

SARDEGNA GRAND HOTEL TERME

A model for
sustainable
development

Sardegna Grand Hotel Terme is the largest thermal SPA in Sardinia and the largest employer of the area, providing therapeutic, wellness, and leisure services year-round to over 65.000 customers.

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Terme di Sardegna S.r.l.

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General Description of the project

Sardinia (Sardegna in Italian) is an island and an Italian autonomous region, located in the West Mediterranean approximately halfway between Italy and the Balearic Islands of Spain.

Sardinia has a population of 1,6 million with an average pro capita revenue 30% below the average of the European union. Once a major mining and industrial transformation area, it currently depends mainly on agriculture in the inland, and seasonal tourism on the coasts.

Sardegna Grand Hotel Terme is a large thermal establishment, built by the Sardinia Region with the support of EU special funds in the 90s, further expanded in the first years of this century and starting operations with the current management in 2006.



The locations of Sardinia and the village of Fordongianus

Sardegna Grand Hotel Terme is in the small village of Fordongianus (population 900), one hour inland away from the sea, where natural springs provide hot water, feeding thermal pools since the times of the emperor Trajan who built here a huge complex. The imperial bath complex is on the right side of the Tirso river and is made up of two buildings dating from the 1st century BC to the beginning of the second century AD. The ruins are still visible today.



Standing ruins of Trajan's thermal baths in Forum Trajani (later called Fordongianus)

The local economy, before the opening of the thermal SPA, was based on stone quarries, sheep herding, and agriculture, giving younger generations little hope for qualified jobs, and forcing many to emigrate. Today Sardegna Grand Hotel Terme is the largest thermal SPA in Sardinia and the largest employer of the area, providing therapeutic, wellness, and leisure services all year-round to over 65.000 customers, mainly from the island. It is one of the few full-time hotels in Sardinia.

An illuminated management created over the years a very special relation with the local community and environment, providing not only jobs but also favoring local agriculture, reducing (when not bringing to 0 in some areas) the environmental impact, participating through the tourist tax to the development of the village, developing special health services previously available only on the Italian mainland.

Sardegna Grand Hotel Terme has a strong social vocation participating, together with the local health system and the surrounding village administrations, in therapeutic programs for the elder population. The entire establishment is fully accessible to disabled customers.

Sardegna Grand Hotel Terme is almost carbon free, producing 850KWh through solar panels and recovering geothermal energy from the hot springs, for an equivalent of 2100 TOE (ton of oil equivalent).

Sardegna Grand Hotel Terme is ecofriendly with strict waste management, plastic free policy, paperless processes, complying with the EU Ecolabel system with whom they are certified since 2016.

Sardegna Grand Hotel Terme is a fair employer, promoting employee's growth through extensive training programs, providing a safe working environment (including continuous inhouse COVID monitoring), and gender equality. For these reasons staff turnover is almost null.

Sardegna Grand hotel Terme is considered an excellency in Sardinia and a model for the Economy department of the University of Sassari (2nd largest city in Sardinia) as it follows the scheme of the 2030 Sustainability Agenda of the United Nations.



TerMare, the new "beach" of Sardegna Grand Hotel Terme

Environment

Nature Preservation Commitment

Sardegna Grand Hotel Terme is aware that tourism represents an **activity with a high environmental impact**: therefore, we are committed to integrating the principles of sustainable development into daily management practices, trying to convey our involvement in environmental issues also to customers.

Sardegna Grand Hotel Terme, also because of its certifications, is committed to:

- The containment of pollution by using more environmentally friendly products.
- The correct management and differentiation of waste aimed at recycling.
- the reduction of waste with more targeted purchases.
- The safeguarding of biodiversity in the areas under the direct control of the hotel
- water and energy saving with a rational use of natural resources.
- A healthy and correct diet, with a responsible usage of regional organic products.
- the promotion of local cuisine and typical local products.
- incentivizing collective transport and light mobility.
- the reduction of noise pollution.
- the promotion of natural and cultural heritage.
- the involvement of guests in the implementation of eco-sustainable behaviors.
- the distribution of information to enhance control on our environmental targets and the participation of tourists and local community in such monitoring.
- Providing guests with information about tourist routes, local flora and fauna, landscape, specific biodiversity, parks, and measures and nature conservation.



