

Sardinia with Classic Collection Holidays – September 2018
By Beccy Gallop (Senior Travel Consultant)

I set off for Stansted to meet the group on our lunchtime flight to Cagliari in Sardinia for our three night stay. As we were flying with Easyjet, I had already checked in online so the process at the airport was very quick and efficient. Passport got inserted into a machine which printed off my luggage tag, that I had to attach to my bag and all done!

The flight time to Cagliari is 2 hours 20, making it an ideal choice for a lesser known city break.



My room

On arrival we transferred to the Hotel Italia, a 3* hotel in the city centre. After checking in and a quick freshen up we headed out for a wander around before deciding on a local pizza restaurant for dinner.

The next morning, we checked out of our hotel and embarked on our city tour, mostly by bus with the old quarter on foot. Cagliari is Sardinia's capital, boasting lively cafes, bars, restaurants, and shops. The delightful old quarter of Castello



View from my room

has medieval watchtowers, an imposing cathedral and an amphitheatre where music, dance and theatrical performances are held in the summer.

On the eastern side of Cagliari, a few minutes' drive from the centre, is a 10km stretch of beach with beachfront cafes, running and cycle tracks. Perfect for those wishing to combine culture, history and beach. The western side, as you head out of the city, has expansive wetlands and salt pans which is a marvellous sanctuary for wildlife such as flamingos, herons, waders and sea birds.



Beach at Forte Village

Tour completed, we headed towards Santa Margherita di Pula to visit the hotel Costa dei Fiori which offers a warm and friendly welcome. It is set in gardens facing the sea that lead down to an infinity salt water pool by the water's edge. There is a second pool up by the main hotel, which has a range of rooms including suites and family units. Other facilities include a tennis court, kids play area with pool, mountain bike hire and a golf course nearby. Beach lovers have the use of a guest's shuttle bus for a small fee, payable locally. This is a perfect hotel for a tranquil peaceful getaway as there are no evening entertainments or functions held here. We continued our journey to our home for the next two nights, Forte Village.

Forte Village resort comprises of a number of hotels set in a 47-hectare private estate with a long expanse of white sandy gently sloping beach. The hotels, within this resort, offer a wide range of accommodation from family style bungalows to luxury suites and an almost unlimited range of activities, dining choices, spa and wellness facilities.

There is a choice of 21 restaurants in high season, including Michelin star chefs such as Rocco Lannone, Gordon Ramsey, Emanuelle Scarello and Alfons Schuhbeck.

The outdoor spa is nestled deep in tropical gardens with a thalassotherapy circuit featuring six pools offering a range of treatment options.

At the heart of the resort is the Piazza Maria Luigia, a social hub providing a great evening venue for events and shows as well as a selection of designer stores and boutiques.

Forte Village is a superb award winning, family resort offering an array of facilities including a children's wonderland with its own Barbie house, Mario world and Leisureland featuring a bowling alley, go cart track and disco. There is also a wide range of sport academies with some offering coaching by sports legends. Bicycles are available for hire and there is a Padi scuba diving centre.

I was lucky enough to be allocated a room in the newly refurbished 5 * hotel Castello (the three 4 * hotels were fully booked) just a few metres from the sandy beach. The Castello offers all the facilities expected of a top-class hotel, guest

rooms have a view of the sea or of the pine woods, luxury executive deluxe rooms, junior suites, suites, and two freshwater pools reserved for the guests of the 5 * hotels, Castello, Villa del Parco and Le Dune & Suites. The Castello Garden bungalows, for families, extends the range of accommodation offered as they are conveniently located adjacent to the main building and close to the Castello and Oasis pools.

The 5 * hotel Le Dune & Suites has magnificent luxury bungalows with secluded gardens, as well as exclusive suites with first class service in a privileged position close to the beach.

Part of the leading hotels of the world collection, the Villa del Parco is a wonderfully intimate 5 * hotel. Set in the gardens of the Forte Village resort, it has direct access to the famous Acquaforte Thalasso spa offering a choice of bedrooms, bungalows and villas.

Recently refurbished, the 5 * hotel Pineta pays homage to Mediterranean architecture with its horseshoe shape on two floors overlooking an airy courtyard and has double & triple rooms.

The three 4 * grades of accommodation are:

- Hotel Il Borgo - consists of deluxe bungalows set in lush surrounding in the highest part of the resort enjoying spectacular views. Some bungalows can be connected internally making them perfect for the larger families.
- Hotel Le Palace - conveniently located at the heart of the resort, moments away from the Oasis pool and Piazza Luisa. It offers luxurious bungalows with ample indoor and outdoor space.
- Hotel Bouganville - has a range of spacious deluxe bungalows surrounded by typical Mediterranean plants, near both main swimming pools and the sports & leisure facilities.



Mario World



***The group in Cagliari
at the wine tasting***

With hotel visits completed, we were lucky enough to start our first evening with some wine tasting prior to experiencing the delights of the Le Dune a la carte restaurant, followed by live music in the Piazza Luisa (main square).

Our final day, we spent the morning looking around the resort ourselves, testing out the pools, beach and sea temperatures! At lunchtime we visited the Pizzeria with their famous salad bowls (the size of serving bowls rather than dessert bowls), followed by a tour of the spa facilities where we experienced the circuit of thalassotherapy pools with each pool having a different temperature and saline density.

Dinner was at the Cavalieri restaurant within the hotel Castello. It is an outdoor buffet restaurant with a vast array of choices to suit all. We then headed back to the main square again to soak up the evening entertainment.

On the last day we were up early, in time to see the sunrise and have breakfast before our journey back to the airport and our flight home.

This short visit gave me a glimpse of Sardinia, with its sandy beaches, rugged interior and friendly people I would definitely return.

Beccy Gallop