

## Nature and environment Sardinia Cagliari

The Province of the Middle Campidano features three different geographical areas defining three corresponding natural, which have in turn been responsible for three types of human settlement.

In the middle lies the fertile plain of the Campidano with its productive agricultural fields; in the east rise the gentle hills of the Marmilla, dotted with small rural centres; in the west dominates the mountainous relief of Linas, a mining basin of national relevance reaching the sea with vast and sandy barren lands. Along the almost 1500 Km<sup>2</sup> of the Middle Campidano are the main naturalistic attractions of Sardinia, which are further enhanced by two unique habitats: the dunes of Piscinas and Sa Jara of Gesturi. In Sardinian language Sa Jara refers to a plateau rising for a few hundred meters between the hills of the Marmilla. Its morphology is the result of an endless erosive process of the surrounding landscape, consisting of sandstones, marl and limestones. The erosive processes have not affected the surface of the plateau, which is therefore distinctly separated from the surrounding countryside. Three Giare are present: Siddi, Gesturi and Serri, although the most renowned one referred to as Sa Jara is the Giara of Gesturi, which differs from the others for the presence of the wild little horses is quaddeddu. Sa Jara rises in the shape of a trapeze for 4,400 hectares, reaching a height between 500 and 600 meters. It is covered by a forest of cork oaks mixed with holm and downy oaks and interspersed with several ephemeral lakes ( Paulis ). There are covered in spring with a mat of white buttercup that creates remarkable sceneries. On the edge of the plateau, in a strategic position, are the remains of several nuraghi, amongst which is the protonuraghe Bruncu Madugui, one of oldest in Sardinia. The snow-capped Gennargentu provides a backdrop to one of the several paulis that, in winter and spring, pop up on the Giara of Gesturi. Below, Sa Jara with its steep ravines rests isolated from the surrounding world. These environmental conditions have allowed the survival of groups of wild horses of small size, characterised by a thick mane, almond-shaped eyes and a dark bay or black coat of unknown origin and that represent a unique object of preservation by the public institutions. The number of pure wild little horses is currently estimated at 700. The coast of the Middle Campidano spreads over about 50 km and is located between the granitic promontory of Cape Pecora and the achieves, in its southernmost part, an almost barren appearance due to the unusual extension of its beaches. The coastal barrier of Scivu-S&rsquo;acqua Durci &ndash; Piscinas 30/40 m in height covered in prickly juniper and Mediterranean bush. Here, it is not unlikely to come across the Sardinian Deer. Further north the Costa Verde begins, an alternation of rocky stretches and tiny cover up to the Tower of Flumentorgiu, overlooking the other wide beach of Is Arenas, which also extends inland for about one kilometre. The sea, thanks to the prevailing north-westerly winds, is especially suited to surfing activities. The formation of the sand dunes is attributable to the result of glacial action which occurred mostly over the last hundred of thousand of years. The significant lowering of the sea level down to several tens of meters has caused the emergence of vast stretches of sandy coastline that the fierce winds (mostly libeccio and mistral) have carried and accumulated inland. The swamp of Marceddì on the border with the Province of Oristano, is a most important wet area not only for naturalists but also for the renowned production of its fish farms. Between the coast and the plain of the Campidano rises the mountainous group of Linas, the highest in Sardinia. The uppermost regions are covered in scrubland and bushes, in which rare endemisms are found such as *Elicrisum montelinasum*, interspersed with valleys with woods of holm and English oaks and yews; whereas in the south the countryside becomes harsher and the granitic rocks of the Oridda and Punta Camedda, where mighty waterfalls and thick woods are located, make the route more challenging. Many are the tracks winding along those laid by woodsmen and miners. The starting points of the mountainous and naturalistic routes are at Perd&rsquo;e Pibara ( Gonnosfanadiga ) and Cantina Ferrari ( Villacidro ). Several other tracks wind their way from Montevecchio to Ingurtosu ( Guspini and Arbus ) and make it possible to visit the major mining sites: wells, tunnels, washes, waste dumps. Consisting of a colony of 600/700 heads, the Sardinian Deer also can be spotted in the vicinity of the mining sites. The mountains with their woods and a lush Mediterranean bush provide home especially to: wild boars, foxes, martens and, up in the sky, the peregrine falcon, the buzzard and the royal eagle.