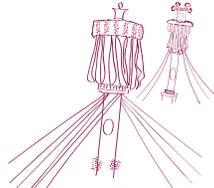


# discover sassari

festivals and traditions

territory, environment and nature

monuments and places of cultural interest





**COMUNE DI SASSARI**

## **discoversassari**

A cura dell'Assessorato alla Cultura e al Turismo  
Settore Sviluppo Locale: Politiche Culturali e Marketing Turistico

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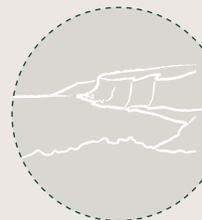
## MONUMENTS AND PLACES OF CULTURAL INTEREST

Monuments and places of Cultural Interest



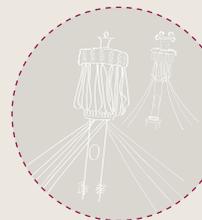
## TERRITORY, ENVIRONMENT AND NATURE

Territory, Environment and Nature



## FESTIVALS AND TRADITIONS

Festivals and Traditions



# discover **sassari**

Una guida per chi desidera conoscere Sassari e l'unicità del suo patrimonio storico e del suo territorio. Pensata per chi visita Sassari e vuole scoprire e riscoprire i luoghi, le tradizioni e i monumenti più rappresentativi della città.

## history

Sassari is situated in the middle of the north-western corner of the island; it has a population of 129,000 and is Sardinia's second largest city. Its ancient name, Thatari, was first mentioned in the "Condaghe di San Pietro in Silki", an ancient register of the monastery (1113). Its territory shows clear traces of the earliest settlers during the late Neolithic Age: Monte d'Accoddi, a sort of imposing ziqqurat, built around 2400 BC, is the most impressive Neolithic site; 170 nuraghi testify to the typical culture which flourished in Sardinia between 1800 BC and 238 BC, whereas remarkable remains give evidence of the Roman presence in the area (238 BC-460/467 AC).

In 1294, Sassari declared itself an autonomous Municipality and adopted its Statutes to regulate the political and administrative life of the city. Its alliance with Pisa and Genoa encouraged extraordinary progress in commerce and culture, as testified by the construction of important buildings, like the walls and the Palazzo Municipale (Town Hall).

After four centuries of Spanish domination, Sassari came under the rule of the House of Savoy in 1720; its strong cultural link with Spain lasted until the second half of the 19th century, when it was symbolically removed by the demolition of the 14th century Aragonese castle in 1877.



## must see sights

Sassari had the aspect of a walled medieval town until the 19th century. The 13th century walls encircled the labyrinthine streets of the old town with its valuable heritage. A walk through a dense network of cobbled streets and arches will reveal the most representative civil and religious buildings, such as the 13th century Cathedral, with its Baroque façade (beginning of 18th century) or the neoclassical Palazzo di Città.

The Rosello fountain, built by the Genoese on a pre-existing water source in 1605-1606, is another landmark of the town.

The church of Santa Maria di Betlem, an exquisite example of Romanesque and Gothic styles, is the first sight a visitor has of Sassari when arriving from Alghero or Porto Torres.

Corso Vittorio Emanuele is the main axis of the old town and corresponds to the urban section of the Roman road linking Porto Torres to Cagliari; it stretches from Piazza Sant'Antonio to Piazza d'Italia, with its statue of King Vittorio Emanuele II and the neoclassical Palazzo della Provincia. A few hundred metres further along is the G.A. Sanna National Museum, one of the most important museums in Sardinia.





Fontana di Rosello

MONUMENTS AND PLACES OF CULTURAL INTEREST  
TERRITORY, ENVIRONMENT AND NATURE  
FESTIVALS AND TRADITIONS

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**discoversassari**



Visit the town, explore its history and heritage, experience its everyday life.



## Thàmus

The museums and culture of Sassari: a single hallmark identifies the main cultural sites and places. The name Thàmus blends the medieval name of the city, Thatari, and the museum circuit, embedding within its six letters the identity, culture and history of Sassari. The logo reproduces the decoration on the ceiling of the foyer of the Palazzo di Città theatre, home to the City Museum. This is where the life, traditions, architecture and history of the city are best represented by way of a permanent display of a collection of finds, documents, objects and works of art. Other parts of the Museum include Palazzo della Frumentaria and the sections of Palazzo Ducale called "The Duke's rooms and cellars". The Thàmus cultural network invites the visitor to set off on an itinerary that, besides the City Museum, also includes Palazzo Ducale, the Aragonese Castle with its barbican, the elegant buildings of Palazzo dell'Insinuazione, Palazzo d'Usini, and Palazzo dell'Infermeria San Pietro, the Rosello fountain, and beyond the city limits, the archaeological area of Monte d'Accoddi and the domus de janas rock-cut tombs in Montalè (Li Punti).





Decorazione della volta di ingresso alla sala del teatro  
Museo della Città - Palazzo di Città

## CITY MUSEUM – Palazzo di Città

The neoclassical Palazzo Civico was built between 1826 and 1829, after the demolition of the pre-existing Municipal House. The façade overlooking the main street, Corso Vittorio Emanuele II, features puristic neoclassical forms. On the first floor is the wrought iron balcony where the Municipal Authorities gather to watch the “Candelieri” procession passing down the Corso, according to a 16th century tradition. The rooms of Palazzo di Città, today headquarters of the City Museum, offer the visitor an exhibition itinerary that is divided into two sections. The west wing, which can be entered from corso Vittorio Emanuele II, offers an intriguing representation of the places, the memories and the identities of the city. The East Wing of the building, which can be entered from Via Sebastiano Satta, contains exhibitions concerning traditional dress for everyday life in the city and countryside, as well as a room dedicated to the religious nature of the city, with particular reference to the rites of Holy Week and typical folk festivities such as carnival. These two aspects of the city’s traditions are well portrayed in the room by the works of the sculptor Eugenio Tavolara (1901-1963), who made “Procession of the Mysteries” (1928) and “Fancy Dress in Sassari” (1937). It also houses the Municipal Theatre (entrance on the Corso) and the Tourist Board (via S. Satta).



