

ITALY - SARDINIA WEST COAST MOUNTAINS & SEA

8-days / 7-nights inn-to-inn **SELF-GUIDED** walk from Santu Lussurgiu to Sinis Peninsula and Cabras



Taking a walk from the black mountains of Montiferru to the sea and the Sinis wetlands you will discover many beaches, bays, headlands, ancient ruins and historical sites. This is a gentle self-guided inn-to-inn walk embracing the wild and romantic beauty of Western Sardinia, through areas of scented Mediterranean maquis, crossing a wide variety of terrain. The Sinis is a nature reserve home to thousands of pink flamingos and a wealth of other birdlife especially in the spring. You will be rewarded with dramatic views and opportunities to explore highlands, lowlands and coastlines. The route is quiet – far removed from the busy resorts. The terrain is rugged in parts, with cliffs on the coast, interspersed with white sandy beaches, grass covered dunes and panoramas embracing the coast and seaside blues.

Departs: Any Saturday from 2nd March to 22nd June and 31st August to 26th October, 2019
Sunday to Friday departures are available for an additional cost.

Cost from: **\$1250** per person twin share, Saturday departures.
\$1380 per person twin share, Sunday - Friday departures.

High season supplement: \$345 (for departures from 23rd June to 6th September 2019)
Single room supplement: \$325 Solo traveller supplement: \$220

Includes: 7-nights of accommodation in 3-star and 4-star hotels. Bed & breakfast (usually continental buffet style). Baggage transport between accommodation and taxi transfers on 2 days to the start of the walk. Welcome briefing, route notes and maps, emergency telephone assistance.

Not included: Local transport on arrival / departure, all lunches and dinners, local taxes (@ €10 per person), personal expenses, drinks or any admission to museums/archaeological sites.

Difficulty: This tour is graded as **Easy to Moderate** as the terrain is generally easy on tracks and good footpaths with walking times of between 3 and 7 hours per day. The longest day is mainly downhill on tracks and back roads. There is a little flexibility on a few days to adjust the distance walked. In summer, warm temperatures can make the routes more difficult.

Begin your walk in the Montiferru Mountains, famous for the clear spring water and the local 'red' beef. Your base is amongst the centuries-old narrow streets of Santu Lussurgiu, which wrap around the head of the valley and descend the steep hillside. A short day walk takes you to the springs of Santa Leonardo where you can 'take the waters'. The longest day walk takes you all the way from the top of the mountains to the coast; it is all downhill and on good tracks. This is a day of sweeping views and a sense of accomplishment as you arrive at your hotel overlooking the bay of Santa Caterina di Pittinuri where you can sit by the pool and watch the sunset turn the limestone cliffs to shades of yellow and pink.

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From Santa Caterina you are transported to the edge of the '*Is Arenas*' forest to start walking past the '*Is Benas*' lagoon. A beautiful cliff top walk leads us to the beach of Su Pallosu and on to the cliffs leading to '*Capo Mannu*', the lighthouse and ancient Spanish watchtowers and stroll into Putzu Idu.

The cliffs at Su Tingiosu are home to plenty of bird life in the spring, especially where the cliffs end at the beautiful quartz beaches of '*Is Aruttas*' and '*Mari Ermi*'. There are plenty of beach front cafes along this stretch for refreshments before heading inland, crossing low hills of arable land, to arrive in San Salvatore Sinis, a village populated for just one week a year for a religious festival. A nearby hotel with a fine restaurant is home for two nights and your starting point for a loop to the ancient ruins of Tharros and Capo Santa Marco. Not far to walk but much of interest along the way including the ancient Basilica Paleocristiana di San Giovanni di Sinis V Secolo, a church dating back to 470 AD, and a choice of restaurants for a nice lunch. The site of Tharros has evidence of occupation from the 8th Century BC through to the 10th Century AD, by Phoenicians, Punics and Romans. The walk round Capo S. Marco passes some small secluded beaches, old watch towers, cliffs and a lighthouse before ending on a larger sandy beach.

From San Salvatore you walk to Cabras, the main town in the Sinis. The route crosses artichoke fields, vineyards, olive groves and the Cabras Lagoon, famous for grey mullets and its '*Bottarga*', the cured mullet roe. The natural reserve is rich in birdlife. In the afternoon you can walk a loop from Cabras cross the '*Pauli 'e Sali*' swamp, a protected area where an immense number of birds usually nest. Cabras is a small town with an attractive compact centre with bars and restaurants for your last meal of the trip.



Suggested itinerary:

Day 1: Arrive Santu Lussurgiu.

Arrive at the hotel by mid-afternoon (ask about airport transfer if required). Allow time to explore the narrow streets and alleyways of this old medieval town of 3000 inhabitants, halfway between Oristano and Bosa.

