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Photograph: Delphina Valle dell'Erica Thalasso & Spa, Sardinia | |

## Review

# Delphina Valle dell'Erica Thalasso & Spa, Sardinia



A sprawling resort with eco credentials on Sardinia's northern tip

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# TimeOut



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## Time Out says

Given it's the second largest island in the Mediterranean (after Sicily), Sardinia brags quite a lot of coastline – 2,000 km, to be exact. Scenic beaches aren't hard to come by here, but Delphina's Valle dell'Erica occupies a particularly glorious spot on the island's northern tip, on a plush green hillside where the coastal breeze ripples through the grass. Sounds lovely, right? On a clear day you can see across to Corsica, and when it's hazy – as it was on my visit – you're still surrounded by the ocean. Long story short, spectacular views are guaranteed.

Such vistas are best soaked in from the panoramic breakfast terrace in the main hotel building. Incidentally, the breakfast buffet is the only place where you'll actually remember you're in a resort. Valle Dell'Erica feels more like a small hilltop town: there are seven bars, seven restaurants, four pools, an enormous spa and a whopping 273 rooms. This sprawling complex houses two separate hotels: Hotel Erica (a slightly larger space with 148 rooms, catered to families) and Hotel La Licciola (a smaller, couple-oriented hotel, where 17 of the 125 rooms have access to an exclusive area and private pool).



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Rooms are cloistered in small blocks of three or four, each comfortably if plainly furnished, and are built with local granite and cork. From the resort's beaches, the buildings appear to dissipate into the land – the brand calls this design 'low visual impact', a move to protect Sardinia's coastline from the threat of towering resort buildings that have blighted so many European coastlines.

Delphina puts a lot of work into sustainability. All of the brand's locations, including its resorts, hotels, residences, villas and headquarters, are powered entirely by renewable energy. It was, apparently, the first Italian chain to achieve this. You won't find any plastic anywhere, neither in the en-suite nor the mini-bar, and the chain's 'bare Mediterranean' approach means the natural landscape is kept largely undisturbed (bar the building of some nice manicured flowerbeds).

Locally sourced produce and wares are present in the hotel's finer details, too. When walking from your room to the spa or pool, you might spot team members picking herbs from around the resort, and plenty of locally-grown ingredients are used in the cooking and the toiletry fragrances. In the reception, you'll see vibrant woven rugs and furnishings, which are made in the nearby town of Aggius (you can actually see them being made in the museum) and are all naturally dyed – the yellow comes from onion skin, for example.

Valle dell'Erica feels wonderfully sleepy during the toasty, sun-filled afternoons, but patches of the resort have a little more life in the evenings. Va Pensiero is one of the site's seven restaurants, and underneath is a terrace and bar which, when we visited, had a live four-piece band strumming out tunes. Plenty of tables (including ours) were persuaded to get up and bop along.

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## Neighbourhood

Palau is the nearest large town to the resort, but drive further inland for just under an hour and you'll reach the tiny commune of Aggius, which has titchy little coffee shops and wonderful views of the surrounding hills.

## Nearby

1. **Thalasso & Spa** is a crucial part of the resort, with facilities including four outdoor seawater pools heated to different temperatures for you to try out a thalassotherapy circuit
2. **Valle della Luna** (which translates to 'moon valley') is roughly a 30-minute drive away from the resort and feels quite literally like you're perched on a celestial landscape
3. **Corsica** is only 16km away at the closest point, and you can hop on a 50-minute ferry from Santa Teresa Gallura to Bonifacio – the fastest one is run by Moby Lines

## Time Out tip

One of Sardinia's biggest draws is its cuisine, and while today there's a bounty of seafood dishes on offer no matter where you're dining, local food is historically more meat-centred. Weird for an island, right? Well, it's because traditionally produce was produced inland to avoid attacks by pirates. If you're keen to know a bit more about the cuisine and get stuck into cooking yourself, the resort regularly runs lessons.