

## Bed and breakfast Sardinia Cagliari magic

The bed and breakfast Sardinia Charm Sardinia tells Cagliari. Watched from the airplane, Cagliari appears as if by magic: it lies around the white limestone hills that rise between ponds, lagoons and the modern port connecting the old town neighbourhoods to commercial and industrial areas. The town opens like a large window between the sea and the rural inland. Earth and water alternate prodigiously; they create wonderful perspectives and also amazingly coloured landscapes: from the greenish of the Molentargius to the purplish-pink of the Saltpans, from the blue of the channel port to the yellow of the lagoon of Santa Gilla, up to the Poetto sandy shore with its turquoise sea.

Around the town, a green belt goes from the woods of Capoterra and Uta through the Sette Fratelli forest as far as the furthest crags of the Serpeddi Mount. From the sea, Cagliari looks even more charming: surrounded by the blue water, beyond the grey wharves, the town appears almost motionless, stony and steep. As Carlo Levi wrote in his work "Tutto il miele è finito" ("There's no honey left"): Cagliari is a beautiful, steep, stony town; with different chromatic effects given by the rocks, the "African" plain, the lagoons; its history is written on the stones, is told by them, like face wrinkles. Cagliari, prehistoric and historic town, capital of the Sardinians but also colonial capital of the Aragonese and the Piedmontese; one of the most destroyed towns by Second War bombings but, just a few years after, also one of the most quickly rebuilt". The view of the town from the sea still today offers the same image evoked by the old prints that were used by Piedmontese military engineers and 19th century travellers. As the ships approaches the port, you can make out the old town centre, with the typical medieval towers and the walls fortified with bastions. Then you can see the buildings and the ancient churches. "Cagliari is an unusual town, made of stone. We climb up a street similar to a spiral staircase... Cagliari is very steep. At a certain point there is a strange place named 'the bastions', a flat ground similar to a wooded drill ground, oddly suspended above the town. A long arm stems from there, like a large viaduct, crosswise above the spiral staircase that climbs up. Over the bastions, the town continues to climb steeply, up to the cathedral and the fortress.

From Castello, we now look towards the port, from which we came: it is a pleasant feeling. From above, everything seems still and rarefied; we do not notice the confusion, the swarms of people. It is as if the time had stopped to flow - against the law of universal acceleration. However, that is not so. Indeed, the port has a rich, complex, even mysterious life. Who arrives from the sea has the first approach to Cagliari just through the port: a magic place - even though in constant evolution - a place of trade, reflections and solitude, which contributes to make Cagliari a town of today. Cagliari, Gate of the Mediterranean, linking point of continental Europe with Africa and the Middle East. But the port also means something more: it is mainly there that the town shows how much it is open, how much it can communicate with the outside world. In Cagliari, safe harbour already from the Phoenician age, the port development has gone hand in hand with the birth and the growth of trade: wheat, wool, cheeses, oil, wine, salt and minerals have always come through the port, already during the Punic and the Roman dominations, even though its then location was not exactly that of today. Still now, trade mainly happens around the quays and the wharves. Cagliari is very ancient and, during its long history, has had different roles; above all, however, it has been market and stronghold, either the one or the other according to circumstances. Already in the Classical Age, its barycentric position in the Mediterranean and the easy access made it a safe harbour, one of the most important in commercial routes. The ancient settlements are testified - still today - by the impressive monuments and ruins that are left: the Phoenician-Punic necropolis of Tuvixeddu, which is the largest and most important sepulchral area of the Mediterranean, the Grotto della Vipera (Viper's grotto), tomb but also temple of love and poetry; the Roman Amphitheatre. However, besides the architectural works, there are many other finds from the ancient civilizations that populated the town. They are conserved at the Archaeological Museum of Cagliari, close to the Cittadella dei Musei (Citadel), in a panoramic area full of atmosphere, former seat of the Regio Arsenale (Kingdom's Arsenal). The Cittadella is located at the extremity of the Castello area. Castello (the Castle) is a medieval district - its towers are still the same that were built in the early 1300s under the Pisan domination. Together with the Marina, Stampace and Villanova neighbourhoods, it maintains the soul and the deep essence of the town. The most important buildings rose there. Palazzo Viceregio (Vice Royal Palace), which was later named Palazzo Reale (Royal Palace) during the stay of the Savoys, exiled from Turin, the Episcopio (Bishop's Palace), the Palazzo Comunale (Town Hall). All those buildings still exist. The Palazzo Viceregio, now owned by the Province of Cagliari, is the seat of the Prefect, and its halls are still decorated by the paintings once owned by the Viceroy. Also the Town Hall is always there, but the administration is now handled in other buildings, located beyond the fortified town. Only the Archbishop continues to occupy his place: almost to attest the strength of faith over the centuries. However, Castello represented something more than a centre of power, more than the place where several external dominations followed each other: the Pisan, Aragonese, Spanish and Piedmontese dominations. Castello - together with the other historic districts - was also the physical space within which the civic and political consciousness of the Sardinian people gradually developed. That happened through the different ages and against the ruling classes - up to the establishment of a historical peculiarity. Castello used to be the seat of the Stamenti (the ancient Sardinian parliaments), and the notion of autonomy, which is the basis of modern democracy and the hallmark of our people, strengthened just there, over the centuries and through ephemeral victories, long halts but also permanent results. Just today, as communications develop more and more, and modernization is huge - the establishment of the new channel port and the construction of the new airport are further evidence of that - we should feel the need to recover our identity and our historic memory. Not the sentimental memory, more and more remote, of a past quickly fading with its fleeting shades; rather, the awareness - scientifically based - that the Cagliari we know, the Cagliari at the dawn of the third Millennium, is the result of a long and complex history. It is the result of events which made an indelible mark not only on spaces and places, but also on the consciousness of people and on their actions.