

OK! Lifestyle • Disney

'Sardinia's romantic azure sea and secluded coves made me feel I was in a fairytale'

Looking for a magical holiday destination straight out of a Disney movie that won't cost the earth? Sardinia is just the ticket, as OK! found on a trip to the romantic hotspot

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If you've seen the new live action version of *The Little Mermaid*, you'll be fully aware of the rugged attraction that lured Ariel up from her underwater kingdom. And we don't just mean Prince Eric. The latest Disney blockbuster was filmed in northern Sardinia which has everything a princess could desire, from heart-stopping good looks to a sunny, laid-back outlook on life.

With its turquoise seas, golden sands, secluded coves and dramatic cliffs, it's the perfect backdrop to any love-at-first sight romance. Or, in our case, a family holiday. (Does that count as a "happy ever after"? We think so!)



Sardinia is known for its turquoise seas and secluded coves (Image: GETTY)



• The Little Mermaid was filmed in northern Sardinia (Image: Disney)

Sardinia is the second largest of the Italian islands, and an easy 2.5 hour hop from the UK with EasyJet running regular budget flights to Olbia airport. And it really is as gorgeous as it looks on camera. Even Sebastian the Crab might struggle to stick to his "darling it's better down where it's wetter" mantra once he's popped up to see Sardinia's dreamy sunsets.

Where to stay

We stayed at Resort Valle dell'Erica Thalasso & Spa, a five-star Delphina resort set in the most splendid of isolation. It's a slice of wild paradise, where gates open into a peaceful botanical oasis set high above crystalline waters. The staff ensured we immediately felt part of their world, with a welcome as warming as the glass of local liquor pressed into our hands on arrival.

The landscape here is pure fairy tale. Paths fringed with fragrant blooms and shrubs lead you into the heart of the resort, winding past the luxurious, low-slung accommodation, and down to the gorgeous sandy bays that wrap around the place. Valle dell'Erica has just been crowned Europe's leading green resort for the fourth time, which fits its setting among national parkland and pristine coastline.



• Resort Valle dell'Erica Thalasso & Spa is a five-star Delphina resort (Image: Resort Valle dell'Erica Thalasso & Spa)



• Resort Valle dell'Erica Thalasso & Spa is a "slice of wild paradise" (Image: Resort Valle dell'Erica Thalasso & Spa)

The resort is actually two hotel villages in one, with the original, more traditional Erica merging into the newer La Licciola. All the facilities are shared, and it simply means you have more grounds, coves and pools to explore. There's also a kids' club. Any budding princesses in your party will want to dive into this summer's attractions, which include spotting a "real" mermaid in the sea, mermaid biscuit decorating, hair braiding and sea-themed nail painting.

What to do

Relaxation tops the agenda here, with gentle days spent pottering between pools and beach. We all loved how chilled it was. My shoulders were already three inches lower within a day, but I booked into the spa's stunning alfresco thalassotherapy water circuit, followed by an excellent signature massage, to unpick any lingering knots.



📍 Sardinia is the perfect location if relaxation is what you're after (Image: Resort Valle dell'Erica Thalasso & Spa)

If you want to visit some of the key locations for *The Little Mermaid* you can book in for a new full-day power boat trip. It leaves from the resort and speeds you off to some of the beautiful beaches featured in the film, including Capo Testa, Monti Russu and Rena Maggiore, aka the spot where Ariel rescues Eric with her siren song. Just pack your snorkelling gear for the swimming stop-offs and keep an eye out for flounder...

The hotel also puts on a daily shuttle to the pretty seaside town of Santa Teresa Gallura, the base for the movie's Sardinian shoot. When we weren't sunning ourselves on the beautiful beach we were climbing the 16th-century Torre de Longonstard, enjoying a pizza stop in one of the town's squares, and exploring the market which is held every Thursday.

Where to eat

Valle dell'Erica has six restaurants, including buffet and a la carte options. One of our most memorable meals was at Li Ciusoni, which serves traditional Sardinian cuisine in a rustic hilltop setting. It was a feast for all the senses, from the panoramic sea views to the belt-busting courses of delicious local cheese, breads, pasta, steak hog roast and dessert.



Valle dell'Erica has six incredible restaurants (Image: Valle dell'Erica)

For something truly romantic, it's worth splashing out the supplement on Li Zini for the location alone. It's a tiny, tucked-away spot, with seafood served on candlelit tables on a private cove. If Eric and Ariel had gone here, there would have been no delay on the "Kiss The Girl" moment, and the film could have wrapped up a whole hour earlier.

How to book

Rooms at Resort Valle dell'Erica Thalasso & Spa start from £173 pppn, half-board, book at hotelvalledellerica.com. Easyjet flies to Olbia from London Gatwick, Luton and Bristol, from £26.99 (one way price in August).