

Sardinia: A Mediterranean Beauty

by Cheryl Pendry, PassPorter Featured Columnist

The fact that the Mediterranean is home to so many islands makes it perfect for cruising and, of course, on any cruise, the likelihood is that you'll stop off at one or two -- and perhaps one of the most beautiful to visit is Sardinia.

Sardinia lies to the west of Italy and the south of France and it's about as close to Italy as it is to the north coast of Africa, which probably helps to explain its beautiful climate when we visited. During the summer months, temperatures range between 70°F and 80°F with almost no rainfall, but surprisingly, in the winter, it can dip down to the low 40s.

Before heading there on Disney's inaugural cruise around the Mediterranean in 2007, I'd heard from friends that we would be wowed by this island. It was somewhere that I hadn't really come across before, so I took their reports with a small pinch of salt. Let's just say when we got home, I was just as enthusiastic as they were about the beauty of this place.

Sardinia's history goes back thousands of years and, like much of Europe, the Romans ruled here, as did the Spanish, who were in charge for more than 300 years, before passing it to the Austrians. Eventually the island became an autonomous region of Italy, which is how it remains to this day. However, it's about as different to the mainland as it's possible to be. The pace of life here is much more laid back and the frenetic driving that we've witnessed all too often in other parts of Italy didn't seem to be as evident here. One thing that was fortunately very evident were the wonderful gelaterias, serving the ice creams that Italy is famous for.

On our shore excursion, we headed to the north of the island, otherwise known as Costa Smeralda. This was an area created by a group of financiers in the 1960s and today remains home to a number of, well-known European celebrities. On our bus ride through this area our guide pointed out a number of villas, all set well back from the roads that were the homes for famous names.

This is the scenery that instantly comes to mind when you think of Italy -- stunning mountains behind picturesque villages with beautiful houses and villas, many with bougainvillea in full bloom crawling all over the buildings. It was a breathtaking sight and it's the sort of place you dream of heading to for a break away from everything.

The real highlight at this end of the island is the Maddalena Archipelago. As the name suggests, it's a series of seven islands and these islands are a popular place to visit for a number of reasons. Those include the unique wildlife, and the regattas held there due to the almost constant wind in the area. Despite that, the wind on our day there was very pleasant and helped to take the edge off the temperatures.

Of course, it's also a popular spot for tourists and one look and you can see why. The waters are perhaps the most clear that I've ever seen and are a beautiful turquoise color. When you first see it, you can't help but wonder whether some sort of coloring has been added to the water, as it just looks so perfect and inviting.

We took the ferry across to the largest of the islands, La Maddalena, and the ferry ride was a wonderful slice of Sardinian life, as it's obviously used by locals every day to get around. It made a pleasant change to be surrounded by the chatter of Italians, as all too often these days, in big cities, you rarely hear the native language.

A scenic drive took us around the island and allowed more views of the stunning turquoise water, as well as the other islands in the Archipelago. Then it was back to the capital of the island, also called La Maddalena, which still boasts buildings from the 19th century, when this town was forced to develop rapidly into a naval base by its rulers. Once again, the feeling as you walked around the town was that life here is slow and relaxed and very much enjoyed by its residents. Cafes and gelaterias lined the streets and we were only too happy to take advantage of them.

It was also one of the few stops on our cruise where some knowledge of the native language came in very useful. All too often my schoolgirl attempts at Italian, French, and Spanish were met with responses in English, but not here. Shop workers didn't seem to speak English and that was a pleasant change, making you feel as if you had finally found the real Italy to enjoy.

As we made our way back to the main island of Sardinia and then the Disney Magic, I could see why so many people had rated this island so highly. It's one of the most relaxing and beautiful places I've come across in some time and I hope our travels take us back that way again one day soon.

About The Author: Cheryl and husband Mark live in England and love to travel, particularly to America. They are in the process of visiting every Disney theme park around the world, having already been to Disneyland

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Resort Paris, Hong Kong Disneyland and both American Disney resorts. They are now planning for their trip to Japan in the spring to visit the Tokyo Disney Resort. [Click here to view more of Cheryl's articles!](#)

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