

CULTURAL WALKING TOUR

Sardinia & Corsica

Rustic Villages & Costa Smeralda

CLASSIC JOURNEYS
THE WORLD'S FINEST WALKING TOURS



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*Classic Journeys
provides unbeatable
access to experiences
around the globe.”*

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TRAVEL + LEISURE

Island Gems in a Sapphire Sea

When was the last time you broke bread with a shepherd? Were you sitting at a stone table in his garden, a Sardinian breeze rustling the leaves, with a corkwood plate of his homemade specialties? It's a simple and simply remarkable event, just one of many we'll arrange for you in this amazing week of Mediterranean adventure. Travel between the isles of Sardinia and Corsica and you'll only venture eight miles...but they're worlds apart. Corsica—part of France, but defiantly non-French—is blanketed in fragrant herbs and dotted with quaint villages. Sardinia seeks adventure. Travel through the island and see how it's more rustic, mysterious; with a few thousand years of Phoenician, Spanish and Italian blood in its veins. Together, these two gorgeous islands are some of the least-touristed spots in Europe. When you leave behind the yacht-studded harbors for the mountains, pastures and vineyards of the interior, you have the rarest of privileges—to see and experience countryside and culture that seem to have stood still in time.

The Classic Journeys Difference

- ACTIVE HIKING & WALKING
- LOCAL WELL-CONNECTED GUIDES
- PREMIERE HOTELS
- FOODIE FOCUSED
- HANDCRAFTED TRIP DESIGN
- MORE IS INCLUDED

What's Included

- Award-winning boutique hotels that provide you unlimited access to the people and places, culture and history you came to experience
- All breakfasts, 2 lunches and 5 dinners
- Full-time experienced guide(s) who are with you throughout the trip and handle behind-the-scenes logistics
- Admissions to tastings, historic sites and other scheduled events as noted in the detailed daily itinerary
- Gratuities for hotels, meals, and baggage
- All land transportation during the trip

Above & Beyond Benefits

→ INVISIBLE CHECK-IN

When your group arrives, we whisk you and your bags to your room immediately. No waiting – no tipping.

→ WINE ON US

In many regions, we uncork wonderful local wines at every dinner, compliments of Classic Journeys.

→ PRIVILEGED ACCESS EVENTS

One-of-a-kind access to remarkable people, places and activities arranged just for you.

→ PERFECT PAIRINGS DINNERS

A special dinner prepared by one of our favorite chefs with a procession of wines tailored to each course.

Terrain

Easy to moderate on good trails and coastal paths. An average of 2 to 3 hours of walking per day, with a vehicle usually in support.

CLASSIC JOURNEYS ITINERARIES MAY BE SUBJECT TO SLIGHT CHANGES, HOTEL SUBSTITUTIONS, AND OTHER MODIFICATIONS.

DAY 1 »

Sardinia - Alghero

We meet in Alghero. It's easy to fall in love with the relaxing atmosphere of this beautiful city, where Mediterranean cultures have long mixed with beautiful results. Alghero was conquered by the Aragons from Spain in 1353, and today, almost 700 years later, people still speak Catalan as well as Sardinian. Even the architecture retains a significant Spanish influence. Street signs are in both Catalan and Italian. In Spain, Alghero is referred to as the "tiny Barcelona of Italy". In addition, one of its towers, Torre di Porta a Terra, was built in 1300 as a contribution from Jewish residents to the military efforts of King Pietro III.

The sea plays an important role in daily life in Alghero. Brightly colored coral, found plentifully in the sea here, is available in many shops. The magnificent coastal views stretch to the promontory at Capo Caccia. Another wonderful feature of Alghero is that most roads in the historical center are pedestrian only, and the residents enjoy strolling—often for ice cream—well into the evening. Streets are lined with interesting shops and there is a market along the seaside as you walk into the historical center of town.

