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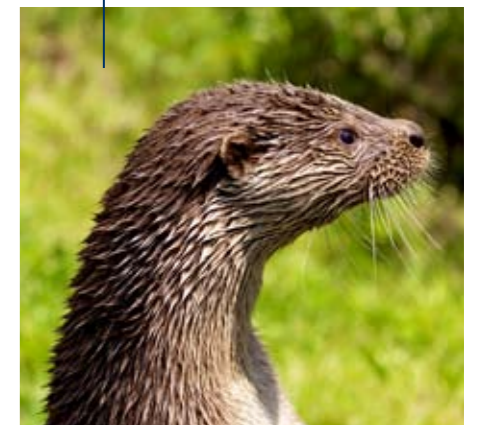
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It's glitz and glamor inside Royal Caribbean's *Mariner of the Seas*. Rich Blando cruises in high style to Phang Nga Bay, **Thailand**



Always travel with a good book



**AGATA FILIANA** ("I Love Santorini!" page 36) is a computer engineer with a passion for traveling. Born in Indonesia, she has lived in England, France, Romania, and Switzerland. When on the road, getting lost and indulging in local food are her two favorite things to do. [www.dreamexplorewander.com](http://www.dreamexplorewander.com) @dewtraveller

Born in the UK, **TIM HANNIGAN** ("The Story Islands," page 26) started work as a chef, trading summers of kitchen work for winters wandering Asia and the Middle East. He eventually shipped out to Java to work as a teacher, and then as a freelance writer. Now he divides his time between Cornwall, UK and Indonesia. Tim is the author of *Raffles and the British Invasion of Java*. [www.tahannigan.blogspot.com](http://www.tahannigan.blogspot.com)

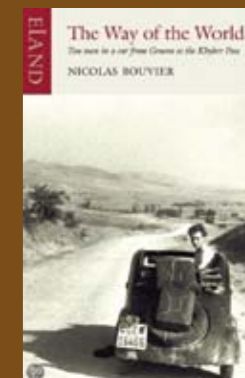


Amsterdam-based travel writer and photographer **ESTHER VAN VEEN** ("Sardinia – Something Else," page 16) backpacked through Nepal, Tibet, Thailand, and Malaysia for three months in 2001. This sparked her ongoing love-affair with Asia. Working as a tour leader, Esther has explored the Mediterranean, the Middle East, North Africa, and Latin America. She dreams of tracing Marco Polo's footsteps along the Silk Road. [www.esthervanveen.com](http://www.esthervanveen.com)

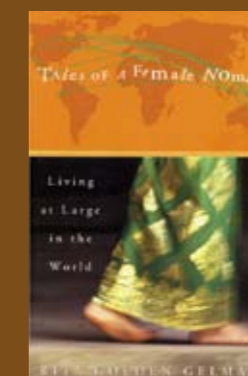


"One of the most intoxicating travel books ever written," says Tim of Nicolas Bouvier's *The Way of the World*. In 1953, Nicolas Bouvier and Thierry Vernet left Switzerland for India in a battered Fiat... "Anyone who doesn't want to hang out with gypsies and make grand transcontinental journeys as soon as they've read it must have something wrong with them."

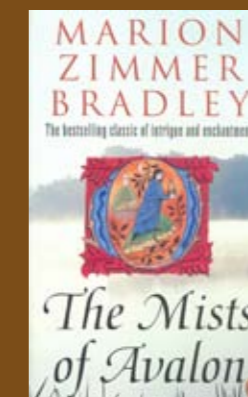
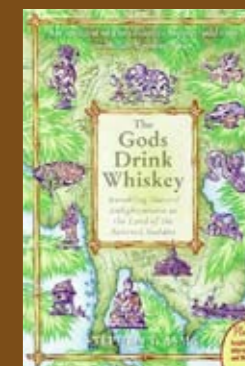
Anisha enjoyed *Paris Letters* by Janice MacLeod. "Based on the author's experiences, this is one for dreamers. The book evokes such a strong sense of Paris and furthers the romance and nostalgia that the world already feels towards the City of Light."