## Palazzo Ducale

Palazzo Ducale was built for the Duke of Vallombrosa, don Antonio Manca, towards the end of the 1700s (1775-1805), however the Duke died in 1805 before the completion of the works and the Palace was occupied by his nephew, the Duke of Asinara. The Palazzo, built on the site of pre-existing buildings, represented one of the most important examples of architecture of the time and inspired later building design. The three-storey façade is decorated with pilaster strips and string-courses; the different ornamental motifs of the window surrounds, alternating curvilinear and triangular tympanums or fine rococo cornices, served as a model and became the norm in later buildings. On top of the façade is an attic storey with a balustrade. From the typical 18th century hall, a delightful staircase leads to the first floor or piano nobile, with a succession of fine rooms and a chapel; the original party room, overlooking the internal courtyard, has been adapted as a Council-Chamber. A painting representing King Carlo Alberto is on display in the Palazzo; it is the work of G. Marghinotti, the most distinctive 19th century painter in Sardinia.



## THE DUKE'S ROOM AND CELLARS - Palazzo Ducale



The section of the museum called **“the Duke’s rooms”** completes and enriches the visit to the building, illustrating the history of the most important civic building in Sassari and life as it went on within in the first half of the 1800s. The display is spread out over three interconnecting rooms, which may be entered from the main hall of the Palace. The itinerary is evocative and inspiring, and it aims to re-enact the organisation and function of the rooms in the Duke’s era. The first room is dedicated to the history of the area in which the Palazzo was built: the excavations in the nearby Piazza Santa Caterina have revealed the remains of dwellings from the 15th-16th centuries. Amongst the most important finds are several bowls in Sassari maiolica ceramic, and polychrome maiolica of the same period from elsewhere in Italy. The last two rooms are dedicated to the residences of the Manca family, from Palazzo d’Usini to Palazzo Ducale by way of objects that illustrate everyday life within their walls: dinner sets of various types; pots and pans from the kitchen; containers from the pantry; containers for pharmaceuticals and toiletries, as well as curiosities, such as two pistols.

The itinerary called **“the Duke Cellars”** passes along a catwalk suspended above the cellars of the palace, the unusual architecture of which makes the place evocative and capable of arousing great emotion. The itinerary goes through the underground rooms, cisterns, wells and ancient sewage tanks, and is enriched with panels and drawings. Excavations have revealed five cellar rooms beneath the floors of the Palace. These probably belonged to buildings from the 1500s which were knocked down to make place for the building of the first noble residence of the Mancas, and were successively reused in the new Palace built by the Duke of Asinara.



## CITY MUSEUM – Palazzo della Frumentaria

Porta Rosello, the only existing gateway of the medieval walls, leads to via Rosello, where stands this late 16th century building that served as a granary to store a wheat supply in case of siege or famine until 1833; it was later converted into a barracks and a carpentry workshop. The complex consists of two non connected structures; the two-storey buildings are quite similar, despite the different organization of space.

The ground floor has large rectangular rooms with barrel vault ceilings; four doors on the front façade have direct access to these spaces connected by round arches.

From the entrance in Via delle Muraglie, a staircase gives access to the first floor rooms with their beautiful wooden ceilings on round arches. Large windows make the upper floor spaces light and airy. The Frumentaria was built in two phases, the first between 1597 and 1598 and the second between 1607 and 1608. Recently refurbished and reopened to the public, it now hosts temporary exhibitions.



## Palazzo d'Usini

Facing onto Piazza Tola, this palazzo was built in 1577 for don Jaime Manca on a pre-existing late-Gothic structure; it represents the first expression of civic Renaissance forms in Sardinia in the 16th century. The client was probably in touch with Italian military engineers, including the two Palearo-Fratino brothers, employed in Sardinia at that time to reinforce the island's fortresses. After the construction of the Teatro Civico, this Palazzo became the seat of the Municipal House under Piedmontese rule in Sassari from 1879 to 1900. The façade is modest with a robust portal; engraved on the architrave is the date of 1577 and the coats of arms of noble families are still visible on both sides of the portal.

The hall has a round arched vault, once opening onto a garden. The interior underwent several modifications and the second floor was added later. The building now houses the Municipal Library.



## Palazzo dell'Insinuazione

Since notaries were endowed with *fides publica* (public trust), the Municipality assigned them the Archives of the "Insinuazione", hence Notaries exercised both functions of *notarius et secretarius* of the town. Pursuant to a Royal decree issued on 15th May 1738, royal towns and the most important centres in the island became the seat of the "Tappe dell'Insinuazione". The Archives of the "Insinuazione" were responsible for the registration and recording of Notarial acts within a territorial district. The Archives of the "Insinuazione" were kept in the Municipal House of Sassari until 1755, when the town Council decided that these documents should be stored in a special archive, in a thoroughly refurbished granary, belonging to local nobleman Esgrecho. Once the "Insinuazione" was closed and after reacquisition by the Municipality, the building was assigned to the Public Notary Council in 1885 and converted into the Notarial Archives (Archivio Notarile).

Reacquired by the Municipal Administration in 1985, the building became the seat of the town Historical Archives.



## Palazzo Infermeria San Pietro

The first part of the building already existed in 1662; the palazzo was built to assist the ill and help the poor and needy. It was built thanks to Elena della Bronda, a local noblewoman, who entrusted the task of running the infirmary to the friars of the Franciscan Order in San Pietro in Silki. The complex was placed in a densely populated and busy area, near the site of the first settlement of Medieval Thadari. The first building phase included the refectory and the chapel; the structure was later modified between 1892 and 1896. The building stands close to the convent of the cloistered Capuchin nuns, in a small piazza leading to the nearby church of Sant'Apollinare. This three-storey building has basements and a rear courtyard; its construction included pre-existing structures, proof of the lively trade in bakeries and cisterns. Recently restored, it now hosts the Department for Local Development and Cultural Policies in Sassari.





## The Aragonese Castle. The Barbican

After the expulsion of the Genoese lords in 1323, the people of Sassari forged an alliance with Barcelona. The citizens soon displayed their dissatisfaction with the new overlords and this led to the first rebellions in 1324 and 1326. In June 1326 hostilities were concluded with the signing of a peace treaty and three thousand Alfonsin lire was paid to the Aragonese to finance the building of a castle to keep the city under control. The fortification was probably finished in 1331. Its military function later declined and it became the headquarters of the Inquisition in 1564. The fortress was completely demolished in the period 1877-1880 to make room for the "La Marmora" barracks. The Barbican was built between the mid 1400s and 1503. This was a new defensive structure inside the fosse area, below the façade of the Castle, which had both a defensive and offensive function involving the use of the new firearms. Archaeological excavations have brought the entire structure to light. This is composed of two 80-metre-long corridors, one above the other, the lower one having 26 openings for Arquebuses. The structure was probably used until the end of the 16th century, when the castle lost its military function. It appears to have been completely covered in earth at the end of the 18th century. During construction work in Piazza Castello a small rock-cut bell-shaped room was found. This was perhaps originally a grain store for the Castle, re-used as a prison in the first part of the Inquisition.

