

## Sardinia, A Continent Within Italy

Marina Melchionda (June 14, 2010)



The region of Sardinia was one of the main sponsors of the June 2 Gala organized at Cipriani Wall Street to celebrate the Italian National Day. A press conference hosted just before the event allowed us and the numerous New York-area media and tourism operators attending to learn more about this Mediterranean Island, its beauties, its folk and cultural traditions, and the extraordinary hospitality of its inhabitants . Here are some reasons why you should definitely consider it as your next vacation destination...

As many of our readers know, the Region of Sardinia was one of the sponsors of this year's National Holiday Gala hosted at [Cipriani Wall Street](#) [2] on June 2.

Held right before the beginning of the celebrations, the press conference organized on the second



floor of the restaurant became an occasion to introduce to the journalists and travel agents attending the beauties of this island located right in the middle of the Mediterranean Sea, North of Sicily, West of Tuscany and South of France.

Consul General Francesco Maria Talò and the Director of the [Italian Government Tourism Board in North America](#) [3]Riccardo Strano welcomed the audience on behalf of the [Regional Commissioner for Tourism](#) [4], Sebastiano Sannitu, who could come to New York but sent a video-message inviting all of those attending the press conference to visit Sardinia.

Sardinia is actually not unknown to American operators in the tourism sector: aside from being one of the most popular vacation destinations in the Mediterranean area, starting a number of years ago the local government decided to promote its multi-faceted beauties and cultural and historic attractions at an international level.

As Mr. Strano reminded us, only two years ago the region hosted the "Italy Symposium", an important commercial and promotional event that allowed about 250 media and tourism operators to explore the island on a tour that brought them to discover its rare beauties from coast to coast

Some of those fortunate ones were attending the press conference on June 2 and shared some of the memories they have of their trip with us. "I was amazed by the sense of hospitality of the local population. They treat you as part of their family, welcoming you into their houses, offering food, and helping you in every possible way", said one of them.

The local inhabitants of Sardinia have a way of life that is indeed envied throughout the country. The rhythms are extremely slow and are dictated by the rotation of dark and light, night and day, seasons, and harvests.

The unpolluted air they breathe, together with the uncontaminated food they have, must be some of the main reasons why they have longer life span on the average than their co-nationals.

The motto of the latest tourism promotional campaign launched by Commissioner Sannitu was not chosen by chance: "In Sardegna vivi di più" (In Sardinia you live more) is really based on hard facts, given that the region has the largest number of hundred-and-more-year-old inhabitants than any other region in Italy.

If this is not a sufficient reason to visit Sardinia for you, we can give you a hundred more. As Mr. Strano suggested, inspired by Mr. Sannitu's video-message, "Sardinia is almost a continent": from the sea to the mountains and the lakes; from tradition to innovation; from folklore to luxury; from food and wine experiences to sport challenges; the region can offer you this and much much more.

What does the name "Costa Smeralda" suggest to you? Beautiful, limpid, crystal-clear sea? The most renowned Italian jetset VIPs? An assonance with the precious emerald stone? Well, you got it. In the summer time this North-East corner of Sardinia is populated by some of the richest, most powerful or influential people of Italy and Europe, and it becomes a long, infinite, red carpet, where mostly famous cinema and showbiz stars show off their glamorous lifestyles to the curious spectators. Its sea of rare beauty is dotted by luxurious yachts, while on the seafront, fancy restaurants, discos, and clubs follow one another.

If you are not a fan of mundane life, no worries at all: the region offers over 2,000 km (about 1,250 miles) of beaches, with harbors, minor islands, and protected marine zones where you can admire uncontaminated sea beds populated by colorful and varied fauna and rich coral banks.

Lake and mountain lovers will not be left unsatisfied either. The inland territory is characterized by mountainous landscapes interrupted by green hills and plains, while most of the lakes and bodies of water are extremely interesting to visit thanks to their particular ecosystems preserved for many years through the International Convention of Ramsa.

The history, culture, and tradition of Sardinia is very little known outside its borders. As all island civilizations have a strong tendency to conserve their own traditions intact, this fact is even more



evident in Sardinia, an island with a mountainous, rough terrain divided into numerous sub-regions that are independent from one another.

Its language, traditional costumes, music, dances, and popular religious rituals pertain to a world that lives on and spontaneously regenerates, and changes shapes, colors, and accents from town to town. Every village has its own customs, is protective of them and preserves them as a cultural treasure.

In most cases, people wear them for town festivals but there are some centers, such as Busachi, in the province of Oristano, or Desulo, Tonara and Orgosolo, in the province of Nuoro, where you'll find old ladies that dress in XIX century fashion everyday.

So don't be surprised if, while touring around, you find yourself witness to a folk dance performed in the middle of a square: they are an integral part of the pagan or religious celebrations that take place throughout the region all year round.

Another part of the cultural tradition of Sardinia is, of course, its food. We had the opportunity to taste some of the region's most famous product and dishes during the June 2 Gala, when the porchetto (roasted suckling pig) and the rich malloreddus pasta with sausage sauce and chunks of pecorino cheese enriched the huge Sardinia inspired buffet offered to those attending the reception.

Thanks to its geographical conformation, Sardinia is both a land of fishermen and peasants, and the extraordinary variety of its inner cultures can offer the visitor a wide range of recipes, products, and combinations to choose from. While spices enrich the flavors and aromas of some of the dishes, almond and honey-based sweets can become a perfect ending to a nourishing dinner when accompanied by mirto, the local liqueur produced by an infusion of alcohol and Myrtle berries

How can somebody experience all of this in one only vacation? Consul General Talò offered us a solution: travel by bike. Such an eco-friendly and affordable means of transportation is not only in line with the way of life of Sardinia's inhabitants, but also with the motto launched by the Consulate for the June 2 celebrations: "Bike to the future". Embracing the cause of sustainable tourism, one can visit Sardinia from coast to coast on two wheels as the region is constantly expanding the length and number of bicycle paths crossing the island.

From the Saracen town of Oristano to the nearby fisherman village of Cabras, with its typical pilgrim white houses called cumbessias; from the Medieval town of Sassari to the main urban center of the Island, Cagliari, founded by the Fenicians in the VIII century B.C, riding by bike will allow you not only to visit the main cultural and historical sites of the region, but also to explore places and sites of rare beauty of which you didn't even know the existence...

So this is just a hint about the many reasons you can find to visit Sardinia and spend your vacation there.

The rest is for you to discover... so don't forget to bring a bike with you, two eyes ready to be surprised, a mouth for exploring new tastes, a spirit which is hungry for new adventures...and enjoy!

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- [1] <http://iitaly.org/files/costasmeraldajpg>
- [2] <http://www.cipriani.com>
- [3] <http://www.italiantourism.com>
- [4] <http://www.sardegnaturismo.it>