"Great perspectives on Buddhism," writes Dominic of Stephen T. Asma's *The Gods Drink Whiskey*. "This is a comic yet real insight into the life of a westerner in Cambodia."



Agata loves Rita Golden Gelman's *Tales of a Female Nomad*. "This powerful book made me laugh and cry, but most of all it taught me how to connect with people from all over the world as a woman."



Esther recommends Marion Zimmer Bradley's classic novel *The Mists of Avalon*. "I love the enchanting world of medieval England. In this novel about King Arthur and his sister Morgan Le Fay, pagan Celtic culture is celebrated with mystic Avalon and Glastonbury as a backdrop."



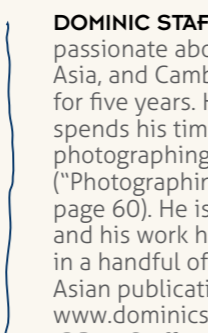
Over the last 25 years, poet **MICHAEL PAUL HOGAN** ("To Komodo," page 40) has lived in China, India, Indonesia, the USA, and his native England. American Voodoo is Michael's first collection of published poetry.



After exploring Australia ("A Seaplane to the Whitsundays," page 56) for almost a year, globetrotters **NOÉMIE SANCELME** and **BAO NGUYEN** settled in Thailand and Vietnam respectively. Driven by an urge to discover, Noémie and Bao are constantly looking for new off-the-beaten track destinations to delve into, striving to reconnect with their inner selves as often as possible.



After 30 years as a fighter pilot, **NIGEL WOOD** works for himself as a commercial designer and photographer ("Corfe Castle," page 22). Although based in his native England, he has lived in Europe, California, and Singapore and loves exploring new locations and finding new subjects, whether just around the corner or across the globe. [www.cobwood.co.uk](http://www.cobwood.co.uk)



**DOMINIC STAFFORD** has been passionate about Southeast Asia, and Cambodia in particular, for five years. He currently spends his time teaching and photographing in Siem Reap ("Photographing Siem Reap," page 60). He is a regular blogger and his work has been featured in a handful of local Southeast Asian publications. [www.dominicstafford.co.uk](http://www.dominicstafford.co.uk) @DomStafford



**ANISHA SHAH** is a luxury and emerging destinations travel journalist. Her background as a BBC TV and radio news reporter, combined with a long-standing love affair with travel, sees her first on the scene at new and exciting travel hotspots ("Belize - Rising Star," page 78). Her work has appeared in Huffington Post, Fodor's, and Prestige Asia. [www.ani-shah.com](http://www.ani-shah.com) @anishahbbc