Day 2: Santu Lussurgiu / San Leonardo Circuit

walking distance @ 12km

A short sharp walk to start the holiday with about 300 metres of ascent along the way. A mix of road walking and agricultural tracks take you up to San Leonardo with sweeping views en route. Spend a little time looking around this village. The church and springs are interesting and Sunday is market day. There are numerous places to get a drink and something to eat. Another mix of roads, tracks and paths will get you back to Santu Lussurgiu. You should have time to divert to the viewpoint above the town where a statue of Christ overlooks the village and to walk down through the maze of narrow streets to look at the churches and find the bar at the centre of the village for well-earned refreshment.

Day 3: Santu Lussurgiu – Santa Caterina di Pittinuri

walking distance @ 24km

First hop into a taxi for a short ride to the top of the mountain and the start of the walk. The route descends from the Montiferru Mountains to Santa Caterina di Pittinuri on the coast. The route initially traverses high ground with views down to the coast then descends to the coastal plain. Most of the way is on good tracks with gentle gradients passing through oak forests, olive groves and quiet pastures. The last hour is on level minor roads taking you to the quiet bay at Santa Caterina. If time permits you may like to walk the footpath to the village of S'Archittu (which owes its name to the natural arch along the nearby coast), one hour each way.

Day 4: Santa Caterina di Pittinuri – Putzu Idu

walking distance @ 17km

After a short taxi transfer you walk to the Is Benas lagoon, home to a large colony of Grey Herons and Pink Flamingos in season. A beautiful track winds along the cliffs leading to the beach of Su Pallosu. This only takes 2 or 3 hours so walk onwards to complete a route around Capo Mannu. This takes you along more cliff tops to the lighthouse and the ancient Spanish watchtowers then to Putzu Idu, a village located on a stretch of coast often frequented by sailors and surfers.

Day 5: Putzu Idu – San Salvatore Sinis

walking distance @ 20km

The day starts at the limestone cliffs of Su Tingiosu, which stretch for some six kilometres and provide habitat for many birds. The cliffs end in the beautiful quartz beaches of Is Aruttas and Mari Ermi where rice-sized grains of quartz form the white beaches. Finally head inland, crossing artichoke and wheat fields to arrive in San Salvatore Sinis, famous for its church erected over a Roman hypogeum (an underground temple). The village is mostly unpopulated apart from one week when a religious festival brings the place to life.

Day 6: Tharros and Capo San Marco

walking distance @ 17km

A day trip walking across fields and alongside the lagoon to San Giovanni, then on to the site of Tharros and the narrow peninsula of Capo S. Marco. A leisurely hour's walk takes you from the hotel to the ancient Basilica Paleocristiana di San Giovanni di Sinis V Secolo, a church dating back to 470AD. Here you join the main tourist track to the site of Tharros, an interesting site dating back to the 8th Century BC, possibly founded by the Phoenicians but dominated by Roman-era ruins.

We suggest you take an hour to explore and for a stop in the café which will set you right for a loop around Capo San Marco using the smaller footpaths that skirt the coastline. Pass the watchtower before walking along the beach and back to the cafes and restaurants of San Giovanni. You can spend the rest of the afternoon relaxing on the beach, walking further along the coast or just head back to the hotel.

Day 7: San Salvatore Sinis – Cabras

walking distance @ 10km and bird watching from Cabras

A morning walk leads you out of San Salvatore to Cabras, the main town of the Sinis. You walk along artichoke fields, Vernaccia grape vineyards, olive groves and past the Cabras Lagoon, the largest in the area, famous for shoals of grey mullet and Bottarga, the cured roe of mullet. Perhaps try some of these local specialties for lunch.

If you are passionate about bird watching don't spend too long over lunch, as today is your day. Take the optional afternoon walk (loop of up to 9km) crossing the swamp of Pauli 'e Sali, a protected area where an immense number of birds, some very rare, usually nest. Sheltered by the rushes and canes you can often take beautiful pictures of flamingos without disturbing them.

Day 8: Departure day

Tour ends after breakfast – airport transfers or additional accommodation can be arranged at extra cost.



Outdoor Travel offers walks - guided in small groups or self-guided with inn-to-inn luggage transfers and meals - in most parts of Europe including in **Tuscany, Umbria, Piedmont**, the **Amalfi** or **Cinque Terre** Coasts or the **Dolomites** in Italy. In Spain we offer walks in **Catalonia, Andalusia** and the **Alpajurras Mountains** or along the **Pyrenees** between France and Spain; in France choose **Provence, Burgundy** or the **Dordogne**, the **Vermillion Coast, Corsica, Burgundy, Alsace**, the **Loire Valley**, and the wild **Cevennes**. Coastal walks are available along the beautiful **Dalmatian Coast** of Croatia and the **Lycian Coast** of Turkey.

For long distance routes, in France and Spain see the **Way of St James** or **Camino de Santiago** from Le Puy in France to Santiago de Compostela in Spain. In Italy consider the **Via Francigena**, the pilgrims' road to Rome, or in England Wainwright's famous, challenging **Coast to Coast** walk.

Contact **Outdoor Travel** for more details and reservations

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