Our welcome dinner features delicious, locally caught fish and the well-regarded local vermentino wine. Not only will you savor the meal, but you will get a first hand opportunity to prepare some of the dishes you will be enjoying. After dinner, we stroll back to our hotel along the promenade. Many shops are open until eleven in the evening and it's very common to see residents out walking past midnight.

MEALS: D

OVERNIGHT: ALGHERO

DAY 2 »

Corsica - Bonifacio

Following breakfast in our hotel overlooking the sea, we journey north and east along the Sardinian coast, where a light walk before lunch leads us to a medieval castle in the town of Castelsardo, perched on the summit of a promontory over a harbor of extraordinarily transparent waters. From nearby Santa Teresa di Gallura, we boat across the eight miles of the Strait of Bonifacio to Corsica, which Balzac described as "a French island basking in the Italian sun." We arrive on Corsica at the ancient fortress town of Bonifacio, dramatically situated atop a white limestone peninsula 180 feet high.

Established by Genoa in the 12th century as a stronghold against the Moors, Bonifacio remained in Genoese hands through centuries of battles and sieges. Inhabitants still speak a medieval dialect. The town also has important literary references, as it is the supposed harbor where Ulysses' fleet was bombarded by the Laestrygonians in Homer's *Odyssey*.

Bonifacio is also highly regarded for its artisans and boutiques, known for their superb local fashions, hand-made shoes and excellent selection of high quality ceramics. If you want time to yourself for shopping during the week, this is a great afternoon for that before we meet our guide for an escorted exploration of the historic town. If you'd prefer to skip some or all of the shopping, our head guide is available to take you on a sea-level walk at the base of the cliffs, where our footpath is carved from the limestone and provides us the opportunity to see the endangered Corsican sea birds.

Over dinner tonight, you'll find that meals in Corsica (and Sardinia for that matter) are often like a lesson in local cuisine, as our chefs proudly introduce us to some of the island's most authentic ingredients. On any given evening, our hosts might prepare for us dishes using ingredients like the *castagne*, or chestnut. Chestnuts have long been used in many Corsican dishes like the famed *Suppa di Castagne*, and chestnut flour is used to produce some of Corsica's most delectable breads and pastries. Corsica's mild, dry climate is also ideal for wine grapes, and we can enjoy sampling the local wine, Gentile, and pairing it with one of several delicious Corsican cheeses. *Brocciu* is ewe's or goat's milk cheese similar to ricotta. Another quintessential Corsican ingredient, it's thrown into everything from stuffed sardines and cannelloni to custards and *Fiadone*, a mouthwatering version of cheesecake.

MEALS: B, D

OVERNIGHT: BONIFACIO

DAY 3 »

Corsica - Sartene

We wake under the vitalizing Corsican sun at our charming hotel. Take a deep breath and enjoy the scent of the *maquis*. This blanket of fragrant shrubs and flowers covering much of the island is intoxicating. Napoléon Bonaparte, who was born in nearby Ajaccio, swore he could smell the myrtle-scented *maquis* from the sea. Following breakfast, we set off this morning to the north into the true heart of rustic Corsica. As we move temporarily away from the sea, we find ourselves surrounded by forests of chestnut and pine trees, then rolling hills and olive groves. Local friends who still operate a historic press used to produce the olive oil that was of the highest demand throughout all of Europe in the 17th and 18th centuries invite us in to learn about the technique...and a chance to sample the local specialty served on crusty Corsican bread.

Nearby is the picturesque village of Sartene, sometimes referred to as the most Corsican town. With its old quarter surrounded by ramparts, the village looks as if it's been carved out of the granite mountainside. Our midday visit provides us the nice opportunity to banter with the local shopkeepers with our guide's help. Be sure to pick up some of the delicious *beignets* that the white-haired village women still make the traditional way with chestnut flour and *brocciu* cheese.

