

Sardinian Highlights

Enjoy the highlights of Sardinia, exploring its coastal and mountain regions with flexible route choices each day

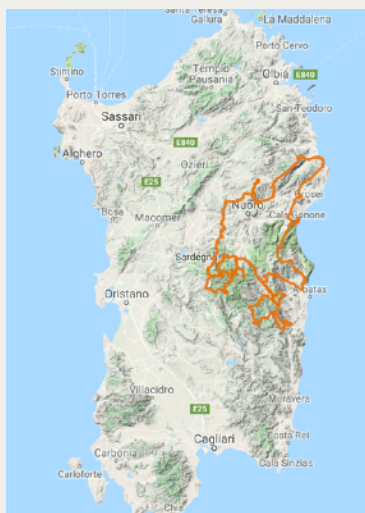
Summary

WHERE: Sardinia

TIME : 6 days

PRICE : see website

DATES: May



Highlights

Coastal and mountain riding: Pass Genna Silana & the Orientale Sarda road

Ultimately flexible holiday with classic, intermediate & challenge route options

Best routes and climbs of the island in 6 days of riding.



Sardinian Highlights

The Mediterranean Italian island of Sardinia is a paradise for cyclists featuring beautiful mountain scenery, fantastic weather conditions, white sandy beaches and vast, sparsely populated, mountainous areas with almost traffic-free roads (and great tarmac!). We have put together this Classic Cols style cycling holiday to showcase what the island has to offer, and we guarantee that you will not be disappointed.

This holiday is not just about cycling; during the week, you'll be immersed in the culture and have an opportunity to taste the local cuisine. In addition, we have designed this holiday with your comfort off the bike in mind so that you can enjoy the ambience of our quality hotels (most with pools and some with spa facilities) at the end of your ride.

Sardinia's unspoilt and rugged heartland and stunning coastal roads make the perfect location for a Marmot holiday. As with our other Classic Cols style holidays, there is a choice of routes to suit you, making this trip suitable both for those that are fairly new to cycling holidays in mountainous terrain as well as those who are keen push themselves. Whether you opt for the Classic or Challenge route (or a few days of either!), this week is definitely a 'holiday' and we'll leave no stone unturned to make this the best holiday it can be.

We also offer Classic Cols holidays in the Alps, Picos, Dolomites, Pyrenees, in Catalonia, Andalusia, Slovenia, Switzerland, Cévennes & Ardèche, Corsica, Gran Canaria and Tenerife.



Itinerary

Day 0 - Travel Out

We offer included airport transfers from Olbia airport (OLB) to our fabulous, boutique-style 4* start hotel Hotel Su Lithu in Bitti, famous for its Tenor singers. The transfer time is around 1hr 15min.

Assemble your bike (or set up your hire bike) before the welcome briefing and dinner. For those arriving early, the afternoon can be spent relaxing by the pool or by exploring the village.

Day 1 - Bitti to Lago di Gusana

Today's ride is the perfect introduction to cycling in Sardinia. We set out through cork oak forests, undulating on quiet roads with good surfaces. You then enjoy a delightful descent across the island's central plain.

A couple of 'cheeky' climbs take you to the town of Sarule, from where you have options of what to do next. The most direct route takes you via the historic town of Gavoi, which is well worth exploring. A slightly Harder route skirts around the edge of Lago di Chuchinadorza, while the Challenge route takes you over the mountains of Teti and Tiana.

All roads lead down to the Lago di Gusana and the 4* Hotel Taloro, built on a peninsula jutting out into the reservoir.

Classic Route

[76km with 1400m ascent]

Harder Route

[95km with 1700m ascent]

Challenge Route

[126km with 2450m ascent]

Day 2 - Lago di Gusana to Aritzo

Today we cycle the highest surfaced road in Sardinia to Bruncu Spina (1570m), the island's only ski resort. Climbing directly from the hotel (at 650m), the forests give way to open moorland and

spectacular views. The climb itself is full of character and although the gradients are generally kind, there are a few short, challenging sections of up to 12%. It is well worth the effort, and the descent is exquisite.

A short climb takes you back up the Arcu de Tascusi (1245m), then you descend all the way to Tonara for lunch. From Tonara you can head directly to the idyllic 4* Hotel Sa Muvara (where we spend two nights) to relax by the pool, or head off to explore more of the Gennargentu mountains.

