world.

In the medieval period two of the great maritime powers of Italy, Pisa and Genoa, brought welcome stability via renewed trade. A wave of new building in the Pisan and Lombard Romanesque styles followed as monasteries were founded and churches built. When the island came into the possession of the Spanish kingdom of Aragón in the fourteenth century, a new chapter opened and it is this blend of Italian and Spanish influences which subsequently created a magical 'hybrid' culture ranging across language, economic activity, the visual and culinary arts.

In the eighteenth century Sardinia was 'traded' as part of the re-drawing of the map of Europe, caused by the 'War of the Spanish Succession'. It eventually passed to the Dukes of Savoy, who ruled Piedmont, upgraded as Kings of Sardinia. This opened the penultimate chapter in the island's development as rule from Turin brought in new ideas. When the Savoy dynasty became Kings of Italy in 1861, Sardinia understandably ceased to matter to them and it sunk into decline. This has only recently been reversed as the island's isolation from much of the modern world, and its unspoilt beauty has led to inward investment in sophisticated tourism.

Sardinia looks stunning in spring and our visit will explore these different facets of its past as we discover its wonderful scenery, complimented by the island's excellent food and wine. Led by Christopher Smith, the recently retired Director of the British School at Rome, we shall stay at two comfortable 4\* hotels. The Hotel Catalunya in Alghero is very close to the town's pretty port and walled historical centre and Cagliari's Hotel Regina Margherita is located close to the historical centre.

## ITINERARY OUTLINE

**Day 1:** Wednesday 10 April – We fly from London Stanstead to Cagliari, arriving mid-afternoon. We drive through stunning countryside to **Alghero** and check in to the **4\* Hotel Catalunya** for four nights. We have our first group dinner in a local restaurant – wine, water and coffee are included with all group lunches and dinners.

**Day 2:** Thursday 11 April – This morning will be spent exploring **Alghero**. The feel of this delightful coastal town is unmistakably Catalan, unsurprising as in 1353 it passed from the Doria family of Genoa to Pedro of Aragón. During a leisurely walk through the town we visit the neo-classical **Cathedral** and the renaissance **Church of San Francesco**. We drive to the northern coastal port town of **Porto Torres** for lunch (not included). In the afternoon, we visit the very fine **Basilica di San Gavino**, built by Pisans between 1030 and 1080. Following our visit, we return to the hotel where the evening will be free.

**Day 3:** Friday 12 April – Today we discover some of Sardinia's early pre-historic sites. We visit the pre-Nuragic necropolis of **Anghelu Ruju** and continuing inland the reconstructed mid Bronze Age Nuragic site at **San Antine**, with its famous truncated, cone-shaped buildings. After a group lunch we continue to **San Pietro in Torres**, a stunningly located Tuscan-style medieval church. Likewise, the nearby **Basilica SS Trinita di Saccaggia** is a splendid twelfth century Pisan-inspired church. We return to Alghero where the evening will be free.

**Day 4:** Saturday 13 April – This morning we travel to **Sassari** to visit the **Museo Sanna**, rich in local archaeological finds. Following a walk around the town and some free time for lunch (not included) we return to Alghero where the afternoon will be free, followed by a group dinner later in the evening.

**Day 5:** Sunday 14 April – We leave Alghero and drive via stunning coastal scenery to Sardinia's most important Nuragic site at **Su Nuraxi**. Following a group lunch we explore these significant remains, dating from around 1500 BC, with a tower, defences and a surrounding village. We also visit nearby **Barumini** where the **Casa Zapata** displays finds from the site. We continue to **Cagliari** and the **4\*Hotel Regina Margherita** and the evening will be free.

**Day 6:** Monday 15 April – The coastal peninsula of **Sinnis** is home to **Tharros**, the most important Punic-Roman settlement on Sardinia. We begin with the early Christian church of **San Giovanni** and subsequently explore the remains of the town, picking out prominent ruins in this most romantic of sites. We travel the short distance to **Oristano** for our group lunch. The town's **Cathedral** is an impressive ensemble whilst Oristano's small **Museum** contains finds from Tharros. We end our day with a visit to the austere Pisan-Romanesque **Basilica di Santa Giusta** and return to Cagliari where the evening will be free.

**Day 7:** Tuesday 16 April – Today we visit **Cagliari** on foot where the historic centre is girdled by walls and we find the monuments shaped above all by the Spanish and Savoyard periods. We visit the **Church of Sant'Eulalia** to view the small Roman underground archaeological site. The **Cathedral** is a mix of Romanesque and Baroque styles. Its **Diocesan Museum** has some interesting paintings. After lunch (not included), we spend the afternoon at the **National Archaeological Museum** which provides an excellent overview of the island's ancient history. Likewise, the small **Picture Gallery** next door introduces a number of local artists. Later that evening we have our final group dinner in an excellent local restaurant.

**Day 8:** Wednesday 17 April – After a leisurely start we drive the short distance south of Cagliari to **Nora**. Pre-Punic in origin, this small, evocative coastal site gives little indication of its importance as the capital of Roman Sardinia. Following our final group lunch we make our way to Cagliari and our afternoon flight to Stanstead.

## PRACTICALITIES

**Price** £2485                      **Without Flights** £2310                      **Deposit** £300

**Single Supplement** £195 (Double/Twin Room for Sole Use)

**Hotels** 4 nights at the 4\* Hotel Catalunya, Alghero; 3 nights at the 4\* Hotel Regina Margherita, Cagliari

**Flights** Easyjet: to include Speedy boarding, allocated seats & 20kg of hold baggage

Outward: **EZY3203** Depart London Stansted **1300**, arrive Cagliari **1640**

Return: **EZY3204** Depart Cagliari **1710**, arrive London Stansted **1855**

**Price includes** 3 dinners & 4 lunches with wine, water & coffee, all local transfers, City Tax, entry fees & gratuities, services of Christopher Smith and our local Tour Manager, James Hill

**Not included** Travel to/from Stansted, 4 dinners & 3 lunches



CICERONI TRAVEL  
2 The Square, Aynho, Banbury, Oxfordshire, OX17 3BL  
Telephone +44 (0) 1869 811167      Fax +44 (0) 1869 811188  
Email [info@ciceroni.co.uk](mailto:info@ciceroni.co.uk)      Website [www.ciceroni.co.uk](http://www.ciceroni.co.uk)