## Fontana di Rosello

Nestling in a tiny valley that flanks the church of the "Trinità", this is another landmark of the town. The fountain of "Gurusello" was first mentioned in the 13th century Code of Statutes (Codice degli Statuti). Nothing is known of its medieval form, except that it had twelve bronze waterspouts (cantaros). Following a Municipal decree (1604), taxes were levied on citizens in order to renovate the fountain and in 1605-1606, under the reign of Filippo III, it was rebuilt and remodelled by workers from Genoa on the site of the pre-existing water source; it was given severe Mannerist features (late Renaissance style). One of the first portrayals of the fountain is in a work by the Jesuit painter Johan Bilevelt (17th century), now kept in the church of Santa Caterina. The marble fountain represents an allegory of the flow of time, with four marble statues representing the seasons and the lion-head waterspouts symbolizing the months of the year. During the anti-feudal uprising of 1795, the fountain was damaged; three statues were destroyed and later replaced with replicas (1828), made in Liguria by a sculptor from Carrara. The only original one, representing Summer, is now kept in Palazzo di Città.





## The prenuragic village of Monte d'Accoddi

This is a Neolithic settlement which developed not far from the sea, in a flat area near a river at the end the 4th millennium BC; the complex includes an altar, a village and a necropolis. Unique in all the West Mediterranean Basin, today it appears as an imposing structure, in the form of a truncated pyramid, with a long access ramp. It was superimposed upon a pre-existing smaller altar of the same shape, a quadrangular terrace with ramp. On top of the ramp, conceived for rituals, was the small "red temple", painted in red ochre. This first altar was built during the cultura di Ozieri (3200-2800 BC) era, when new cults and more complex religious rituals appeared. The adjoining coeval village of rectangular huts which flourished on the site of a previous settlement (3400 BC) with circular huts, partially sunk under the access ramp. The altar was destroyed by fire around 2800 BC and it was necessary to rebuild it in its current form. The site appears to have been inhabited until the early Nuragic Age (about 1800 BC) and even later.

This monument remained buried up to the 1950s, when it was first excavated by the archaeologist E. Contu; further exploration in the 1980s revealed the construction phases and brought to light interesting remains from the dwellings in the area. The archaeological site also includes a necropolis, with eight burial chambers carved in the rock (hypogea).



## Domus de Janas - Montalè

About 7 km from Sassari, this area is a Neolithic burial site (ne- cropolis), with rock-cut tombs called "domus de janas" (fairy houses).

Casually discovered in 1982, the most significant tomb was dug in a low limestone layer, accessible through a narrow opening leading to a small quadrangular antechamber; this room is remarkable for the bull-horn motifs and bas-relief decoration on its walls. The anteroom bears no evidence of the original roof and is connected to a large central quadrangular chamber with seven adjoining smaller cells arranged on a radial plan, according to the typical rock-cut tomb pattern of the area around Sassari.

The architectural and decorative features of the tomb can be ascribed to the cultura di Ozieri (3200-2800 BC), a local culture dating back to the late Neolithic period; the site appears to have been frequented over hundreds of years and the tomb was still in use during the copper Age, as clearly demonstrated by ceramic artefacts attributed to the cultura di Monte Claro (full Copper Age 2400-2100 B.C.). Around this "domus de janas", four other rock-cut tombs were partially re-adapted to different purposes, converted into shelters or used for country activities.



## The Walls

Though sober in architecture, the walls have been silent witnesses to the history of the town for many centuries. In medieval times, the village of Thatari was encircled by defensive walls, the construction of which began in the first half of the 13th century. They were about 2 km in length with four gates, built on the base of towers or on reinforced corners, giving access through the walls. The defensive circuit had 36 crenellated towers and a moat to provide greater protection. A small chapel was erected by each gate during the Aragonese period. Sassari was a small walled town until the 19th century when urban expansion caused the partial destruction of the walls, culminating in the demolition (1877-1880) of the 14th century Aragonese castle. The only surviving remnants are some partially inhabited towers with coats of arms still visible in corso Trinità, a sole round tower in via Torre Tonda, and the defensive tower in piazza Sant'Antonio.



## Duomo di San Nicola (Cathedral)

A church dedicated to "Sanctu Nicola de Thatari" was first mentioned in a 12th century register known as "Condaghe di San Pietro in Silki". During the second half of the 13th century, the church was built in a Pisan-Romanesque style, but nothing remains except for the lower part of the bell tower and parts of the sacristy walls. After the almost complete demolition of the Romanesque structure, the cathedral was rebuilt in Gothic-Catalan style between 1480 and 1500. Behind the main altar in the apsidal space, partly refurbished in the 17th-18th century, are the valuable wooden choir stalls, carved by local craftsmen in the early 18th century. On the main altar is a 14th century icon of the Madonna del Bosco, which has been venerated since the construction of the first church. The Baroque façade (start of 18th century) is a veritable masterpiece of engraving, full of statues, ornaments, reliefs, columns, friezes and busts. In the upper storey the shell-headed niches contain the statues of three local martyrs (Proto, Gavino and Gianuario); in the curvilinear crowning a niche houses the statue of San Nicola, the patron saint, and on top of the crowning cornice is God the Father. The Sacristy leads to a section of the Diocesan Museum, housing gold and silver liturgical artefacts and vestments, precious missals and valuable paintings; its art gallery is in the nearby church of San Michele.



