

Nora and Cagliari

Itinerary:

Cagliari – Nora (3 hours)

- Archaeological area of Nora

Cagliari city sightseeing (1 hour)

- Panoramic sight from Monte Urpinu Park
- Poetto beach
- Molentargius-Saline Park and birdwatching (flamingos)
- Our Lady of Bonaria Basilica and Sanctuary

Duration: 4 hours

Activity level: light/moderate

Description

Cagliari-Nora 40 km (by bus, minibus or private car)

On the South coast of Sardinia a few km from Cagliari and within the town of Pula, there is the ancient city of Nora.

Nora is considered one of the oldest towns in Sardinia, founded by the Phoenicians between the 9th and 8th centuries B.C. The ruins of Nora are breathtakingly: old neighborhoods, the luxurious villas decorated with mosaics, baths, temples, ancient cobbled streets and the splendid theater. The archaeological site enjoys a scenic location on the sea front, situated on the capo di Pula between two hills: Sa Punta 'e Su Coloru and Coltellazzo, dominated by the Spanish Tower. Near the archaeological area you find the beach of Nora: it has white, mixed grain sand, enclosed by a rock formation. Close to the beach is the small medieval church of Sant'Efisio, in memory of the place where it is said that the saint found martyrdom.

Back to Cagliari for the city sightseeing tour.

Once on the top of **Monte Urpinu Park** from viale Europa observation platform (100 meters above the sea), you enjoy **unequaled panoramic view**: Castello district with its fortified walls, Cagliari ponds, Golfo degli Angeli and the surrounding hinterland, as far as Sette Fratelli mountains.

Our tour continues to the **Poetto beach**: it is truly vast and closed off at one end by the **Sella del Diavolo (Devil's Saddle Headland)**. A legend has it that the particular shape of this limestone headland comes from an epic fight between angels and demons that took place in the skies over the **Gulf of Cagliari**. During the fight, Lucifer was unsaddled by his horse and lost his saddle, which fell on the land, giving it its particular shape.

It is the longest beach in Sardinia and the main coastal resort for the cagliaritari. It stretches for around 9 km. The sea can be blissfully crystal-clear when the much awaited north-westerly mistral wind is blowing.

Close to Poetto is **Molentargius Saline Nature Park** that includes the ancient salt mines (saline), whose use is certified by documents dating back to the Roman period, and the Molentargius pond itself, with its protected wildlife. Home to **flamingos** and other species of residential and migratory birds. With their pink plumage, long legs and necks, and strongly hooked bills, flamingos cannot be mistaken for any other type of bird.

At the end you discover **the basilica, the sanctuary and the convent of Our Lady of Bonaria** that are built on the hill south-east of the city centre. The initial church, which maintains its original Gothic architecture, was built after 1323 and it was then donated to the Order of Our Lady of Mercy, who then built a convent. In 1370, during a terrible storm in the gulf of Cagliari, a ship wrecked and part of its load, a large case containing a very fine **statue of Our Lady**, was found on the shore in front of the church. Both the statue and the case are on public display. The building of the adjacent basilica started in the 18th century and it was then resumed, but not finished until 1926. The complex is surrounded by a small but pleasant park, with nice views over the port.