

19 TORRENTE LENI • RIU D'ORIDDA • GUTTURU IS ABIS • RIU D'ORIDDA • PUNTA PISCINA IRGAS • RIU CANNISONI • TORRENTE LENI

Distance/time: 10.8km/6.7mi; 4h10min

Grade: moderate, with ascents totalling 415m/1360ft. For the most part, the walk follows clear tracks and paths which are partly waymarked with red paint and cairns.

Equipment: see pages 53-54

How to get there and return: 🚗 by car from Iglesias (Car tour 4 at the 208km-point). Take the SS130 towards Cagliari until you reach the signposted exit for Vallermosa after 24km. Follow the SS293 north via Vallermosa. Turn left to Villacidro when you meet the SS196 crossroads. After 4.5km, take the signposted exit to Villacidro. On entering this village, take the wide left turn (several signposts, including MONTI MANNU, DIGA, S SISIINIO, SAN GIUSEPPE). Now watch your cumulative km reading (set to 0 here). After 1.9km take the signposted right turn to the reservoir (DIGA SUL RIU LENI). The road passes a right turn to Villacidro after 400m and approaches the dam wall which is covered with greenery. Keep left at the fork by the dam wall, ignoring the 'Officio Diga' to the right. The road winds on the hillside above the reservoir. Turn left at the T-junction beyond a bridge (4.5km) that crosses an arm of the reservoir. After crossing the bridge over the main river (Torrente Leni) that feeds the reservoir (10.2km), you meet a T-junction: turn right on the gravel road. After 14.8km a fenced-in terraced nursery with the forestry house (Caserma Forestale) comes up on the right. Park your car below it, on the left-hand side of the gravel road.

Extending to the west of the eponymous reservoir, the Foresta Demaniale Montimannu comprises wild and rugged mountains, their rock — mainly granite and slate — dating from the Palaeozoic era. Springs flow for eight to nine months a year in this region; they feed two beautiful rivers which flow into the Torrente Leni below the Cantina Ferraris. The Riu d'Oridda is the most spectacular — a river cut deeply into the granite of the Concas de Piscina Irgas, where it has created beautiful rock pools and cascades. The woods are rich in different species; in addition to the native oaks, there are pines, chestnuts, cedars, cypresses, eucalypti

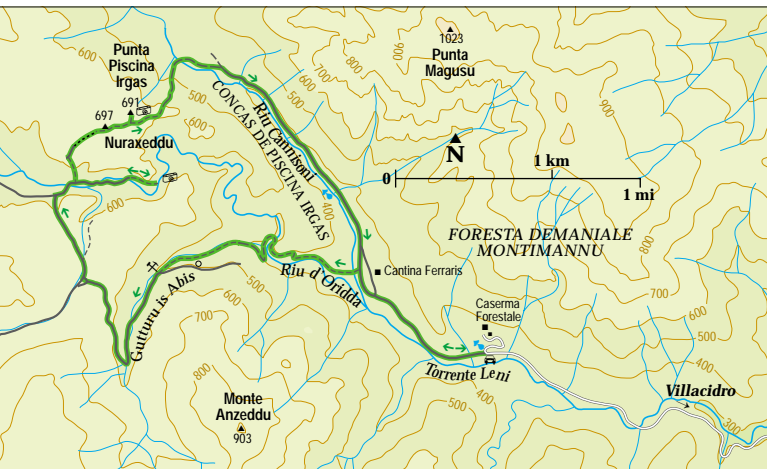
and mimosas. This circuit leads you through this magnificent landscape, affording splendid views throughout.

Before you set out, you can fill your water bottles at the spring next to the entrance gate to the nursery. **Start out** by following the gravel track straight ahead through the valley of the **Torrente Leni**; eucalyptus has been planted in the valley floor. Keep left at a fork and stay in the valley floor (the right-hand fork leads up to the Cantina Ferraris, a shepherds' outpost). Turn left by an olive tree in the open, park-like valley floor (the shepherds' outpost is seen up to your right from here) and cross the rushing river — either on the unstable-looking **FOOTBRIDGE OR ON ROCKS (20min)**.

On the far side of the river the path snakes through *macchia*. Soon you pass a huge cork oak that bends over the **Riu d'Oridda**; mosses and ferns are growing on its gnarled branches. The trail rises through the trees above the river bed, before descending back down to it. When you regain the river, watch out for a **LARGE ROCK ON THE BANK WITH IRON BARS** sticking out of it (**35min**). Here you have to look out for the best spot to cross the river. Turn left on the far side and follow the path some 50m/yds along the river bank, before climbing an old, stony trail to the right (**RED AND WHITE PAINT FLASH** on a rock). This trail runs for some time above a stream bed which is glimpsed down to the right and gradually narrows to a path.