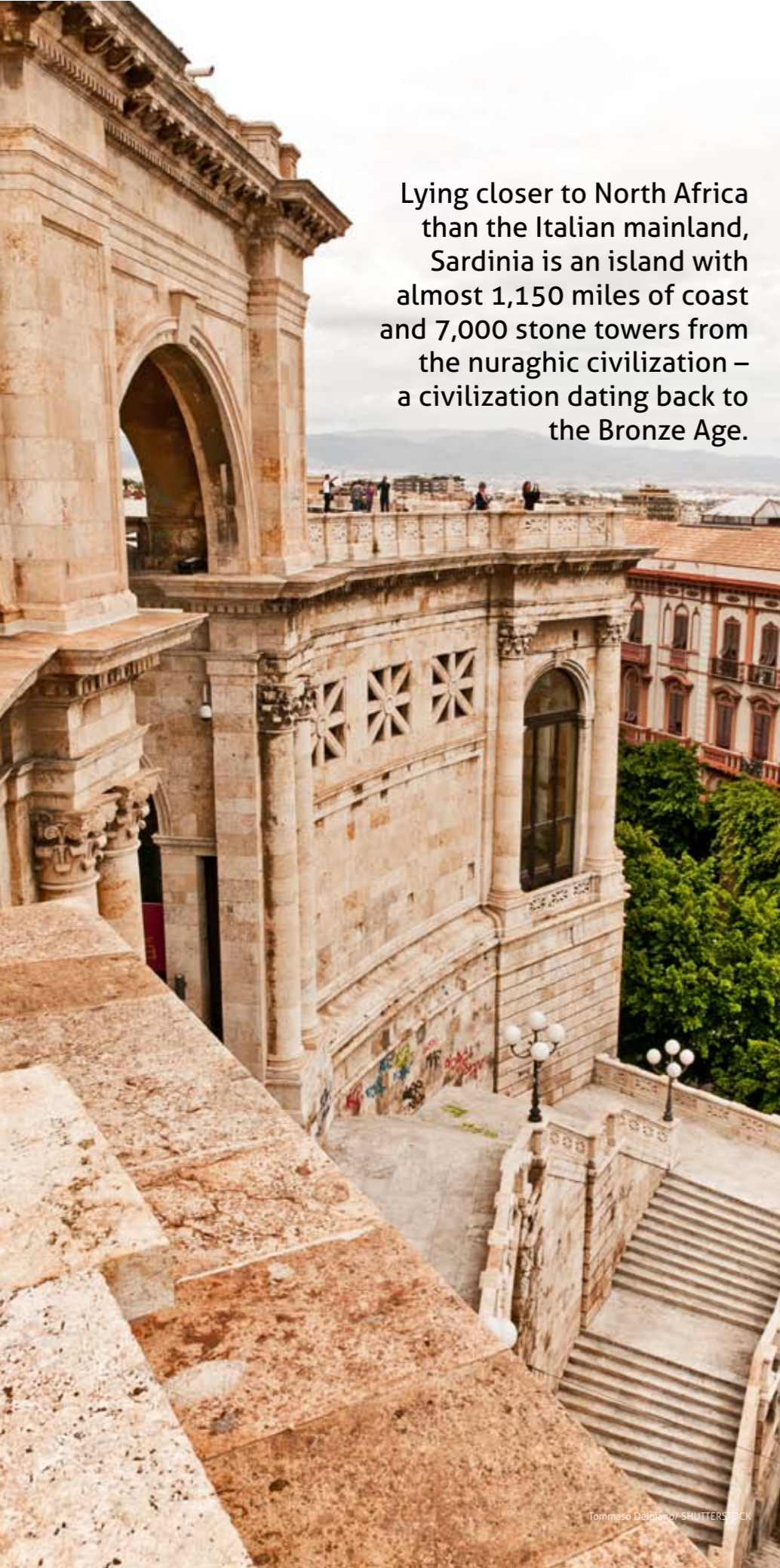
# Sardinia - Something Else

BY ESTHER VAN VEEN | PHOTOGRAPHS BY ESTHER VAN VEEN

When English novelist D.H. Lawrence visited Sardinia in 1921, he wrote: "This land resembles no other place. Sardinia is something else."



Lying closer to North Africa than the Italian mainland, Sardinia is an island with almost 1,150 miles of coast and 7,000 stone towers from the nuraghic civilization – a civilization dating back to the Bronze Age.



**LEAVING GLAMOROUS** Costa Smeralda in the northeast of Sardinia to the rich and famous, I headed down to the unpolished south for history, culture, idyllic beaches, and folkloric street art.

**MEDIEVAL CAGLIARI**

Cagliari, the capital of Sardinia, sits on the south coast and is surrounded by marshlands. Bright pink flamingos spread their wings and flew out of a lagoon, seemingly in slow motion. I hadn't expected these exotic birds on Italian territory.

But whether Sardinia is really Italian is still disputed among its fierce and proud inhabitants - who prefer to see themselves as Sardinians, not Italians. They are the only Italians considered to be from a different ethnicity, one which traces back to prehistoric times. The local culture and history make Sardinia quite distinct from mainland Italy.