Nourished from lunch, we return to the sea, where we stop to enjoy one of our favorite walks, along the balmy, gusty Mediterranean coast toward Punta di Campomoro. This region is unique as it is a nature reserve, which Corsicans call the "Garden of the Wind". Depending on the season, you may be able to find arbutus berries, blackberries, mushrooms, walnuts, hazelnuts, wild strawberries, asparagus, sea urchins...or go for a swim in the sea. Along the way we absorb some of the island's best panoramas as we follow a footpath that leads us to a majestic watchtower, which provides us commanding views of the scenic coastline. With our clothes now smelling of an intoxicating mixture of the sea and wild herbs, we turn inland to explore one of Corsica's most notable archeological sites—Cauria—where large stone *menhirs* laid undiscovered for nearly 5,000 years until the last century. These humanlike monuments have facial features and are posed for battle, a variation on stone monoliths created in places like Stonehenge in the age. It's a fascinating place to walk around and explore, as we learn more about prehistoric Corsica from our guide. Later in the day, we return to our home in Bonifacio, where a wealth of fine restaurants offers many options for dinner.

MEALS: B

OVERNIGHT: BONIFACIO

DAY 4 »

Sardinia - Porto Cervo

This morning, as the sun rises and paints the chalk cliffs orange, join our guide on a memorable walk overlooking the sea toward Cape Pertusato and with views back to Bonifacio.

We wave goodbye to Corsica as we ferry back to Sardinia. Arriving mid-afternoon we're welcomed by the Costa Smeralda and its warm island breezes. (Sardinian legend claims that Costa Smeralda is the birthplace of the wind.) The famed "Emerald Coast" area is known for the resort created by the Aga Khan, who discovered it in the 1960's when his yacht came ashore to weather a storm. A scenic drive leads us through the coastal village of Porto Cervo, the crown jewel of the Emerald Coast. Here, we discover the dueling charms of the fashionable boutiques tucked behind earth-toned shop fronts and the natural port where the yachts of the rich and famous anchor.

Sardinian arts and crafts are one of the most enjoyable aspects of the island and are deeply rooted in ancient history. The most prestigious products range from antique style furniture to stone sculptures and woven woolen products. We'll see many of these scattered about the property and in the guest rooms as we arrive at our beautiful country resort near Oliena.

MEALS: B, D

OVERNIGHT: OLIENTA

DAY 5 »

Sardinia - Scala Pradu

As beautiful as the coast is and we enjoy it immensely there, this is the highlight of our time in Sardinia for us, in the heart of the island where traditions run most deep. In this true, untouristed part of the island, shepherds tend their sheep, farmers often ride to market on donkeys, and Christian religious festivals maintain many of their original pagan roots. Sardinia is also a handicrafts heaven. Locally produced goods include bright woolen shawls and rugs, hand-carved wooden objects, gold filigree jewelry and hand-woven baskets in all shapes and sizes.

As when visiting other islands, it is often helpful to have a friend who knows the in's and outs of local life and customs. Sardinian people are often reserved at first if approached by an outsider. But when introduced through a friend, like our native friend and guide Fabrizio, they open up quickly and are very hospitable as they welcome you into their circle. With him, we embark on an uphill walk through a valley in the foothills of the Supramonte Mountains. This quiet countryside is wrapped in olive tree shrubs, endemic herbs and flowers. The path follows an ancient shepherd route and immerses us in the beauty of these magic mountains. In the distance we may see shepherds as they take their sheep to graze. Along our path we notice small stone and pebble towers that are created by locals to indicate that the road is well scouted and groomed. Fabrizio tells us about the shepherd life, plants, animals and birds of Sardinia. At Scala Pradu we have a picnic lunch which usually includes local products such as "pecorino" sheep cheeses, cold meats, tomatoes, melon and wine.

This afternoon we head back to the hotel to relax. After freshening up we'll pause for a wine tasting treat before dinner at one of our favorite restaurants in Nuoro.

