

The country church of San Cristoforo

Dedicated to the patron saint of travellers and drivers, the country church of San Cristoforo (*Santu Gristolu*) is only a few kilometres away from Fonni. The racetrack close by is also named after this saint. A large stone statue of Saint Christopher, donated in 1999, also serves as a signpost of the church for anyone driving in the area. The ancient building, which dates back to 1820-1850, rises in a large clearing. A cobblestone path lined with local stones leads up to the church façade, which features a big pointed arch by the main portico entrance, in addition to round arches arranged along the building perimeter and around it. A bell-gable with a cross on top crowns the upper end of the façade, decorated with a metal plaque engraved with the saint's name.

The church has a single-nave oblong plan and a clay floor. Except for a plastered barrel vaulted roof above the altar, the roof is made of timber. Recent restoration work has unearthed two frescoed musician angels by the niche that hosts a large statue of the saint, which is surrounded by drawings of columns, vegetation and other decorative motifs. Work to identify both the date of the fresco and the artist is still underway. However, this is the only prominent decorative element inside very sober interiors.

Sacred rituals and celebrations to commemorate the martyr, which used to be held during the month of September, now take place at the end of July. Following celebrations of the triduum and the blessing of vehicles in piazza San Giovanni in Fonni, a long procession makes its way across the village all the way up to the church, where mass is celebrated.

The Palio of Fonni is held on the first Sunday in August, at the nearby racetrack. This popular horse race first started in 1985 and attracts horse riders from across Sardinia and the rest of the peninsula. An equestrian acrobatic show performed in pairs by horse riders from Fonni is held on the same day.

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