The path continues to rise and crosses to the right of the dry stream bed. Then it runs uphill in a sunny valley and crosses back to the left. You pass a huge fig tree, followed straight away by the drystone wall of an old **CHARCOAL BURNING TERRACE** on the left. Soon a spoil heap is seen on the right, followed by the **ENTRANCE TO A GALLERY**. Now the track widens and joins another track coming from behind you to the left (**1h10min**). Continue ahead through the **Gutturu is Abis** ('Ravine of the Bees'). As you gradually gain height, a beautiful view unfolds of the reddish cliffs opposite, culminating at Punta Magusu (1023m/3355ft). Eventually you cross a flat saddle and descend into a hollow where you bear right at the fork (**1h45min**).

Initially the track contours, before it begins to lead downhill. You reach the open river flats of the **Riu d'Oridda** which are densely covered with asphodelus and rock roses (*Cistus monspeliensis*) — a sea of white flowers in spring. Here the track branches (**1h55min**): turn right on the minor track and walk downstream. Soon the track crosses to the left side of the river. After some 75m/yds along the left bank, a faint, overgrown path rises to the left through the *macchia*. This



120 Landscapes of Sardinia

is *easily missed*; it will be your route later in the walk. Ignore it for the moment and continue straight ahead downstream for a short detour to the beginning of the Oridda ravine.

Keep walking along the bank until the faint track you are on crosses back to the right-hand side of the river. If you look back now to the opposite (left) side of the river, you can see a spoil heap. The faint track crosses the river once more, leading you back to its left bank. Now continue on paths through a small coppice with some camp fires, until you are back at the RIVER BED (2h10min). Here the river leaves the flat valley bottom and the rocky RAVINE begins. The river is cut deeply into a granite massif. It would be far too dangerous to follow the course of the river through the ravine, since it flows through rock pools and over cascades — so savour the view and take a first break.

Then retrace your steps to the start of the faint overgrown path; it now comes up on your right (2h20min) and rises through *macchia*, to the left of a pine grove. This path is partly stony underfoot. Soon it curves to the left and climbs the hillside before petering out. Now head pathless up the steep rocky hillside in a northeasterly direction towards some rocky outcrops. When you reach a WIRE-MESH FENCE continue uphill to the left of it. Eventually the distinct rocky peak of Nuraxeddu appears ahead of you; the wire fence leads across its highest point. Turn right through a gap in the fence at the foot of Nuraxeddu (2h45min). Now leave Nuraxeddu on your left and, pathless, walk straight ahead (east-northeast) through the *macchia* towards the highest summit (Punta Magusu) rising ahead of you. Faded red and white flashes and cairns will be of help but, if you keep heading towards the summit, you won't get lost.

After five minutes you reach the foot of another rocky peak, Punta Piscina Irgas, which rises to the left. On your right you look down into the deeply-etched Oridda gorge, where you can see a high waterfall. Now you can climb up to the left for a detour to the top of **Punta Piscina Irgas**, from where there is a magnificent panorama (2h55min). Descend the same way to the lower slopes and continue to walk east-northeast towards the highest peak. Following faint paths straight ahead along the rocky ridge, once again CAIRNS AND FADED WAYMARKS keep you on the right route.

Just before a rocky spur you reach a FLAT EARTHEN AREA with a campfire and stone seats, where several paths branch off (3h10min). Descend the trail to the left and keep left on the main trail at the fork soon encountered; it zigzags quite steeply downhill, partly on steps. Down in the valley you



You'll frequently come upon shepherds' outposts on your walks on Sardinia, with shepherds and (occasionally) shepherdesses tending their flocks in time-honoured fashion. A cuile (top right) is a typical sheepfold with shepherds' huts. Right: in the valley floor below the Cantina Ferraris



reach the **Riu Cannisoni** ('Cane River'). Turn right downstream, then cross the river bed on a FOOTBRIDGE (3h25min).

Continue to walk downstream along the left bank, initially in the shade of the trees, then in full sun. The track gradually becomes wider and you pass a fenced-in WATERWORKS. Eventually you regain the open area below the Cantina Ferraris (3h55min) and follow your outward route back through the valley of the **Torrente Leni** to where you left your car (4h10min).