Classic Route

[73km with 1600m ascent]

Challenge Route

[94km with 2300m ascent]

Day 3 - Day ride from Aritzo

Today we explore the valley of the Rio Flumendosa and the island's central plains. It is an excellent ride through rural Sardinia with constantly changing scenery on quiet, well-surfaced roads. You start climbing gently straight from the hotel to the Valico Sa Casa (1040m), which is set in a sparse, shrubby pine forest. From here you undulate with a downhill bias for 30km over the Valico Ortuabis and down to the reservoir of the Lago Basso del Flumendosa. Climbing up the other side of the valley you pass by the mountain hamlets of Sadali and Seule, before crossing the river for a final time and climbing over the Passo Cossatzu (866m).

The Challenge route takes you further south, past the bronze age settlement of Nuraghe Arrubiu. It then crosses the river Flumendosa down at 150m and involves a couple of steeper climbs before rejoining the classic route.

Naturally, taking a day off the bike is an option. The hotel has a swimming pool and the village of Aritzo is worth exploring.

Classic Route

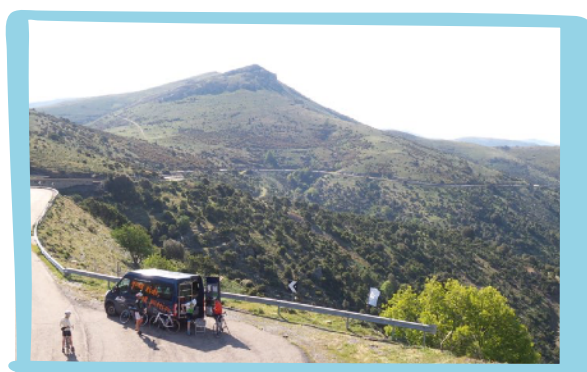
[87km with 1580m ascent]

Challenge Route

[137km with 2370m ascent]

Day 4 - Aritzo to Valico Strisaili

The promise of huge views and interesting landscapes as you circumnavigate the Gennargentu Massif is a huge incentive to get you going this morning! You start the day with a descent before heading up to the Arcu de Tascussi (1245m) via Desulo. This leads to the Arcu Correboi (1246m), which was once an important mountain pass; a new road has recently been tunnelled through the hillside, making it virtually traffic-free. The views from here are spectacular, and the descent is an absolute gem – the gradients are constant and the corners are sweeping. On reaching the valley floor, you traverse a sparse landscape of rock and ancient oak trees.



Your destination is the 4* Orlando Resort Hotel (with spa & pool facilities), nestled in Santa Barbara National Park. You have the option of retiring gracefully to a sun lounger, but as always, there is more cycling on offer if you wish, and the Arzana loop of our Challenge route will certainly test your legs!

Classic Route

[82km with 1500m ascent]

Challenge Route

[111km with 2150m ascent]

Day 5 - Valico Strisaili to Cala Gonone

Leaving your mountain retreat behind, you climb gently to Valico Talana (1100m) for a breathtaking view of the coastal plain way below. The only way is down (fun!) and this descent has style! Next up is the magnificent Orientale Sarda road, showcased by the Giro d'Italia in Spring 2017. Built in the 1800's, it is a feat of engineering and climbs up to the Passo di Genna Silana (1008m).

Your destination is the beachfront hotel Bue Marino in Cala Gonone, a quiet coastal village once only accessible by sea. Luckily for you, they bored a hole through the mountain and laid a

fantastic series of hairpins, guaranteed to deliver you to the coast with a smile on your face.

If relaxing on the beach (cocktails anyone?) is not your thing, then at the end of the day there is the rather silly option of taking on the locally famed Strava segment up the concrete road that scales the cliff to the North of town. It is only 2.2km long, but with average gradients of 10% it will get your heart pounding!

Classic Route

[80km with 1300m ascent]

Harder Route

[114km with 1880m ascent]

Challenge Route

[121km with 2200m ascent]

Day 6 - Cala Gonone to Bitti

Re-acquaint yourself with the fantastic hairpins of yesterday evening, leaving the coast of Cala Gonone behind you as you climb. From here, undulate down onto the coastal plains that lead you to Siniscola at the foot of Monte Albo (820m), a massive white limestone ridge. The climb is jaw dropping, benefitting from both mountain and sea views. Continue on this quiet and winding road before turning inland once again, ticking off the final few km to a lunch stop just over the summit.

Next, you'll meander with a downhill bias back to the picturesque pastoral village of Bitti and the Hotel Su Lithu, where your cycling adventure started a week ago. As always, for those wanting a bit more at the end of the day there are a few optional climbs, which make the most of the nearby limestone mountain.

