

WHERE YOU SEEMS TO LOSE ALL CLEAR DISTINCTION BETWEEN PAST AND PRESENT

*The soft breeze stirs among the rounded hill of the **Trexenta** district. It caresses the golden mantle of wheat fields and the leaves of centuries old olive trees, it finds its way among the narrow alleys and the low houses of **Suelli**, lending its breath to the legends and memories of this small Sardinian village. We know that in small towns time seems to proceed at a more leisurely pace, at times it even seems to stop altogether. Present mingles with past, legend interweaves with reality, we lose all clear distinctions between yesterday and today.*

Maybe this is why at Suelli we breathe a fairy tale atmosphere, the magic of "once upon a time", and people and buildings seem to inhabit a hazy time frame. As if the ancient inhabitants who 4,000 years ago populated with mysteries the many "nuraghe" and fascinating megalithic monuments which dot the surrounding countryside were still present, rather than relegated to distant prehistory.

Today, **Suelli** appears to the visitor as a small and peaceful hillside village; however, in the past it was for a long time the seat of a important bishopric, as is still today witnessed by the presence of its cathedral and the sanctuary sacred to San Giorgio, Bishop of Suelli who lived in the year 1000. To San Giorgio, in fact, is dedicated the interesting retablo dated in the 1500s, which may be admired inside the church, painted by the artists Pietro and Michele Cavarò. Numerous archaeological findings dating back to the Neolithic Period, as well as the twenty nuraghe found in the territory of Suelli, including the magnificent "Piscu Nuraghi", bear witness to the early population and thriving settlements in the region, which was renowned in the Roman Imperial Age for the fertility of its land, earning the definition of "granary of Rome".

The Manor

The first construction of Casa Ruda dates back to the early 1600s. The Manor House, the frescoes, paintings and furniture may be dated at the end of the 1700s. The large main portal was completed around 1800.

It is a large complex, developing around pleasant inner courtyards and gardens: from the Manor House dating from the end of the 1700s, to the various outbuildings. It is a fine architectural example, which brought this country manor and farmhouse back to life. But the most interesting feature of this complex is the example it provides for a restoration method which could, be adopted for the conservation of ancient houses in the old towns of the Trexenta, the Marmilla and the Campidano districts, all characterised by buildings arranged around open-air spaces.

The Ruda Family

The Ruda, a family of Catalan origin, moved to Sardinia in the late 1400s, settling in their feudal holding of Samatzai and later at Donori and Cagliari; they gradually extended their properties in the areas of the villages of Suelli, Soleminis, Guasila, Ortacesus, Villacidro, Villasor, Pauli Arbarei, Lunamatrona, Oristano, Cabras. The title of knights bestowed upon the family and represented by a coat of arms depicting two criss-crossing branches of rue or herb of grace, (from which the name of the family derived), was to be further advanced when the Ruda became Counts of San Lorenzo and Barons of Furtei. At the end of the XIX century, the noble Cavaliere Carlo Vittorio Tordelli, native of Spoleto, in Umbria, married the noble Chiara Ruda.

The lineage of the Tordelli family includes civil servants of high rank in the Papal State, and great art collector; in the XIX century, they began with passion a new venture, becoming hoteliers first in Rome and later in their mother-town of Spoleto, where they founded the prestigious "Grand Hotel Tordelli". From the union between Luigi Tordelli, son of Vittorio and Chiara, and Francesca Ruda, Vittorio e Giorgio Tordelli Ruda were born; they soon followed the steps of their family traditions, giving new vigor to the management of their properties, committing themselves, among other ventures, to a thorough and painstaking restoration of their family mansion, the "Casa Ruda" at Suelli.

Four centuries after the arrival of the Rudas in Sardinia, in the late 1800s, the wedding of Chiara Ruda with Cavaliere Vittorio Tordelli marked the union of the noble lineage of the Rudas with the entrepreneurial spirit of the Tordellis, a family from the Umbria region of Italy, of noble descent themselves, having among their forebears dignitaries of the papal State, great art collectors and HotelProprietors, including the ownership of the prestigious Grand Hotel Tordelli in Spoleto. The grandchildren of Cavalier Tordelli, Vittorio and Giorgio Tordelli Ruda, the latest descendants and inheritors of the family's traditions, are the authors of the careful and thorough restoration of Casa Ruda

These works, inspired by the wish to preserve the original features of the whole complex, have led not only to the recovery of the original splendour of the ancient Manor House, but have also given life to an **attractive museum** and to welcoming and comfortable reception areas. The complex is articulated in courtyards and gardens, connecting the ancient Manor House to the various dependant buildings; its new lease of life is a strong source of inspiration for the conservation of traditional houses in the ancient villages of the Trexenta and Marmilla districts and Campidano plain.

Having completed the restoration works, Giorgio and Vittorio decided to open the house to selected groups of friends and guests, who are welcomed, now as in the past, with the traditional warmth and hospitality of the country gentleman. Thus, ceremonies, receptions, gala dinners, complete with all the ingredients which transform a convivial gathering into an unforgettable event: exquisite cuisine, based on the rules of the true Sardinian tradition; faultless and discreet service, careful and efficient organization and assistance.