Carbon compensation and mitigation of climate change

Sardegna Grand Hotel Terme was built with a modern concept of using renewable energy. The building itself, with its three stories high windows panels, passively receives the sun rays, transforming them into useful thermal energy.

The local pink trachyte, a malleable stone of volcanic origin, has been widely used, allowing a better mimicry with the territory. Such stone provides two main carbon saving factors: transport of materials to the building site (less than 2 kilometer) and no new CO₂ generating cladding or façade materials needed for future maintenance or renewals.

Large resorts have a huge carbon footprint as they require important energy supplies to run the business. For this reason, both a geothermal and a solar system are in place.

8 liters per second of thermal water flow from the spring at 52 ° C and are distributed at 38 ° C for all the practical applications (therapeutic mud, spa, wellness center, pools). The difference in temperature is used to heat the two buildings and to produce hot water. This geothermal energy is extracted with large heat pumps with an annual saving of 2100 TOE (ton of oil equivalent).

The installed solar panels have a nominal output of 850 kWh which are constantly monitored. The electric production is also displayed on screens in the public areas of the hotel, so guests are constantly aware of the actual availability of renewable clean energy.

The combined annual energy production corresponds to 2400 TOE (ton of oil equivalent), meaning that 7700 tons of CO₂ are not introduced into the atmosphere.

To reduce the use of private motor vehicles, all the information about for the use of local public transport is widely available to guests.

Finally, the CO₂ reclamation program includes planting new trees and producing therapeutic mud through photosynthesis in 12 vats with an exchange surface of 150 square meters.

Energy, water saving, renewable energy, waste management.

Sardinia is an island with scarce water resources, so the local population is already aware about reducing consumption and avoiding waste.

Likewise, Italy has waste management laws for strict differentiation aimed to recycling. Such rules, obviously, apply also to Sardinia. Sardegna Grand Hotel Terme has been working on reducing the production of waste (especially plastic and other polluting materials) for many years, even before the enforcement of waste management and recycling laws.

Differentiated waste bins are spread all over the property and available for guests. If guests don't differentiate waste in the rooms, staff is instructed to do so during cleaning operations. Special waste such as medicines and batteries can be delivered by guests to the reception for proper disposal.

Shower-foam and soap dispensers are installed in every bathroom eliminating disposable containers. No single use plastic containers or packaging is used, except for what was mandatory during the COVID pandemic.

Every room has an electronic system that disables lighting and air conditioning / heating when the keycard is disconnected. Air conditioning goes automatically in pause when the balcony windows are open.

Every toilet is fitted with separate flushing systems and a flow stop button that guests can operate. Taps have a regulated flow to reduce consumption.

While maintaining the quality standards of a 4-star hotel, linen and towels will be changed according to the spirit of environmental policy and water conservation. Guests, however, can request more frequent changes at will.

All the spent thermal water is collected in special tanks after usage for irrigation of gardens and trees.

Social

Culture preservation

The village of Fordongianus (location of Sardegna Grand Hotel Terme) goes back thousands of years and was originally called Forum Trajani as the Roman Emperor Trajan built here a huge thermal establishment for the healing and recovery of his legions. The ruins of this construction are still visible and are at walking distance via a pedestrian trail starting from the hotel.

Guests are also encouraged to visit in the surrounding area the remains of several “nuraghi”, prehistorical tower shaped stone constructions going back thousands of years before our era.

Sardinia has a very rich traditional culture. Also, people speak different languages (Sardinian and Catalan) and dialects according to the different areas of the island. At Sardegna Grand Hotel Terme such diversity is found in the names of some departments, and of dishes served at the restaurant.

