



SU NURAXI DI BARUMINI

“Su Nuraxi di Barumini-Cagliari, a remarkable monument for some new and absolutely exceptional features, today seems more important and significant than any other for various aspects.”

I nuraghi della Sardegna, Le vie d'Italia, Giovanni Lilliu

In 1949, following the erosion of the land caused by torrential rain, the Sardinian archaeologist Giovanni Lilliu uncovered the site of Su Nuraxi, which at the time was nothing more than a sloping hill, typical of the area of the Marmilla; he then directed the excavations, which lasted for six years, bringing the largest and most important complex of nuraghi in Sardinia back to the light. It was included as a UNESCO World Heritage in 1997. The exceptional event contributed to enlighten the dark and fascinating history of the Nuraghe civilisation and confirm the importance of the *nuraghi* in the island's history. Many buildings in the settlement, including the interconnected circular beehive structures on the slopes of the hill, date back to the Iron Age, the first huts to the Bronze Age (11th-9th centuries B.C.) and many of the ruins that can be seen today to a later period, between the 6th and 7th centuries A.D. The oldest part of the complex is the Nuraxi tower, which originally had three floors, reaching a height of 18.6 m; around 1200 B.C., four other towers and an impressive wall were added. The defensive wall system arose around the main nucleus as the settlement grew in size. The site continued to develop even after its partial destruction in the 7th century because it was never abandoned and was still inhabited in Roman times. If the *nuraghi* are the offspring of a civilisation which was independent for centuries and developed on an island which is unique from the geographic and cultural points of view, Su Nuraxi di Barumini is the extraordinary *summa* of this specificity.



CULTURAL HERITAGE

UNESCO DOSSIER: 833
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CRITERIA FOR SELECTION: The *nuraghi* of Sardinia, of which Su Nuraxi is the most important example, represent an extraordinary response to the cultural and social situations of the time, through the creative and innovative use of the materials and techniques at the disposal of a prehistoric insular community.



“The nuraghi, for Sardinia, are a little like the Pyramids for Egypt and the Colosseum for Rome: evidence not only of a flourishing and historically hard-working civilisation, but also of a spiritual conception that gave a monumental and lasting character to its external expressions. No other expression of island architecture from ancient times, or even from times closer to us, reveals the sense of power, majesty and solid and monumental effort, and religiosity that appears in the buildings of the nuraghi.”

According to Giovanni Lilliu, the **nuraghi** are elements that are inseparable from the Sardinian landscape and culture: visiting the island, there is nothing that brings you closer to its profound identity than being astonished in front of their power and mystery. Start from the Marmilla, an area with a high density of archaeological sites in central-southern Sardinia, until you reach the coast, where the Sardinian sea is the best possible reward, and you arrive in the Sulcis-Iglesiente.

Take advantage of the coolest hours to enjoy **1 Su Nuraxi di Barumini** in the best possible way. It is accessible only with a guided tour, and you will learn about the archaeological themes at the Centro Giovanni Lilliu. Then go into the village, to the **2 Casa Zapata Museum**, where a series of objects from the nuraghi and a small collection of traditional musical instruments are on display. From Tuili, on the other hand, go to the **3 Giara di Gesturi**, with an excursion organised by a local tour operator: this uncontaminated

plateau, clad in Mediterranean scrub vegetation and ancient woods of cork oaks, is home to the last herd of wild Sardinian ponies. After the excursion, let's return to an archaeological site by heading south-east and visiting the **4 Nuragic Complex of Genna Maria**, one of the most important in Sardinia. After history, culture, flora and fauna, it is time for the beach. One of the loveliest beaches on the island is nearby: on the Costa Verde there is the **5 Beach of Piscinas**, with a magical sea and high sand dunes,

and further south, in the Iglesias area, there is the **6 Beach of Cala Domestica**. Moving inland, you can explore the former mining area, until you reach the **7 Temple of Antas** and visit the Roman ruins of this bucolic site dating back to the 3rd century A.D., north of **8 Iglesias**. This town, with its church and buildings in the Aragonese style, is not to be missed, especially at Easter, thanks to the moving atmosphere of the Holy Week processions.



MAP



THE SARDINIAN NURAGHI

“The nuraghi are without a doubt the most widespread characteristic of the Sardinian landscape, but not even the frequency of their visibility is able to instil in those who look at them a sense of familiarity: the thought that nothing similar exists anywhere else remains deaf and latent.”

Viaggio in Sardegna, Michela Murgia

The *nuraghi* in Sardinia are a real “system”, a network of prehistoric settlements. As well as the beehive complex of Su Nuraxi, the most spectacular one, there are some truly grandiose structures (such as the Nuraghe Santu Antine in Torralba, in the area of Sassari, 25 m. tall); however, there

are apparently 7000 *nuraghi* and perhaps there are just as many waiting to be discovered. Ignored for centuries by the island's inhabitants and sometimes used as shelters by shepherds, thanks to carbon dating in archaeological studies, the stone towers have begun to throw light on the mysterious civilisation of the *nuraghi*; they were actually fortified settlements dating back to the Bronze Age which, as well as being used as watch towers, were also probably used as sacred sites for religious rites or as gathering places for celebrations and trade. That said, it has to be acknowledged that what is most striking about the *nuraghi* is their mysterious image, the remains of something that was built, lived in and had an identity and a function but which has become the symbol of an eternity beyond history, the voice of remote times which has cancelled time itself.