## Santa Maria di Betlem

This monastic church was built for the Benedictine order at the beginning of the 12th century. During the 13th century, after the arrival of the Franciscans, its Romanesque structure was enlarged in the new Gothic manner of Tusco-Umbrian origin. Under Aragonese rule, the church was modified to satisfy the Catalan concept of space in the 15th century. This work included the enlargement of the central nave and of the short transept, as well as the addition of the groin-vaulted side chapels, while the original wooden truss roof was left unchanged. During the first half of the 19th century, the church underwent an enlargement and modification project; it was covered by a dome and was given its present form, together with the monastic complex, rich in precious architectural and decorative elements, still visible today. Among the works of art, the most ancient is certainly the “Madonna di Bethlem” or “Madonna della Rosa”, a polychrome wooden statue of the Catalan school, datable to the fourteenth century. The sacristy leads to the 13th century cloister featuring a fountain called “Brilladore”. Every year, on the 14th August the ancient guilds renew their solemn vow to Our Lady of the Assumption, offering ten candle shaped columns in the thanksgiving procession of the Candelieri, when the statue of the Vergine Assunta is solemnly put on display in the church.



## University

The construction of the new Jesuit College or University began in 1611 along the medieval walls, thanks to a substantial donation from Antonio Canopolo, born in Sassari and appointed Bishop of Oristano. The building was designed with classrooms arranged around a central courtyard. Started in 1625 and finished in 1651, enlargement work involved the religious house and the associated church of San Giuseppe. The complex underwent several modifications and the church was later demolished; the front façade and the internal portico were modified in 1927. The imposing back façade facing the public gardens is what remains of the original 17th century building; this side has large framed windows and counterforts with arches supporting the balcony on the piano-nobile. In 1782 part of the structure was destined to house the Royal Tobacco Factory until it became the property of the University. Parts of the medieval walls, of which the round tower in via Torre Tonda is clearly visible, were incorporated in this wing of the complex. Along the corridors of the Palazzo and in the portico encircling the courtyard, inscriptions and busts remind us of the most distinguished figures who contributed to the excellent reputation of the University of Sassari over the centuries.





## Mus'a - Canopoleno art gallery

The newly restored Jesuit College "Canopoleno" is now the premises of the Art Gallery; the complex, including the adjacent church of Santa Caterina, was built for the Jesuit Order between the 16th and the 17th centuries. The exhibit, housing more than 400 works of art from the Middle Ages to the 20th century. The building has two courtyards: one corresponding to the inner court of the old cloister, the other opening onto Piazza del Comune. Each floor has long corridors defining the internal spaces, showing the distinguishing features used in the various construction phases. Its architectural pattern is austere and rigid, with almost no internal or external decoration, except for the elegant classicist motifs on the entrance portal and around the first floor window, on the side adjacent to the church of Santa Caterina. The lateral façade and the internal façade overlooking the courtyard have strong window surrounds in the typical Jesuit style, commonly used in Sassari during the 17th and 18th centuries.



## Brigata Sassari Historical Museum

Founded in 1992, on the ground floor of the Lamarmora Barracks; this structure was built at the end of the 19th century on the site of the 14th century Aragonese castle, demolished between 1877 and 1880. The Museum is dedicated to the Brigata Sassari, the military unit that distinguished itself for courage and military valour during World War I. The Museum houses a fascinating exhibition of historical relics, uniforms, photographs and other wartime items of the Sardinian regiments that served in WWI and displayed extraordinary courage and heroism. The unit adopted the red and white collar badges and the emblem of the "Four Moors", featuring a red St. George's cross with a moor's head in each quarter. After the Armistice the Brigata Sassari was disbanded, to be later reorganized in Sardinia in 1988. Nowadays, the Brigata is a modern mechanized unit of volunteers, exclusively recruited in the island. Apart from its institutional functions, its squadrons have been involved in international peace missions since 1996.



## Piazza d'Italia - Palazzo della Provincia

Palazzo della Provincia is the headquarters of the Prefettura, the Government territorial office established soon after the unification of Italy. Designed by Eugenio Sironi and Giovanni Borgnini, it was built in the Neoclassical style between 1872 and 1880. Worthy of note is the Council Room (Sala Consiliare) decorated with an elaborate series of frescoes by the Sicilian artist Giuseppe Sciuti. The frescoes represent an allegory of the history of Italy, from the obscure primitive Era to the Modern Age. Among the figures is King Vittorio Emanuele II in the act of holding the newly liberated Italy and promoting progress, symbolized by a locomotive and a telegraph. This fresco is an important example of historical verismo (second half of the 19th century), exquisitely represented by painter Sciuti. The façade of the Palazzo looks onto Piazza d'Italia, the largest piazza in Sassari (about 1 hectare in surface) built in 1872. In the middle is the statue of King Vittorio Emanuele II, the work of Genoese sculptor Giuseppe Sartorio (1899). The monument was inaugurated in the presence of the Royal Family, with a folk ceremony that can be regarded as the first Cavalcata Sarda.



## The "G. A. Sanna" National Museum

The "G.A. Sanna" National Museum was founded in 1878; the scientific and cultural relevance of the collections makes it the most important museum in north-central Sardinia. The archaeological section contains artefacts from the Palaeolithic to the Middle Ages. The room dedicated to Prehistory contains artefacts from the Palaeolithic Age to the Early Bronze Age (around 500,000 years ago until 2,000 BC); noteworthy are also the fragments of hollow logs from the Petrified Forest in Anglona. Particular attention is paid to the prehistoric altar of Monte d'Accoddi, to megalithic tombs such as the burial chambers carved out of the rock (hypogea), giants' tombs and dolmens. A rich display of pottery and bronze statuettes testifies to the Nuragic Age, the unique and distinctive civilization that flourished in Sardinia from about 1800 to 238 BC. The historical profile of the island ends with fascinating relics from the Phoenician-Punic, Roman and Byzantine dominations, as well as artefacts from the early and late Middle Ages. In the medieval section, great emphasis is on the Romanesque churches, with an interesting replica of the basilica in Porto Torres. Four beautiful Roman mosaics from Sorso and Alghero are on display in the conference room.



## San Pietro in Silki

La The original church was founded in the 11th century and around 1112, it was donated to the Benedictine nuns by the mother of Judge Mariano I of Torres. The lower part of the bell tower and some traces in the nave are the only remains of the Romanesque plan with one nave and apse. After being donated to the Franciscans, the church was modified between 1472 and 1478, with the addition of the side chapel dedicated to the "Madonna delle Grazie" (1472-1475) after the miraculous finding of the statue of the Virgin, highly venerated in Sassari and now in the main altar. This chapel is cross-vaulted and opens onto the nave through a pointed arch with pilasters surmounted by stone capitals carved in the Catalan-Gothic manner. The "Madonna delle Grazie" chapel was later enlarged; today a lovely iron gate separates it from a later room housing a marble altar, the funerary monument to the Baron of Usini, Jaime Manca, commissioned after his death (1632) by his widow. This monument, unique in the whole island, was built on the mainland. The presbytery wall is entirely occupied by a beautiful gilt wooden altar (1755), which was a typical feature in the churches of Sassari during the 17th and 18th centuries; the portal (1722) is similar to the one in the Cathedral and both were created within the same workshop. The monastic complex houses a canvas representing "The Visitation of Mary", the work of an artist from Northern Europe, Ferdinand Storm (16th century).