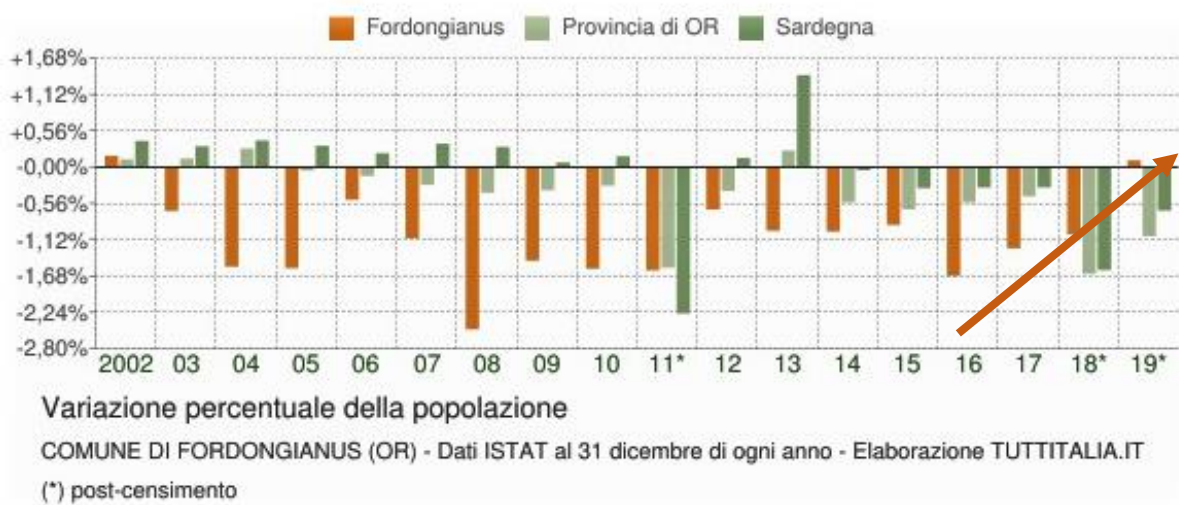
Sardinian cuisine is the expression of the culinary art developed in Sardinia and is varied and diversified, ranging from roasted meats, bread, cheeses, wines, to seafood and land dishes, both of peasant and pastoral derivation, of game, fishing, and collection of spontaneous herbs. It is considered part of the Mediterranean diet, a nutritional model proclaimed in 2010 by UNESCO among the oral and intangible heritages of humanity. Sardegna Grand Hotel Terme protects this heritage and offers it to its customers as part of the health and wellness experience.

The town of Fordongianus has quarries of a soft volcanic rock, pink trachyte, which can be used also for artistic purposes such as sculpture and bas-reliefs. Every year the city hall organizes a sculpture contest, and the works are permanently displayed on the grounds of the hotel as this is the place where the largest number of visitors can admire them.

Local community involvement

Sardegna Grand Hotel Terme is the largest employer of the area, getting most of its staff from the nearby villages.

Fordongianus, the closest village, saw its population stopping its fall and, in 2019, had an actual growth, against a continuous strong decline in the surrounding province for the same period (source: Italian Institute for Statistics). New families are forming at the hotel, and we welcomed newborn children. They represent the future for the local community.



The local tourist tax paid by the hotel is the largest revenue stream for the village and it financed the restoration of historical buildings, the refurbishment of the central square, several road works, and many other smaller projects.

The local city council collaborates with the hotel by organizing joint events, helping in obtaining permits and other bureaucratic items from the regional administration, and providing a relaxed and compromising environment when dealing with differences that may arise.

The purchasing policy favors local businesses and local productions of goods and services, spanning from agriculture produce to advertising. This policy is coupled with a rigorous payment system, in the framework of a completely digitalized and paperless administration, increasing the trust of suppliers and enhancing purchasing prices and conditions.

On a regional scale, we have direct relations through social media with a Facebook community of over 62K followers, mostly from Sardinia. Through this channel we offer our services, often combined with local traditions and events that would, otherwise, pass un-noticed or under attended.

Human rights protection

Sardinia is an Italian region and part of the European Union, so the Universal Declaration of Human Rights is embedded in our Constitution and legal system. Human rights protection is not an issue.

However, to ensure the long-term viability of our business, and to add further ethic components to our business policy, we decided to use as a guideline the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) included in the UN 2030 Agenda. From here the policies against discrimination and implementing fair employment.

Health and safety for employees and guests

Sardegna Grand Hotel Terme is a health-oriented hotel with an inhouse Scientific committee composed by several medical doctors. The medical unit is fully equipped with diagnostic machines and performs many different types of analysis, including COVID tests both for employees and customers.

Health of employees at work is regulated by EU and Italian laws which are fully implemented. We receive regular inspections by the health and work department that certify the full compliance to such procedures.

Likewise, guest safety is regulated by law and its implementation is subject to periodical inspections. Guest safety is implemented both at infrastructural level (fire and smoke detection devices, protection of electric systems, anti-slick flooring, protection of windows and balconies, depth of swimming pools, ...) and staff training level (evacuation procedures, HACCP system for F&B, emergency handling, documentation of procedures).