Perched dramatically on a hill, Castello - Cagliari's medieval center - is enclosed by a thick wall with watchtowers. It has terracotta-colored houses and cobblestoned alleys, and a certain grandeur and distinct feel compared to coastal cities on the Italian mainland. D.H. Lawrence even compared it to Jerusalem when he arrived by boat in 1921.

My guide in Cagliari was Manuela, an elegant Sardinian woman. We walked through the narrow streets of the medieval town center, passing stores selling traditional clothing and designer shops with the latest fashions.

"Cagliari is built on Phoenician foundations," Manuela told me, listing some of the town's features: a Roman amphitheater, medieval Spanish walls, Pisan watchtowers, and baroque churches. We visited the fascinating *Museo Archeologico Nazionale* in Piazza Arsenale and saw a large collection of prehistoric mother goddess statues and bronze figurines from the nuraghi.

"Sardinian culture has been formed over thousands of years," continued Manuela. "The prehistoric nuraghic civilization is found only on Sardinian soil, and is shrouded in mystery as there are no written records. Its strong pagan legacy includes the archeological remnants of around 7,000 nuraghi towers, and a primeval, folkloristic culture that is still very much alive today."

Sardinian culture also incorporates foreign elements. Located on Mediterranean sea trade routes, Sardinia was visited by the Phoenicians, the

Romans, the Byzantines, Saracen pirates, the Italians, and the Spanish. These civilizations cross-pollinated local culture, and left their legacies in local architecture and in the Sardinian kitchen: local adaptations of Tunisian couscous and Spanish paella have tasty twists.

After the museum, we went to *Caffè degli Spiriti* at the Spanish Bastione di Saint Remy (a bastion in the city wall) for a glass of local white Vermentino wine overlooking the deep blue gulf of Cagliari, the terracotta-tiled roofs of the historic district, and the fishing boats in the harbor.

**HOME COOKING**

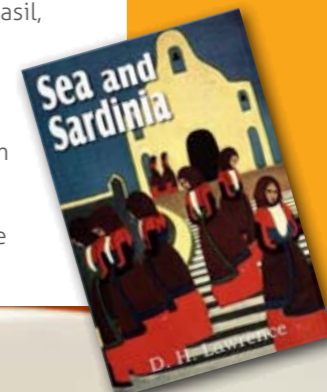
East of Cagliari's Castello district is the *Mercato San Benedetto* – the traditional and high quality indoor food market that includes the largest fish market in Sardinia. "It's an excellent place to meet the locals and fishermen of Cagliari," Manuela noted.

Manuela's parents, Pasquale and Ina Talana, visit the San Benedetto market every Saturday for their weekly groceries. Ina invited me to join them for an authentic, non-touristy experience.

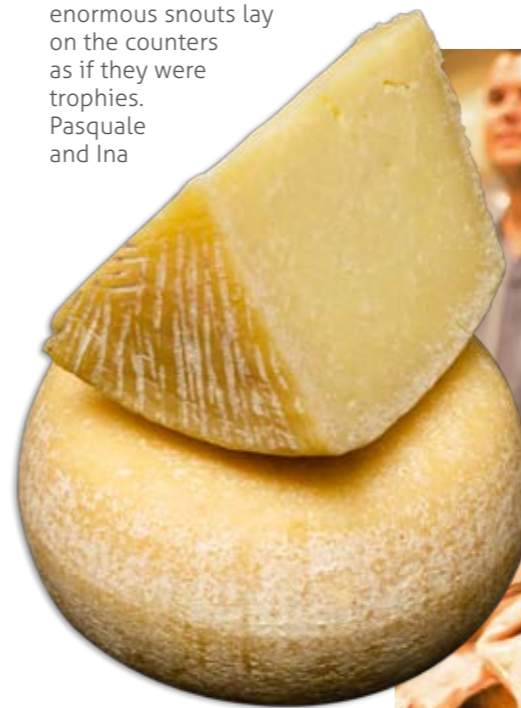
Upon entering, Pasquale was greeted by many of the fishermen. "These families have been selling fish here for generations," he said, leading me through the stalls. We passed buckets of glistening, silver-scaly fish and plates full of octopuses, shrimps, crabs, mussels, and clams garnished with fresh lemon slices. Sword fish with enormous snouts lay on the counters as if they were trophies. Pasquale and Ina