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Fonte Sant'Antonio  
Piazza Sant'Antonio

Teatro il Ferroviario

Stazione FFSS

Piazza della Stazione

Piazza Mons. Mazzotti

Piazza Duomo

Piazza del Comune

Piazza Università

Piazza Santa Maria

Piazza Tola

Piazza Azuni

Arcevescovado

Largo Macao

Giardini Pubblici

Piazza Mercato

Largo F. Cavallotti

Via Luigi Luzzati

Largo S. Sebastiano

Via Lacomina

Via Lamonione

Via Vecchia

Via Turritana

Via Capo d'Orso

Via Casabirba

Via Masia

Via Porta Nuova

Via Di Savoia

Via Manci

Via Ancoy

Via Maria

Via Giovanni

Via Coppino

Via Michele

Via Porta Utzeri

Via Maddalena

Via Decisa Santa Croce

Viale Manci

Viale S. Francesco

Viale Umberto I

Viale Manci

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Viale Lacomina

Viale Lamonione

Viale Vecchia

Viale Turritana

Viale Capo d'Orso





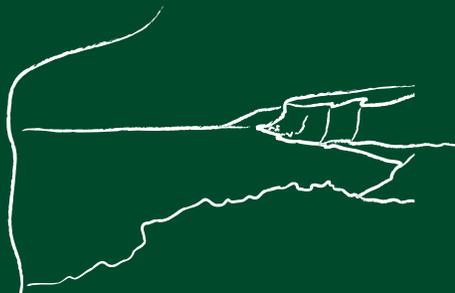
MONUMENTS AND PLACES OF CULTURAL INTEREST  
TERRITORY, ENVIRONMENT AND NATURE  
FESTIVALS AND TRADITIONS

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**discoversassari**



Visit the territory of Sassari and experience the beauty of its landscapes and the amazing variety of its unique environmental resources.



## Town gardens and parks

Sassari has a network of green spaces in its urban area, providing opportunities for a pleasant break for both residents and visitors alike.

Divided into three separate areas, stretching along via Manno, Corso Regina Margherita di Savoia, via Coppino, viale Mancini and viale Italia, the Public Gardens date from the end of the 19th century (1870); the entire park covers an area of approximately 29,400 m<sup>2</sup>. The first section of the park, between viale Italia and via Tavolara, is criss-crossed by a network of basalt gravel paths; on the grassy area there are trees, some of which are magnificent specimens, encircled by well-designed flowerbeds. Adjacent to the old town, the park is a beautiful recreational area also featuring a children's playground. The second section, between via Tavolara and via Coppino, has numerous very old trees, many of which are specimens of great value: holm oaks, palms, linden trees, plane trees and pines. The ornamental fountains ("Saint Francis' fountain" and the "Four Seasons fountain") located here are almost coeval with the creation of the garden. The small part of the park, between viale Italia and via Manno, incorporates the tram terminal.





## Monserato park

This area is the largest green space in Sassari. Situated on the south-west edge of the town, Parco Monserato has great symbolic and historical value for Sassari, as the whole area was undoubtedly the largest aristocratic property in town. During the second half of the nineteenth century the park was given its current neoclassical structure, with beautiful pieces of architectural interest, such as the Tempietto delle Acque, the Ninfeo, the Hunting Tower and the Vasca del Belvedere; in Neo-Gothic style. The Vasca (basin) was planned following the natural slope of the site, by successfully integrating both architecture and nature.

A restoration project included an old farmhouse and an adjoining church; the farmhouse is now a restaurant. The entrance to the park is behind the Vasca delle Rane (Basin of the Frogs), which is the park's most representative feature. The park has an irregular shape covering a total area of approximately six hectares; a variety of trees and hedges has the effect of hiding and then dramatically revealing beautiful views over the town. There are fine specimens of palm trees, citrus trees, carob trees, olive trees and oleasters, pomegranates, magnolias, cy-presses, willows, holm-oaks, linden trees, pines, horse-chestnuts and mastic hedges.



## Bunnari - Valle dei Ciclamini

Not far from Sassari is a beautiful area of dense vegetation, a valley with a small river, called rio Bunnari, and the homonymous artificial reservoir; in the past, the area was a favourite destination for Sunday outings. Recently, after years of neglect, a number of improvements have been made through a development program and the municipal administration has invested considerable resources aimed at enhancing and safeguarding this area. The Valle dei Ciclamini (Cyclamen Valley) and other place names remind us of its environmental beauty. The area around the two artificial lakes is hilly, with pine trees and downy oaks on the slopes; this sloping land is mainly rough pasture used for grazing sheep and cattle. The shores of the lakes are populated by a variety of aquatic birds, such as herons, coots, ducks, as well as many species of terrestrial birds which can be seen all around. There are also marsh turtles that live in the water, tree frogs, green toads and Tyrrhenian painted frogs that inhabit the moist grass and rushes along the shore. Just a short distance from Sassari, this area is fascinating for its biodiversity. The newly opened Parco di Bunnari centre has bar and restaurant services, and leisure facilities including a swimming pool, minigolf course and five-a-side football pitches. A network of paths offers easy walks and mountain bike trails through the beautiful surrounding countryside.



Bunnari - Valle dei Ciclamini

## La Nurra

The municipal territory of Sassari largely corresponds to the Nurra region, in the north-western corner of Sardinia, the boundaries of which coincide with the Alghero-Sassari-Porto Torres road network and the coastline stretching from Porto Torres to Alghero.