Easier Route

[103km with 1380m ascent]

Classic Route

[109km with 1830m ascent]

Challenge Route

[148km with 2600m ascent]





Start & End Hotel

Hotel Su Lithu, Loc. Sa Pineta, 08021 Bitti,
Tel +39 0784 413012

Travel

Finding flights

We recommend using a comparison tool such as www.skyscanner.net when searching for direct or indirect flights from various airports/regions/countries. It can be helpful if you search for one-way flights, giving results of all direct routes available, eg. 'UK to OLB'. Search results may change as airlines release their schedules for the following year at varying times.

If you are flying long haul we recommend arriving into Olbia a day early in order to get over any jet lag before you start cycling. We can generally only offer an airport transfer on the start/finish days of the itinerary but can certainly arrange a taxi transfer for you (payable direct to your driver) on other days.

If you are travelling in a group of 6 or more and are unable to join the group airport transfers, we may be able to organise a private transfer for you. Please contact us to discuss.

Under your own steam...

If you are going to meet us at the start hotel or are leaving independently at the end of your trip to go on elsewhere, please let us know so we can plan accordingly; we may also be able to help you with your travel plans, so do get in touch if you need assistance..

Foreign Travel Advice

For the latest travel advice from the Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office including security and local laws, plus passport and visa information, check www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice.

Airport Transfers

Marmot Tours offer airport transfers at designated times from the most convenient airport for the start of your trip. Transfers are timed to fit in with as many flights from as many regional airports as possible.

Transfers at set times from and back to Olbia OLB airport are included in the holiday price and take 1hr and 1hr 15min respectively.

If you arrive earlier than the transfer time then you will need to wait at the airport for your pick up. If flights are delayed then transfers may also be delayed. If flights are significantly delayed or cancelled then you may need to take a taxi to the start hotel and make a claim on your insurance or to your airline.

You will find our most up to date transfer times on the **Holiday Details** page on the Link (once you've made your booking). If you need to know the timings before booking, please get in touch via email: cycle@marmot-tours.co.uk.

Navigation

The Marmot Tours App provides you with maps, altitude profiles, general information and safety notes, as well as detailed directions of where to go (via RWGPS). Your holiday will be available to view on the App from 7 days before and until 7 days after your holiday.

Our guides will also aim to be at those 'easy to miss' junctions and you will see the van and guides regularly.

Additionally, we provide you with GPS files in .fit and .tcx formats for your navigation devices. They will be available on The Link a week or so before the start of your holiday.

The files can be downloaded onto most units, including Garmin and Wahoo and in their most basic form provide a purple line to follow. With the more recent units you will also receive a set of visual instructions as you approach a turning. Our GPS tracks take you from hotel to hotel.

If using a Garmin, please ensure you download the base map of the country you're visiting before you go as this helps greatly with your navigation.

Pacing and Training

As with all sports holidays, the fitter you are, the more you can relax and enjoy the stunning route.

It can be difficult to find extended climbs for training in the UK, but generally, if you can build up your comfort on the bike (ideally on consecutive days) and your stamina and cardio vascular fitness overall, then you will really benefit when it comes to the holiday itself.

As well as training before the holiday, pacing yourself will go a long way towards you achieving your goals. The joy of a group holiday is that you are likely to find someone to cycle at a similar speed to you, so you don't need to try and keep up with your partner/friend/room mate. The quickest way to injure yourself or burn out is to cycle faster than you feel comfortable going.

We can't emphasise enough that this is your holiday and so, if you want a lift up the hill for whatever reason, your guides will be happy to help.

Am I fit Enough?

It is normal (and only right) that you should consider whether or not you are fit enough for a cycling holiday in the mountains.

We have created our Classic Cols range of holidays in order to open up the world of road cycling in the mountains to those who may not have experienced it before. Our itinerary warms you up gently to the altitude, the extended climbing and to the technique of descending.

Our Classic route is an achievable goal for regular cyclists who have never climbed a mountain on a bike before. Other holidays where the Classic route is considered 'easier' are our Pyrenean itineraries, the Tour of Tenerife, the Cevennes & Ardeche, Catalonia and Corsica as well as our Ventoux & the Verdon Gorge tour (although if you like to test yourself, their Challenge option certainly packs a punch!)

Our goal at Marmot Tours is to create an ambience of non-competitive cycling with no pressure to keep up with anyone else. It is about achieving your own individual goals and having a fabulous time doing it.

