

# Valle dell'Erica Resort, Thalasso & Spa hotel review: a five-star beauty on Sardinia's wild north coast

Nature rules at this eco-luxe resort with outstanding island food and coastal views to make your heart soar



The President Spargi Sea View room with pool at Valle Dell'Erica

Kerry Walker | Wednesday October 02 2024, 12.02pm, The Times

**T**he swanky, celeb-magnet Costa Smeralda gets all the love, but a wave away is a stretch of under-the-radar [Sardinian](#) coast that delivers luxury without a drop of pretence or a bikini-posing Instagrammer in sight. If there is such a thing as the Italian dream, Valle dell'Erica Resort, Thalasso & Spa gets pretty close. With rooms and suites sprinkled across two hotels — Valle dell'Erica and La Licciola — on the sweet-scented Mediterranean macchia and cove-indented coast, this is less a resort and more an extension of

nature. Nothing jars or feels artificial. Cicadas hum, rosemary, bougainvillea and oleander run riot, and the beaches are part-Caribbean, part-Seychelles, with azure water pummelling granite rocks. Wander the trails hugging the coast's contours and you'll never see the same view twice. Choose a cliff-top lounge and you'd never guess that other guests are close by. Go for a bubble in the spa's hydrotherapy pools and the peace is like you've never felt before. As the piazza is at the heart of every Italian village, so it is here — with drinks by lantern light, live music and kids dancing as the stars twinkle. It's beautiful and the aim is to keep it that way, with the resort running on 100 per cent green energy and electric buggies saving you legwork when the paths get too steep.

## Overall score 9/10

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## Rooms and suites



The Arcipelago Penthouse Suite at Valle Dell'Erica

Score 9/10

Spread across fragrant gardens, the 273 low-level, villa-style rooms and suites at Valle dell'Erica and its resort-mate La Licciola deliver discreet luxury, with a design as fresh as the sea breeze: lots of natural light, crisp white bedding and whispers of turquoise and aquamarine. Nothing is over-styled and natural materials such as granite, wood, wrought iron and pale stone rule alongside subtle nods to Sardinia in traditional motifs, hand-knotted rugs and handmade terracotta lamps. Wet room-style showers come with Delphina Hotels and Resorts' own brand of luscious, herb-infused products, so when you shower you breathe in the island. Beds are divinely comfortable, but it's worth rising early to flick on the espresso machine, pop on your robe and watch the sun rise from your veranda. The vast majority of rooms and suites have riveting sea views, the biggest of which — at an extra cost — come with private pools and far-reaching views over La Maddalena archipelago that are so gorgeous you'll never want to leave your sundeck.

## Food and drink



Outdoor cooking at Li Ciusei, La Licciola

Score 9/10

Valle dell'Erica's seven restaurants (one for every day of the week) certainly don't skimp on fresh island produce, be it net-fresh lobster and sea bass carpaccio or meltingly tender lamb, beef and pork seasoned with island herbs. House wines from the island — zingy vermentino whites and velvety, full-bodied cannonau reds are excellent and reasonably priced.

If the idea of a buffet breakfast makes you roll your eyes, you haven't seen spreads like the ones at Nautilus and Les Bouches. They are eyes-on-stalks stuff. You could spend a week trying different antipasti and breads, including excellent and addictive *pane carasau*, Sardinia's crunchy, wafer-thin flatbread. Chefs cook up a storm in front of you — pancakes, omelettes, waffles and eggs at breakfast, Sardinian riffs on pasta and gnocchi at brunch. Others carve roasted meats and fish smoked whole in a wood oven. And for dessert? It's as though they have pinched Italy's best pastry chefs and handed them a banquet table. Should you get peckish between breakfast and dinner, the Mediterranean brunch is superb, with a vast spread of antipasti, salads, freshly cooked pasta, wood-fired pizza, fish and meat main courses and desserts.

Stay for a week or more and it's tempting to try at least one or two of the à la carte options. On a verdant hilltop framing the sea, rustic Li Ciusoni delivers the full-on Gallurese agriturismo experience, with show cooking — watch *malfareddus* (shell-shaped gnocchi) being hand-rolled in a wicker basket — and a feast of island specialities like *porceddu*, suckling pig slow-roasted over myrtle and juniper. Other romantic picks include panoramic Il Grecale, where island ingredients are finessed into dishes like *fregola* with cuttlefish, porcini and burrata; candle-lit La Prua; and beachfront Li Zini for astonishingly fresh shellfish.

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- [Sardinia v Sicily: which is better?](#)

## What else is there?



Children can enjoy accompanied evenings on the beach

### Score 9/10

Plenty. If *dolce far niente* (doing nothing) appeals, find a secluded lounger perched on rocks above a tiny, granite-sculpted bay, dip in the glassy sea, float in the saltwater infinity pool or head over to waterfall-splashed Conchiglia swim-up bar. Right up there with Italy's best, Le Terme Thalasso Centre and Spa ramps up the relaxation with a jetted hydrotherapy circuit, sauna, hammam, beautifully tended gardens and treatments that sing of the island, from pink clay masks to seaweed wraps and mood-boosting massages with essences of lavender, rosemary, sage and laurel.

There's action but no pressure — whether you hook onto a free Sardinian cookery class, play padel, go to the gym, join a yoga class or exercise al fresco on the nature trail that skims the coast. And if you fancy diving, windsurfing, sailing or kitesurfing, say the word and it can be arranged.

Children, meanwhile, love Ericaland (as do parents craving time out). There's childcare from 9am to 11pm and a raft of activities to keep all ages from tots to teens amused, including face painting, pizza baking and water pistol battles. Older children can embark on *Robinson Crusoe*-style adventure days, with paddling by day and starlit camping by night. At the younger kids' club, the resident giant sea horse, Lollo, will dance them to delight.

## Where is it?



Valle dell'Erica Resort, Thalasso & Spa on the northern Sardinian coast

### Score 9/10

Just over an hour's drive north from Olbia airport whisks you through lushly wooded, granite boulder-scattered hills to the resort, which feels remoter than it is because of the way it snuggles into the coast. You're just 15 minutes from Santa Teresa di Gallura, a charismatic Sardinian town, with steep roads redolent of San Francisco, brightly painted houses that recall South America, a vibrant, café-lined piazza filled with live music on summer evenings, a 16th-century Aragonese tower and frost-white Rena Bianca beach. Hire a car or take the daily shuttle. Inching a little further west is Capo Testa, a lighthouse-topped headland

dramatically sculpted by giant granite boulders. The special energy here draws everyone from folk festival-goers to meditating Tibetan monks. Corsica and the La Maddalena archipelago, with its cluster of wild granite islands and crystal-blue water, are just a joyous skip away. Valle dell'Erica can arrange half and full-day boat trips to both, as well as excursions with a private skipper and deep-sea fishing.



**Price** half-board doubles from £146 per person

**Restaurant** n/a

**Family-friendly** Y

**Accessible** Y

*Kerry Walker was a guest of Valle dell'Erica Resort, Thalasso & Spa (delphinahotels.co.uk)*