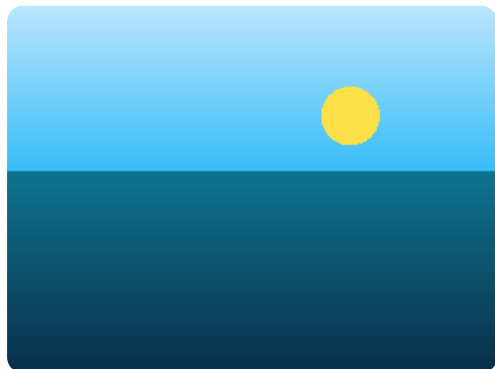


TRAVEL

An hour from the road

A bay in the south of Sardinia that the asphalt never reached



The road to the bay ends where the asphalt does. From there a track of red earth runs between dry-stone walls, past a shuttered farm and a row of prickly pears, and then the land simply stops: a shelf of pale rock, the water beyond it green over sand and blue over weed. Nobody built anything here. The nearest village is an hour away on foot, and it has never been in a hurry to come closer.

We walked out in the cool of the morning with bread, tomatoes and two litres of water each. The shepherd we met at the last gate counted us, counted the bottles, and let us through with a nod. By ten the sun was over the ridge and the cicadas had started; by eleven the only shade on the whole shore was the one we carried with us, a square of canvas on four driftwood poles.

What strikes a visitor from the north is how little the place asks of you. There is no path to follow and no view to find, because the view is everywhere. You swim, you dry, you read a page and lose your place. The afternoon wind arrives at three, as it has every day since May, and turns the bay from glass to hammered pewter in the time it takes to look up.

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On the way back the shepherd was waiting with a bag of figs. He would not take money for them. He asked instead whether the water had been cold, and when we said no, not at all, he laughed and said that it would be by November, and that November was the month to come.

Getting there

Leave the car at the last farm and carry what you need: there is no water on the shore and no shade before the evening. The track is easy underfoot, but it is an hour each way and the walls beside it keep the wind out. Start before eight, turn back by five, and close every gate behind you.