bought a portion of clams and invited me to dinner - a warmly welcomed example of Sardinian hospitality.

They lived in a detached house just outside Cagliari and grew fresh basil, mint, raspberries, and figs in their garden. Sardinians love to grow and prepare their own food, and eat mostly organic produce. After a generous portion of *cozze* (mussels), and a plate of pasta with artichokes and mint, there was little room for the pecorino cheese dessert.



D.H. Lawrence's classic travel book *Sea and Sardinia* can be read for free via Amazon Kindle or Project Gutenberg.



**SANT'ANTIOCO**

The next morning I left Cagliari, driving through a dry landscape of cactuses, olive trees, and wild oaks. Sheep grazed and round hay bales seemed to roll off the hills. I was heading for Sant'Antioco, an island off the southwest corner of Sardinia.

I stopped at the harbor. The sun lit up the pastel-colored houses along the palm tree-lined boulevard. Many fishing boats were out at sea, but some remained docked beside the yachts and wooden barges.

"Sei interessata nella pescaturismo?"

A tanned fisherman approached, asking if I was interested in *pescaturismo* - fishing tourism. Tourists can join fishermen for a day of fishing at sea and enjoy seafood barbecues on board. I was tempted by this authentic adventure, but had other plans and continued my journey north, to the small fishing village of Calasetta.

Calasetta had a picturesque, crescent-shaped harbor filled with small boats and yachts. Here I met Roberta, a petite but fierce Sardinian woman who was my guide for the day.

"Sardinians flock here every August," she said. "But foreign tourists haven't really discovered Sant'Antioco yet."

In the harbor, local vendors sold oranges and lemons alongside Tunisian vendors selling brightly-painted North African ceramics. Roberta explained that the history of Sant'Antioco is strongly intertwined with that of North Africa and the Middle East.

"The Phoenicians founded an important trading post here in the eighth-century BC, named Sulcis," she said. "The seafaring Phoenicians were from present-day Lebanon, and they dominated the Mediterranean sea trade from 1200-400 BC. After the Phoenicians, the island flourished under the Romans, and was raided by Saracen pirates in the Middle Ages until it fell into oblivion."

We walked through narrow streets lined with blue and white houses, towards a small square - Calasetta's Piazza Municipio. Over a cappuccino, I soaked up the almost North African

atmosphere of this blue-white town and its palm trees.

Afterwards we went to Sottotorre, the idyllic beach at Calasetta. A Piedmont look-out tower built in around 1737 perched over the narrow, bright beach and turquoise sea. "There are plenty more paradise-like beaches," Roberta said, mentioning Le Saline and Turri. She proposed we visit them and before I knew it, I was bathing at Turri Bay, marveling over the crystal-clear waters - which explained the popularity of diving around Sant'Antioco.

**STREET ART IN SAN SPERATE**

On the way back to Cagliari, I stopped at San Sperate - a village famous for its street murals. In the 1960s, local artist Pinuccio Sciola started painting the walls of the village after being inspired by murals he saw in Mexico. I walked down Via Sassari and the numerous alleys of the village center, and was astonished by the excellent copies of works by Picasso and Mondrian, and folkloristic Sardinian scenes depicting farmers at work and religious processions. Little did Sciola know that artists from all over the world would transform his town into an open air museum.