Am I too fit?

We have designed our Classic Cols style holidays to be accessible to a wide range of riding ability. Having a quick peek at each day's stats for the Challenge route should reassure you that even if you are a very fit and experienced road cyclist, there will be plenty to entertain you on this holiday.

With our daily route options you have the opportunity to cycle all day long. If you ride our Challenge route each day then you are looking at 737km with over 14,000m of ascent for the week. The Sardinian Challenge route, to allow you to compare, is similar, if a little easier, to the Catalan, Ventoux & the Verdon Gorge and Corsican Challenge routes in terms of overall ascent and none of the climbs are rudely steep (unlike in the Picos and Dolomites).

What is so nice about this range of holidays is that you can come along with people who are either less or more experienced than you and you can each get out of it what you want by choosing the daily route for you.

Strava

Many cyclists nowadays are using apps like Strava and Garmin Connect to track their progress, training and to compare themselves to their peers.

These apps make for great training tools and interesting post-ride analysis but there are obvious risks associated with competitive cycling styles, pushing yourself beyond your usual tolerance and focusing on live feed information whilst on the bike.

We therefore ask our clients to avoid such 'Live Segment' features when cycling on a Marmot Tours holiday, especially descending, and to **focus on the road at all times**.

Gearing/Bikes

Mainly, climbs are not particularly steep (compared to a lot of hills in the UK) but they do go on for a very long time. It is best to make sure that your bike will be suitable for your level of strength/fitness.

For most people a compact (smallest ring on front having 34 teeth), fitted with a 30 or 32 cassette on the rear, is a good choice. It is possible to fit your bike with larger cassettes, using a rear hanger extender, like the WolfTooth RoadLink.

Please note that carbon wheels with rim brakes are unsuitable for this holiday. Find more info about this in our [FAQ section](#) on the webpage.

If this all sounds too complicated then we do have some excellent titanium-framed bikes for hire, which are fitted with SRAM 50-34 at the front with 11 speed 11-36 toothed cassettes.

Guiding

"Just coming down to earth now after an unforgettable week of amazing scenery and new friendships made". R Bill

Supporting you on your holiday will be two of our experienced, approachable, knowledgeable and fun guides. Despite being passionate about cycling, both guides will be in support vans as this holiday is all about you and your needs. Between them they will have knowledge of the area and the language and be skilled at bike mechanics.

Having two vehicles per group (regardless of the number of bookings up to a group size of around 20) is what allows us to offer you freedom to cycle at your own pace with a level of independence on this holiday. One van stays on the Classic route and one van covers the Challenge route. Due to the distances involved, those cyclists doing the full challenge route may need to be more independent than those on the Classic Route. Our guides are experts at advising you on the routes, where you can expect to see the van, and what you might need with you.

In the event that you need help for a mechanical issue (for example) one of the vans will be able to quickly get to you with full tool kits, spare back wheels and even a spare bike. We hope you won't need us for anything serious but being prepared for all eventualities is what we do exceptionally well.

You can expect to see a support van with water, snacks and your personal day bag 2 - 4 times a day, so you don't need to carry much on your bike, unless the weather is exceptional!



Group Dynamics

Your group will be any number up to around 20 riders. This number works really well - it's big enough for you to find others to cycle with at your pace, but not so huge as to feel impersonal! We get lots of clients booking alone and lots of small groups of friends. If you think you can get a group of 18 - 20 people together then we can offer you a custom departure date.

We love that we get a really good variety in terms of cycling experience... from club cyclists, people training for other events, those raising money for charity, ex-pro cyclists and people who are relatively new to cycling who like to try something new on holiday.

Accommodation

You stay in a selection of mostly 4* hotels with en suite facilities. Most have a pool, so bring your swimsuit! The hotels have been selected for their customer service towards cyclists and their location. You will be sharing a twin room with another client (of the same gender) unless you book a single room for a supplement (contact cycle@marmot-tours.co.uk for availability). Each hotel has a garage/locked room to ensure that your trusty steed has a comfortable night too.

Food

Breakfast

No surprise that this is the crucial meal of the day. You can expect continental style breakfasts with a range of cereals, fruit, cheese, eggs & meats for your protein kick start.

Lunches

You know what you like to eat when you are riding and it is not likely to be the same as what the others in your group will want to eat. We don't include lunches so there are no enforced group stops. We strongly advise that you stop for proper food at lunchtime. Each day we recommend a suitable place serving cyclist friendly food which is great for you, and the locals appreciate your custom. We will be sure to have a van there for your midday faff!