The word Nurra probably comes from the Roman town of Nure, originally lying halfway between the Roman colony of Turris (Porto Torres) and the present town of Alghero. It is an area of great natural interest and its landscape is rich and varied: plain and hilly areas alternate in the central part and along the northern coast, while on the west coast the land is higher with majestic cliffs overlooking the sea. The Nurra boasts a wide variety of environments where water is the recurrent element; environmental and natural resources are characterized by the presence of different kinds of water: marine, brackish and freshwater determining high levels of biodiversity. Coastal lagoons and ponds have a major influence on the environmental resources of the municipal territory of Sassari. The brackish-water Stagno di Pilo and Lake Baratz are nature reserves of great interest, playing host to a wide variety of bird species. The marine environment, both along the shore and in the sea, is host to a multitude of life forms and this rich biodiversity makes the Nurra one of the most important ecosystems in the Mediterranean basin.



Scogliere di Porto Ferro



## Porto Ferro

The beach of Porto Ferro stretches between two rocky promontories guarded by three Spanish watchtowers dating from the 17th century: the Tower of Bantine Sale which stands on the southern promontory, and Torre Bianca and Torre Negra on the northern one. The coast offers a beautiful beach of ochre-coloured sand, stretching for more than a kilometre. The sea provides a habitat for a wide variety of marine species, which makes it ideal for diving. On windy days, this secret spot has perfect surfing conditions and the surfers put on an amazing display of skill and bravery. Going further along the coast beyond Torre Bianca, tiny beaches open in enchanting bays protected by rocky spurs rising from the sea. Behind the beach and bordered by a vast pine forest, is one of the largest dune systems in Sardinia. South of the Bantine Sale Tower, the coastline becomes high and jagged. Lovely little coves with secluded beaches opening onto this scenic shoreline are within easy reach of a dirt road running parallel to the coast. These tiny coves of rocks and pebbles with crystal clear water and a marvellous sea bed rich in underwater life are ideal spots for snorkelling. The vegetation consists mainly of maquis (Mediterranean scrub) against the stunning backdrop of the dense pine forest. To the south the shoreline suddenly rises up in a succession of steep limestone cliffs, stretching from Punta Cristallo to the promontory of Capo Caccia.



## Lago Baratz

Lago Baratz, Sardinia's only natural freshwater lake, lies east of the Porto Ferro bay. It is mainly fed by small rivers: Rio dei Giunchi, Rio Cuile Puddighinu and Rio Bastianeddu. This lake was formed during the last glaciation as a result of the presence of a massive sand cordon of marine and continental origin, deposited here by strong winds and violent storms, causing the formation of a dune system. A source of fresh water (S'Ebbi Dolzi) running into the bay of Porto Ferro is the only evidence of the Rio dei Giunchi once having run into the sea (Rio dei Giunchi means "stream flowing through the rushes"). The lake is surrounded by pine trees (umbrella pines and Aleppo pines). Some stretches of this wood alternate with typical Mediterranean scrub species, mainly consisting of wild olive, arbutus with strawberry-like fruits and myrtle. The rich aquatic vegetation provides shelter and food for typical lake fauna. This area has been designated as Site of Community Importance (SIC) by the European Commission.



## Argentiera

This stretch of coastline is characterized by a succession of steep cliffs overlooking the sea, rocky headlands and promontories encircling small bays and coves of unforgettable beauty; when accessibility by means of narrow footpaths is not possible, these charming and secluded inlets are easily accessible by sea. This stretch of wild rocky coastline shelters tiny, sandy inlets close to Porto Palmas, Scoglio Businco and the village of Argentiera. Geologically, Argentiera is one of the most ancient territories in the island, quite similar to the Sulcis-Iglesiente area in South-West Sardinia. The vegetation mainly consists of the typical Mediterranean shrub (maquis), which grows very thick in some places; only isolated fragments remain of the forests that once covered the entire region. Much of the seabed is irregular and uneven, with rocky ridges where channels, recesses and cavities host a great variety of underwater life forms. The small village of Argentiera was originally built for miners and their families; it was named after the mineral (silver – argento it.) extracted from the silver-lead-zinc veins in the environs. The silver mine was active during the Roman period and during the Middle-Ages; after a long period of disuse, it reopened once more during the second half of the 19th century (1867), although a century later, in 1963, it was definitively abandoned. Mining activities stopped after World War II due to the exhaustion of reserves. The architectural complex represents an extraordinary heritage of mining archaeology in the island and at the moment it is part of an urban and environmental regeneration project aiming to offer its visitors a new and interesting insight into the history of Sardinia.







## Porto Palmas

Cliffs and rocky headlands jutting out into the sea give way to the only sandy beaches of this area, in the bay of Porto Palmas and in front of the old mining village of Argentiera. Porto Palmas is the only place where boats can be moored safely, providing a protected anchorage for a few miles along this rugged coastline. A crescent-shaped beach of white sand is nestled within this tiny bay. It is enclosed by low rocks and is well protected from the wind and currents, hence it is ideal for families with young children.

## Lampianu

Lampianu beach is near the Nurra resort, which has now fallen into disuse. Heading north, a signposted pathway leads to the coast facing a rocky reef called Scoglio Businco, whereas going southward it leads to steep steps going down to Lampianu beach. In this isolated and rarely visited region, the countryside is still wild and unspoilt with a rugged coastline and uncontaminated seawater. It is a wonderful spot for snorkelling, giving you the opportunity to discover a vast array of bright colourful marine organisms.



## Stagno di Pilo

Stagno di Pilo represents an environmentally important site due to the variety of its wild flora and fauna. This pond, separated from the sea by a narrow sand dune ridge, provides an ideal habitat for a wide variety of bird and fish species, thanks to thick vegetation consisting of rushes and tamarisk trees. Owing to a somewhat isolated position away from the main road, the natural conditions and environment are completely unspoilt and unpolluted; at different times of the year, depending on the season, wild pink flamingos can easily be seen here. It is a brackish water pond where various salt deposits form during the dry season; the saltwater mingles with various streams of fresh water feeding the pond. The environmental features of the area, as in the western part of the gulf of Asinara, typically vary from that of the marsh to Mediterranean maquis.

## The beach of Fiume Santo

The beach of Fiume Santo extends some kilometres from the tonnare (tuna fisheries) of Stintino to Porto Torres. The seabed slopes down gently and just a few hundred metres away from the shore are some rock formations and stretches of Posidonia seaweed, home to a variety of marine life. Behind the long sandy beach is a series of little ponds and salt water lagoons, including Stagno di Pilo, which is considered to be the most important. The area is ideal for birdwatching in late spring and early summer when colonies of nesting terns can be seen in the less crowded stretches of this beach.



