



Sardinia

Report by Lee Jackson 30 April 2011

Some years ago while working for a specialist tour operator in London I was asked to describe Sardinia. My one sentence attempt was “Italian Cuisine and Culture with the long white sand beaches you associate with the Caribbean”.

Although my attempt in many ways does this vast mountainous Island no favours it does capture two important aspects for the would be holidaymaker. In the first instance the beaches really are that good, long white sands, and largely crowd free outside of July & August.

On the second point any Sardinian would be aghast at the idea that the culture and cuisine was akin to anywhere else in Italy, but as a guide to the uninitiated you will be able to choose many of the Italian staples alongside Sardinian specialities on most menu's, and a Berlitz Italian Phrase book will do the same job as it would in Rome.

We have visited the Island on 3 occasions and not wanted to leave each time. We have stayed in 5 star luxury resorts with spa facilities, children's clubs and extensive sports facilities all included. We have also rented a private villa with its own pool and toured much of the North of the island including the mountainous interior.

Though truly an idyllic location, what makes Sardinia special sometimes comes at a price. The Island has not made great attempts to attract large scale mass tourism and consequently hotel prices are more expensive than many alternative Mediterranean resorts. Of course the benefit of this is that the island has retained its identity, and beyond some helpful signage and activities in the larger hotel complexes you are left to the joys of a Sardinian resort.

For Chic sophistication, high class boutiques, restaurants and bars, the Costa Smeralda in the North East, accessible best via Olbia airport, is a must visit.

Developed in the mid-sixties with investment from the Agra Khan this area, with fashionable Porto Cervo at its centre, the area has long been the retreat of the jet set. Porto Cervo is also at the centre of the Maddelena Archipelago and a great base to explore the islands and crystal clear waters of the area.

Travelling west along the Northern Coast the resorts of Badesi and Isolla Rosa (Pink Island owing to the colour of the rock) provide a choice of 4 and 5 star hotel options, lovely beaches and lively seas that attract surfers in the early evening as the waves begin to build. The small bakery in Isolla Rossa is worth a visit, if only to taste the “Sundra's” a Sardinian pastry containing lemon and Sultanas, difficult to resist even after all the food a 5 star resort has to offer.

Of all the locations we have visited on the island we are particularly fond of Alghero at the North West tip. This small city provides lovely walks on the ramparts of the old town, a good choice of restaurants serving Sardinian specialities and great beaches within minutes from the port.

All this combined with the availability of flights to Alghero Airport from East Midlands or Manchester, which is just 10 minutes' drive from the city. This makes Alghero a very accessible location, both for a holiday or even just a short break for 3 or 4 nights (we regularly have to resist another trip).

A visit to the South of Sardinia still beckons. After a brief visit to the port of Cagliari and a few hours wandering the old ramparts, we would love to spend a couple of weeks exploring the South West where a visit to the largest sand dunes in Europe is high on the agenda.

There again with Alghero available from East Midlands for just a few nights break.....