New measures were necessary during the COVID pandemic to maintain high levels of safety, creating contactless processes between customers and employees. In particular, the inhouse IT department created online check-in (in Italy personal ID must be registered upon arrival), QR code menus for both bar and restaurant, online bill check and payment. Such functionalities are available on the hotel website, on the internal app and on the informative totems scattered through the lobby.

The sterilization procedures, on the other hand, are already in the mentality of thermal hotels as we are trained to fight against bacterial contamination that can occur in warm wet environments. COVID contamination was quickly managed with the same training methods, based on specific scientific protocols. Because the hotel has a medical unit it reopened after lockdown at the end of May 2020 (with reduced capacity) and never stopped operations since that date.

Economic

Local employment

Sardinia is a tourist destination during summertime as it has extraordinary seaside locations and some of the best accommodation infrastructure of Europe, such as in the worldwide famous Costa Smeralda. For this reason, there are many qualified people with good hotel training but used to seasonal employment.

Health tourism requires specific skills to deal with customers that can have special needs. Also, in the therapeutic part of the establishment, simple aesthetic SPA skills are not enough. For this reason, the company decided to provide extensive training to **local employees** offering full time / long term contracts, growing the internal know how and the loyalty of the staff.

Most of the employees come from the surrounding villages, mainly from Fordongianus itself. Some employees immigrated to Fordongianus from other areas, contributing to the positive demographics of the village and its economy.

Employee participation and training

Sardegna Grand Hotel Terme monitors the growth of employee's skills starting from when they are hired. The objective is to increase skills across all the staff, favoring training that will bring better efficiency whilst lowering energy and physical waste.

There are two main training paths: wellness and medical, management and social interaction.

The wellness and medical line of courses is aimed to increase the variety of services offered at the wellness center and to provide all the thermal establishments in Sardinia with specialized thermal mud workers. All the thermal workers of the other five thermal establishments in Sardinia have received training at Sardegna Grand Hotel Terme.

Training in the hotel is focused on new systems (paperless accounts, contactless customer service, energy management), customer relations, customer satisfaction, complaint management, team building, languages and much more.

Each training program is setup together with representatives of hoteliers, workers unions, local authorities, and specific funds (EU, regional financing, special internal provisions dedicated to training).

Economic viability of the business

Sardegna Grand Hotel Terme is a healthy and viable business.

Since 2009 it went from a 3-month season to be open all year round. The clients are both leisure and therapeutic, some of which socially subsidized by the Italian health system. Subsidizes are referred to mud and aerosol therapy (classic thermal weeks) and physiotherapy in thermal water. There is a cap on subsidized services for 100,000€/year on a general turnover of 6 million euro in 2020.

The hotel provides accommodation for an amount of 40,000 bed nights / year, almost completely on full board basis (3 meals). On top of this the resort has 25,000 / year customers who do not sleep at the property and enjoy one day entrances to the swimming pools or for daily treatments.

Half of the profit is reinvested every year on the infrastructure, both customer side (i.e.: new pools and other new services) and energy production (i.e.: solar panels, heat pumps, optimization of usage). This approach ensures that repeat customers maintain an interest in coming back and multiplies the business opportunities increasing the sustainability of the business.

Marketing and brand enhancement

Sardegna Grand Hotel Terme directly manages its marketing and sales processes.

The Sardegna Grand Hotel Terme brand is very well known on its market due to a continuous presence through social media marketing (only on Facebook there is a community of over 62,000), advertising on newspapers and other media making the business the largest advertiser in Sardinia.

With an annual advertising budget of 65,000€, IT investments of sales automation systems, and commissions paid to intermediaries, cost of sales does not go over 2% of turnover. Commissions to OTAs, travel agents, other intermediation entities, are paid for less than 1% of all reservations. 99% of the business is directly generated through the extensive website, weekly advertising campaigns, monthly mailings, and advertising on newspapers.

This is a perfect example of a tourism business that got away from the huge online reservation corporations enabling the benefits generated by the business to remain in locally.

Contacts and further information

Website: www.termesardegna.it

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/fordongianusterme/>

Twitter: <https://twitter.com/termesardegna>

Instagram: <https://www.instagram.com/sardegnaGrandHotelTerme/>

Reviews: <https://reviews.customer-alliance.com/hotel/sardegna-grand-hotel-terme-fordongianus-2771c10c7dda5e26.html>

Overview video: <https://youtu.be/J9agcB9nHRc>

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