Snacks

Your support van aka snack-shack will be well stocked with a variety of tasty delectables: Salty crisps, bars, cakes, fresh fruit (bananas obviously!), nuts & sweets are the staples. We suggest you bring your own favourite energy powders/gels/bars with you as these will not be easily available en route.

Dinner

We eat as a group in the evening - either in the hotel or at a nearby restaurant. Expect three courses (and generous portions) which are tailored to the needs of cyclists. Dinner will be served at around 19:30. Wine at dinner or up to 2 beers or 2 soft drinks are included, however, coffees are not.

Special diets

Please note your special dietary requirements on the booking form or contact us. Our hotels can cater for most dietary needs and allergies if we know well in advance. Please note that we request that you stick to your dietary preference for the entire trip, as it is very complicated for the hotels (and guides) if an individual is vegetarian for some meals and not for others.

What's included

- 6 days supported riding
- Airport transfers on arrival and departure days at specified times
- Access to Marmot App with daily holiday info, directions, maps and GPS files
- 7 nights half board accommodation and table wine during dinner (up to half a bottle per person), or up to 2 beers or 2 soft drinks
- 2 customised and well stocked vehicles with experienced guides, offering moral support, and nutritional, mechanical and first aid assistance, plus snacks & water

Bike Hire

Marmot Tours has an excellently maintained fleet of custom built, titanium framed bikes available to rent for your holiday. Advantages of rental include:

- avoiding hefty fees levied by airlines for transport
- worry free travel (knowing your trusty steed is safely stored away at home!)
- the chance to try a titanium bike built specifically with climbing cols in mind (gearing!)
- relinquishing responsibility for cleaning and maintenance to our experienced team

Please see our [Bike Hire webpage](#) for details like prices as well as full specs and dimensions.

Please note that despite the size of our fleet steadily growing, we cannot guarantee that we will have a bike in your size available. If you would like to hire a bike, please check availability before booking your holiday.

How to Book

1. Email cycle@marmot-tours.co.uk to check availability for your preferred departure date. Remember to also check availability for single room and bike hire if they are your preference.
2. Bag your spot with a provisional booking for a week or so while you get planning.
3. Log on to or register with our online booking system, The Link (link.marmot-tours.co.uk), to make your holiday booking.
4. Receive a confirmation email and pay the £400 deposit by BACS or by card online.
5. Confirmed single room supplements and bike hire are being added manually to your balance invoices, so may take a day or two to appear.
6. We'll post regular holiday information and updates on the Link (you'll receive an email notification).
7. You can meet your fellow holiday makers via The Link Forum and share training / travel plans etc.



Insurance

Holiday insurance is **essential** for all Marmot Tours holidays and anyone without insurance is not able to take part in the trip. Please arrange your insurance cover at the time of booking, as this will ensure that you are covered if you incur an injury during training and are unable to go on your holiday. We have a very high cancellation rate so are unable to deviate from our cancellation policy.

Your insurance needs to cover you for non-competitive road cycling (cycle touring) at altitude with the following fairly standard inclusions:

- Medical Expenses
- Repatriation

Some clients also like to ensure they have the following optional items:

- Cancellation cover
- Loss or damage to their bike

NB if you are hiring a bike from us there is an insurance element in the fee so you will not need additional cover.

Once you have arranged your insurance, please add the relevant details to the **Before you go...** section of your holiday on [The Link](#). Unlike your passport and emergency contact details, you will need to add insurance details for every trip you are taking.

This ensures we have the most up to date information and are able to assist you in case you have an accident on your holiday.

Financial Protection

Marmot Tours are members of ABTA, the Association of British Travel Agents.

ABTA and ABTA members help holidaymakers to get the most from their travel and assist them when things do not go according to plan.

As part of our membership contract we are obliged to maintain a high standard of service to you by ABTA's Code of Conduct.

- In line with our ABTA membership (no Y6184), we hold an insurance policy that gives you full financial protection for all funds you pay us for your holiday
- We have full Tour Operators Professional and Public Liability Insurance with specialist brokers Campbell Irvine
- We carry out risk assessments on all of our holidays to ensure we have thought through every detail
- We employ staff with the correct experience and skills to ensure you have a safe and fun trip, and have a thorough training programme each season.

For further information about ABTA, the Code of Conduct and the arbitration scheme available to you if you have a complaint, please contact ABTA, 30 Park St, London, SE1 9EQ (Tel 0203 117 0500).