"CONTOS DE FUCHILE (STORIES FROM THE FIREPLACE): THIS LOVELY NAME THAT EVOKES ALL THE WARM PEACEFULNESS OF THE LONG FAMILY EVENINGS SPENT NEXT TO THE FIREPLACE IN THE PARENTAL HOME IS WHAT WE CALL FABLES, LEGENDS AND ALL THE FABULOUS AND MARVELLOUS NARRATIONS LOST IN THE MIST OF TIMES OTHER THAN OUR OWN. THE SARDINIAN

PEOPLE, ESPECIALLY IN THE WILD MOUNTAINS AND ON THE DESOLATE PLATEAUX WHERE THE LANDSCAPE HAS IN ITSELF SOMETHING MYSTERIOUS AND LEGENDARY, [...] IT IS SERIOUSLY FULL OF IMAGES AND STRANGE AND INFINITE SUPERSTITIONS."

Grazia Deledda was both a passionate scholar of Sardinian traditions and the author of children stories. Reading one of her *Sardinian fables and legends*, or a story such as *The man of the nuraghe*,

inspired by the traditional cultural and unrivalled Sardinian landscape, children can approach the unique atmosphere and the ancient images that populate the island, before setting off to discover Su Nuraxi di Barumini and the surrounding area. **1 Su Nuraxi** can be visited at any time of the year; remember though that, if you choose the summer, the sun and the heat at some times in the day can be unforgiving. Plunge into the mysteries of the Sardinian nuraghe culture by following a guided tour to the archaeological site and the Centro Giovanni Lilliu, where the youngest children will be able to get to know the fascinating work of the archaeologist and the history of the discovery of the site. Continue the "research" at the **2 Casa Zapata Museum** in Barumini, housed in the 16th century residence of the Zapatas, the Spanish governors of the Marmilla, where there are some unique finds. After the educational part, it is time for fun: 1 km from the village of Barumini, in Tuili, the **3 Sardinia in Miniature Park** welcomes adults and children with the reconstruction of a village of nuraghi, a biosphere, a dinosaur park and the island reproduced in miniature. You can then reach the **4 Giara di Gesturi**, in the countryside north-west of Barumini, a wild plateau of volcanic origin where the so-called "Sardinian ponies" drink in one of the numerous seasonal *pauli* (lakes), in the early morning or late afternoon. An itinerary of the island cannot be said to be complete without seeing the sea: on the Costa Verde you can reach the beaches of **5 Torre dei Corsari** and **6 Scivu** and, above all, the **7 Beach of Piscinas**, one of the most beautiful on the whole island, a wide ribbon of golden sand with dunes which can even reach 60 m in height, with shrubs of Mediterranean maquis : a landscape to remember in your eyes and your heart even after you go home.



SU NURAXI in books

Reading suggestions to understand Sardinia and the nuraghi.

• **Nella terra dei nuraghes**, Sebastiano Satta, Pompeo Calvia, Luigi Falchi (1893). Sardinia is the horizon that inspires verses by three Sardinian poets.

• **Nuraghe so, sos seculos isfido**, Celestino Caddeo (1902). Verses dedicated to the *nuraghi* by the poet of Dualchi (Nuoro).

• **Sea and Sardinia**, D.H. Lawrence (1921). The descriptions in this diary of a trip to Sardinia, a land "which resembles no other place", are still exact.

• **Sardegna come un'infanzia**, Elio Vittorini (1952). The account of a journey to Sardinia by a young Vittorini, fascinated by the island and the *nuraghi*.

• **I nuraghi della Sardegna, Le vie d'Italia**, Giovanni Lilliu (1953). An essential article, by the archaeologist who "discovered" Su Nuraxi.

• **Viaggio in Italia**, Guido Piovene (1957). A unique and detailed reportage from the Alps to Sicily, also stopping in

Sardinia and Su Nuraxi, which the author visited in the company of the director of the excavations, Giovanni Lilliu.

• **Su Nuraxi di Barumini**, Giovanni Lilliu, Raimondo Zucca (1988). An accurate historical and cultural reconstruction and an itinerary.

• **Controstoria dell'architettura in Italia**, Bruno Zevi (1995). The architect and historian questions the nature and the meaning of the village of *nuraghi* of Su Nuraxi.

• **Passavamo sulla terra leggeri**, Sergio Atzeni (1996). The history of Sardinia "of the millennia of isolation between bronze statuettes and *nuraghi*", until the Aragonese conquest, told by one of the most beloved Sardinian writers.

• **Accabadora: tecnologia delle costruzioni nuragiche**, Franco Laner (1999). Architecture is the starting point to propose a new interpretation of the origin and meaning of the *nuraghi*.

• **Opere**, Giovanni Lilliu (2008). All the writings of the archaeologist in an edition edited by Alberto Contu.

• **Viaggio in Sardegna**, Michela Murgia (2008). In the chapter "Pietra. Nuraghi, muri, menhir e spose", the writer speaks of the meaning that stones have for Sardinians as the "main symbolic place of memory."

• **Il sogno dello scorpione**, Salvatore Niffoi (2021). As the world succumbs to a mortal fever, the two main characters seek refuge in a *nuraghe* and survive thanks to the stories they tell one another.

Children's books:

• **Fiabe e leggende sarde**, Grazia Deledda (2013). Stories that draw on Sardinian traditions, written at various times and for various publishers.

• **L'uomo del nuraghe, La morte e la vita e altre novelle**, Grazia Deledda (2018). Ten short stories, published in *Il Corriere della Sera*, *La Lettura* and *Il Giornalino della Domenica* in the early 20th century and since then never before published in their original form.

• **La civiltà nuragica per i più piccoli dall'Età del Bronzo all'Età del Ferro**, Nicola Dessì (2021). An illustrated book that is both entertaining and accurate.