Esther is the author of *Puur Sardinie*, a Dutch-language travel, recipe, and photography book on Sardinia, published in March 2014.



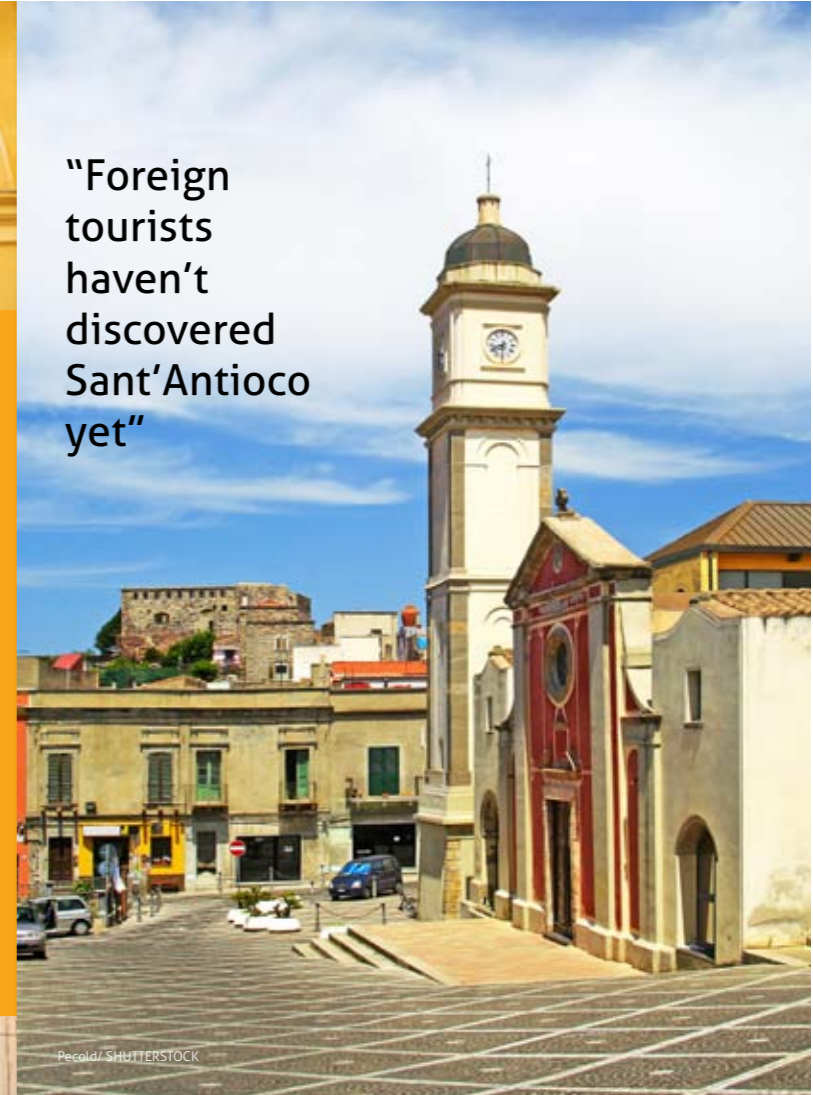
**Where to Stay**

Miramare Boutique Hotel, Cagliari  
www.hotelmiramarecagliari.it  
Cà de Anna, Calasetta  
www.cadeanna.com

**Where to Eat**

Ristorante Antica Cagliari, Cagliari  
www.anticacagliari.it  
Caffe degli Spiriti, Cagliari  
www.caffedeglispiriti.com  
Libarium, Cagliari  
www.caffelibarium.com  
U'Palacca, Calasetta  
Tel: +39 0781 887 016  
La Caletta, Calasetta  
Tel: +39 345 253 3184

"Foreign tourists haven't discovered Sant'Antioco yet"



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**Go Now!**  
Sardinia Day (*Sa Die de sa Sardigna*) is celebrated every April 28<sup>th</sup> with concerts and folk music.