## Platamona

The Aragonese tower of Abbadurente marks the starting point of this beach which extends along some 12 km of flat and sandy coastline. Platamona derives its name from a Byzantine word meaning “flat place”, probably referring to the presence of fens, marshes and swamps. Just behind the coastline is one of the most interesting wetlands in Northern Sardinia, the Platamona pond approximately 3 km long and lying within the territory of Sorso. The seabed is mainly sandy with some isolated rocky banks going out into the open sea.

The marine fauna consists predominantly of species distinctive to the shifting seabed environment, as well as some large pelagic fish in migratory shoals. The main coastal road gives access to the beach resorts in the area.

Behind the beach is an ancient juniper forest of centennial trees; currently the juniper forest area is part of a reforestation programme with pine trees; the dense undergrowth is characteristic of the Mediterranean maquis; in spring, a stunning variety of wild orchids bloom among the shrubs and bushes.







La Festa dei Candelieri  
è patrimonio dell'Umanità

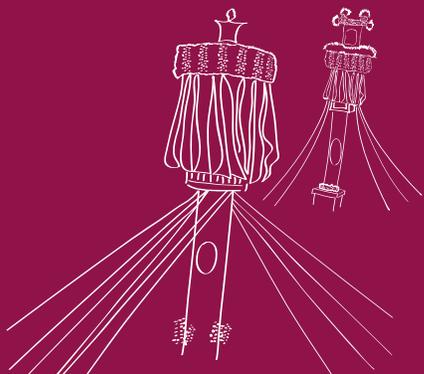


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**discoversassari**

Discover the ancient festivals and traditions,  
which mark the history of Sassari.  
Experience the atmosphere, which townsfolk  
feel deep inside.



## Carnival

The carnival has its roots in the deepest local traditions. Similar to other European areas with strict social hierarchies, in Sassari carnival constituted a primary source of liberation and renewal, thanks to its spontaneous and irregular rhythms: an authentic experience of life without hierarchies in contrast with the fixed categories of everyday life.

The cheeky sense of irony, the taste for scathing quips and the caustic verse of the gobbule represent some of the characteristics that distinguish the Carnival of Sassari from those of the rest of the island.

In particular the gobbule, poems or traditional songs, most probably descending from the ancient Catalan literary tradition of the coblas, represent the irreverent nature of the festival. The typical sounds of the Carnival are those of instruments from the folk tradition: the seghe-de-seghede or the carnevale zanzarra or serràggia (made from a pig's bladder filled with air placed on a bamboo cane), lu bottu (friction drum), lu trimpanu (tambourine with cymbals), lu tamburu. Today, beside the Carrasciari di li mazzidaggi (the Butchers' Carnival) a series of activities take place along the streets of the city: theatre, music, street artists' shows, the classic long doughnuts, providing enjoyment for children of all ages.

An exhibition in its own right is the excellent wood carving "Mascherata sassarese" (Fancy Dress in Sassari, 1937) by Eugenio Tavolara. This can be seen in the City Museum - Palazzo di Città, in the section dedicated to the Sacred and the Worldly.



Eugenio Tavolara, Mascherata Sassarese (1937)

## The Rites of the Holy Week and the Confraternities

The local Holy Week rites are based on models from the Iberian religious traditions, dating back to the Spanish presence in Sassari over four centuries. In the week preceding Easter the Arch-confraternities of the Holy Cross and of Gonfalone, of Oration and Death, of the Servants of Mary and the confraternities of the Holy Sacrament and the Holy Mysteries, all of ancient origins, organise processions that cross the old city centre to the sound of drums, in an atmosphere that is highly evocative. The Rites start off on Holy Tuesday with the procession of the Confraternity of the Mysteries, whose members, dressed in purple robes, bear wooden statues of the Passion of Christ through the town.

Holy Wednesday is the day of the procession of Our Lady of Sorrows carried out by the Arch-confraternity of the Sacred Sacrament. On Maundy Thursday there is a mass in Coena Domini (Mass of the Lord's Supper) in the Church of the Holy Trinity with the ceremony of foot-washing, traditionally organised by the Arch-confraternity of the Holy Cross and of Gonfalone (also known as the "white disciplined ones"). Following an ancient tradition, after the mass in Coena Domini, the altar with the shrine in which the consecrated Host is placed is adorned with flowers and candles. An unusual and typical decoration is that of the Sepolcri (Sepulchres), which is composed of plates on which shoots of corn and legumes have been grown in the dark. The faithful visit the Sepolcri in thousands, making the streets and squares of the city extremely lively. Every day in the Church of S. Antonio Abate, the Arch-confraternity of the Servants of Mary celebrates rites connected with the Crown of the Seven Sorrows of Holy Mary. On the morning of Good Friday, the same confraternity oversees the solemn procession of the Madonna of the Seven Sorrows, which visits seven churches in the Old Town. On the evening of Good Friday, the Church of the Holy Trinity hosts the para-liturgical service of Iscravamentu or the Descent of Christ from the Cross, overseen by the Arch-confraternity of the Holy Cross.

This moment of great religious intensity is followed by the Procession of the Dead Christ and by the Stations of the Cross with stops in the different churches in the Old Town. For about a decade, a rite has taken place on Easter Sunday in Piazza Colonna Mariana that is a re-visitation of the meeting between the resurrected Christ and Our Lady.



## Cavalcata Sarda

The Cavalcata Sarda is the greatest secular event in Sardinia. Its roots lie in the parades on horseback through the streets of the city as part of the festivities organised in honour of rulers, such as that in 1711 in honour of Charles III who was victorious over Philip V. The first modern versions of the Cavalcata Sarda took place on the occasion of visits to the city of illustrious personalities, such as in 1899 for the inauguration of the monument to Vittorio Emanuele II in Piazza d'Italia, or the presence of Umberto I and Queen Margherita of Savoia, to which a large number of groups participated, almost exclusively from the province of Sassari. The events in 1929 and 1939 are also worthy of note; these were organised on the occasion of visits by members of the Royal Family. The Cavalcata Sarda was rediscovered at the start of the 1950s, as interest in tourism and culture increased in Sardinia; since then the event has taken place every year on the second last Sunday of the month of May.

The Cavalcata Sarda is different from the other events that take place throughout the year all over Sardinia, because it does not have religious associations: the procession is not related to a vow, but nevertheless has the majestic and profound traits of the Sardinian cultural tradition personified in the thousands of participants, who are the corner stone to this great spring festival. Over the last century, the Cavalcata Sarda has earned the title "the festival of beauty", a lavish display of the wealth and variety of the traditional Sardinian costumes, the





preciousness and beauty of the associated jewels, and the plethora of sounds and dances of the folk tradition.