MEALS: B, L, D

OVERNIGHT: OLIENA

DAY 6 »

Sardinia - Lanaitto Valley

We awake in our beautiful countryside refuge, under beams of old juniper wood and tucked into our antique beds covered with handmade Sardinian fabrics. Our friend Giovanna and her family welcome us into their kitchen to show us how they make their traditional *carasau* bread. Save room from breakfast, as you'll want to taste the delicious flat bread, which is baked twice and is a favorite among shepherds who take it with them into the mountains.

Fortified from our tasting, we follow tranquil paths through a valley in the foothills of the Supramonte Mountains. Our walk ends with a visit to a 3,000- year-old Nuraghic village, one of Sardinia's most important archaeological sites, and one of 7,000 such mysterious structures on the island. The largest and most technically perfect megalithic structures still standing in Europe, these round stone towers were built before 500 B.C. by the island's early inhabitants, the Nuraghi. Exploring the village with our local guide, Fabrizio, a Sardinian native, we discuss the significance of the structures.

Midday, we continue on through the Lanaitto Valley, past acres of valleys and forests to the rustic home of our shepherd friend, Tonino. For us, he lays out a lunch spread of fresh ricotta cheese and honey, sausage and bacon, pecorino sheep's milk and caprino goat cheeses, fruit and a homemade digestive liquor. It's a true *locavore* experience as we eat in his garden from native cork plates on carved rock tables. Following lunch, Tonino talks to us discussing shepherd life in Sardinia, and we often lose ourselves in his stories about his life and the history of the area. He may even show us how he works leather and carves wood to produce his famed crafts.

If you'd like to atone for some of the calories at lunch, join us for an easy afternoon walk through the countryside where oak trees and juniper dominate the vegetation of the valley. If we're lucky, we'll even see some *mufflone*, or wild sheep.

Over dinner our guide tells us about the Sardinian tradition of winemaking, which started before the Roman domination of the island—during the Nuragic period—and has continued ever since. The Phoenicians, Romans, Byzantines, Tuscans, Genoese, Benedictine and Camaldolite monks, Spanish and Piemontese all have a place in the history. Satiated from a delicious dinner, we have time to relax on the terrace or swim in the pool under the star- filled night sky.

MEALS: B, L, D

OVERNIGHT: OLIENA

DAY 7 »

Sardinia - Alghero

As if we are leaving behind a newly found family, we wave farewell to Signora Pasqua at our country inn, and make our way west to Alghero. On the way we stop and visit the town of Bosa. We'll embark on a walk through the town center viewing shops.

We part company in the early afternoon at our preferred hotel here, or we are happy to bring you to the nearby airport. From Alghero there are several fine options for short connecting flights to Rome, Milan, London and Frankfurt.

MEALS: B

Tour Hotels



Villa Mosca

Designed and constructed in the early 20th century, Villa Mosca today represents one of the icons of the city, a stunning example of Art Nouveau architecture. The building, with its octagonal shape, plays host to elegant, intimate and refined rooms.

NIGHTS: 1 nights



Cala Di Greco

High in the wooded hills overlooking Bonifacio, this all-suite hotel is Mediterranean modern at its best. From breakfast to sunset, the spectacular pool is the place to eat, relax and sip a glass of wine. Each of the suites includes a private patio.

NIGHTS: 2 nights



Su Gologone Hotel

Wrapped in ancient vineyards and olive groves, this 4-star country inn offers majestic quietness and charming history. Its guesthouses are scattered among gardens, courtyards, stone pathways and a spring water guest pool.

NIGHTS: 3 nights

Arrival & Departure

→ ARRIVAL DETAILS

START LOCATION: **Lobby of Carlos V Hotel**
START CITY: **Alghero**
START TIME: **2:30 PM**

→ DEPARTURE DETAILS

END LOCATION: **Alghero Airport or City Center**
END CITY: **Alghero**
END TIME: **2:30 PM**