On this Sunday morning the villagers and horse-riders in traditional costumes parade through the city streets, following a route that is more than 2km long. There are more than 3,000 costumes, and all the municipalities of the island are represented. The result is an unforgettable show of colour and sound. Along the route the villagers in costume followed by the horse-riders greet the onlookers and the authorities, offering them traditional Sardinian products: bread, cakes and local delicacies. An impressive column of more than 300 horse-riders closes the procession.

The early afternoon is dedicated to the *pariglie*. These take place at the Pinna Racetrack and consist of displays of horsemanship in which the most courageous Sardinian riders show their merit by doing acrobatic stunts on the backs of galloping horses.

The event is accompanied by the Festival of Traditional Songs and Dances of Sardinia, in which folklore groups from around the island entertain the crowds with the island's vast repertory of music and dance. The Festival starts on Friday night in the evocative setting of the pre-Nuragic altar of Monte d'Accoddi and continues on Saturday and Sunday night in Piazza d'Italia where the sound of the *launeddas* (Sardinian reed instrument), the *tenores* (male choirs) and the accordion bring the festival to a close in an atmosphere which is both unique and unforgettable.

## The Candelieri

The festival of the Candelieri is of Pisan origin: in the 13th century the trade corporations of Sassari borrowed from Pisa the tradition of offering candles to the Madonna in mid-August. In the modern era, the tradition took on an even more profound meaning from a religious point of view with the institution of the vow the city took in honour of the Blessed Virgin, who had interceded to bring to an end one of the terrible plagues that periodically broke out in the city. Known as the "descent", from the Sassari dialect word faradda, the procession of the Candelieri is a long ritual involving collective participation, the key players of which are the Guilds, the members of which wear the ancient costumes of the trade corporations, the Candelieri bearers, the civic authorities, but above all the townspeople, who turn out to see the event in droves.

Originally the votive candles were carried within wooden "machines" that with time became wooden columns. At present the Candelieri the Candelieri can weigh up to 400 kilos. They are composed of three parts: the upper section is in the shape of a capital to which are added





bunting and a pennant with the name of the leader of the bearers; coloured ribbons (li betti) hang down from the top, these are rolled up and then unravelled by the children of the guild; the shaft of the Candelieri is three metres high, with a diameter of 40cm and this bears an image of the patron saint and the symbols of the guild; the square base has four crossbars so that eight people can bear it in their arms.

On the 14th of August, early in the morning, the day of the faradda starts with the so-called "dressing ceremony". Each guild "dresses", or prepares, its own still unadorned Candelieri at the headquarters of the guild or at the house of the leader of the bearers, the guild member who has the honour and burden of being responsible for the votive wooden candle. The preparation ceremony is simple and informal, always accompanied by great cheerfulness to banish the nervousness the guild members inevitably feel: it is a sort of encouragement to face the hard trial that the faradda represents.

# festivals and traditions

Following an ancient ritual the “descent” of the Candelieri takes place on the evening of the 14th of August, starting from Piazza Castello, where before there was the ancient Aragonese Castle. The route has not changed with time and it leads down what is now known as Corso Vittorio Emanuele, the main street of the Old Town, rounding up in the church of Santa Maria in Bethlem, which lay outside the walled city in Medieval times. Halfway through the procession there is a key moment: the guilds pay homage to the citizens, who are represented by the Mayor at Palazzo di Città. Here takes place the distinctly symbolic ritual of the exchange of emblems between the Municipality and the guild of the Landowners, which the whole population of Sassari identifies with, as agriculture has always been of great importance. The festival of the Candelieri has been declared a world intangible heritage by UNESCO, together with the so-called “celebrations of big shoulder-borne processional structures” that take place in Nola, Palmi and Viterbo.



## GUILDS' PROCESSIONS AND MASSES

Throughout the year, Guilds express their devotion through processions, during which their members wear the ancient costumes of the trade corporations

### First Sunday after Easter

Procession - Gremio degli Ortolani - (Vegetable farm workers) - Santa Maria di Betlem

### May 1st

Procession - Gremio dei Massai (Landowners) - San Pietro in Silki

### Second Sunday of May

Procession - Gremio dei Falegnami (Carpenters) - Santa Maria di Betlem

### Last Sunday of May

Festa del Voto - Procession and Mass

### Closest Sunday to June 24th

Procession - Gremio dei Contadini (Farmworkers)- Santa Maria di Betlem

### Second Sunday of July

Procession - Gremio dei Piccapietre (Stoneworkers) - Santa Maria di Betlem

### August 2nd

Procession - Gremio dei Muratori (Builders) - Santa Maria di Betlem

### Sunday before the Candelieri

Procession - Gremio dei Viandanti (Wayfarers) - Sant'Agostino

### August 14th

Discesa dei Candelieri

### August 15th

Holy Mass on the Solemnity of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary

### August 22nd

"Ottava dei Candelieri" - Mass

### Second Sunday of September

Procession - Gremio dei Sarti (Tailors) - Santa Maria di Betlem

### December 1st

Procession - Gremio dei Fabbri (Blacksmiths) - San Nicola (Cathedral)

### December 8th

Mass in honour of the Blessed Virgin Mary

### December 13th

Procession - Gremio dei Calzolai (Cobblers) - San Nicola (Cathedral)

## local food

In the Old Town you can taste the typical dishes of Sassari's cuisine, closely linked to the farming tradition of the city and its territory. A classic first course is favata, prepared during Carnival. You can also try an array of soups with beans, potatoes, lard, wild fennel and sun-dried tomatoes. Ravioli are another favourite, as are giggioni, gnocchi with sausage and tomato sauce. The second courses are mostly based on meat and vegetables: lambs feet in tomato sauce; cordula with peas and coratella are both made with the innards of lamb (kidneys, liver etc.).

The Sassari people are also great fans of different types of escargot. Above all in summer, sardines are fried or roasted. The most typical dessert is the long doughnut, again associated with Carnival.

Another typical dish is fainé, a sort of flatbread made with chick pea flour and served up cut into pieces and seasoned with black pepper.

Fainè



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**COMUNE DI SASSARI**



La Festa dei Candelieri  
è patrimonio dell'Umanità