

# It's Official, Sardinia Is the Ultimate Honeymoon Destination You've Probably Never Heard Of

*This island was built to make your honeymoon dreams come true*

By Claire Volkman Published on January 3, 2018



*Paul & Bruce Maranda/Getty Images*

Sure, you've heard of the pastel-colored **Amalfi coast**, the glamorous island of Capri, and the foodie capital of Sicily, but what about Sardinia? One of Italy's best kept secrets, the island of Sardinia has long been a vacation getaway for Europeans. From the high-end hotels, sprawling resorts, white sandy beaches, and high-end galleries of Porto Cervo to the surprisingly busy capital city of Cagliari (home to some of island's best gelato shops and chic museums), the island's multifaceted allure appeals to any kind of traveler, whether it's shoppers and socialites who want to be seen at the Hotel Pitraizzi or hard-core backpackers aiming to get lost in the caves of Baunei. If you're craving an Italian getaway that packs a punch (and lacks the crowds of neighboring hot spots), make Sardinia your next stop.

## Romantic Resorts

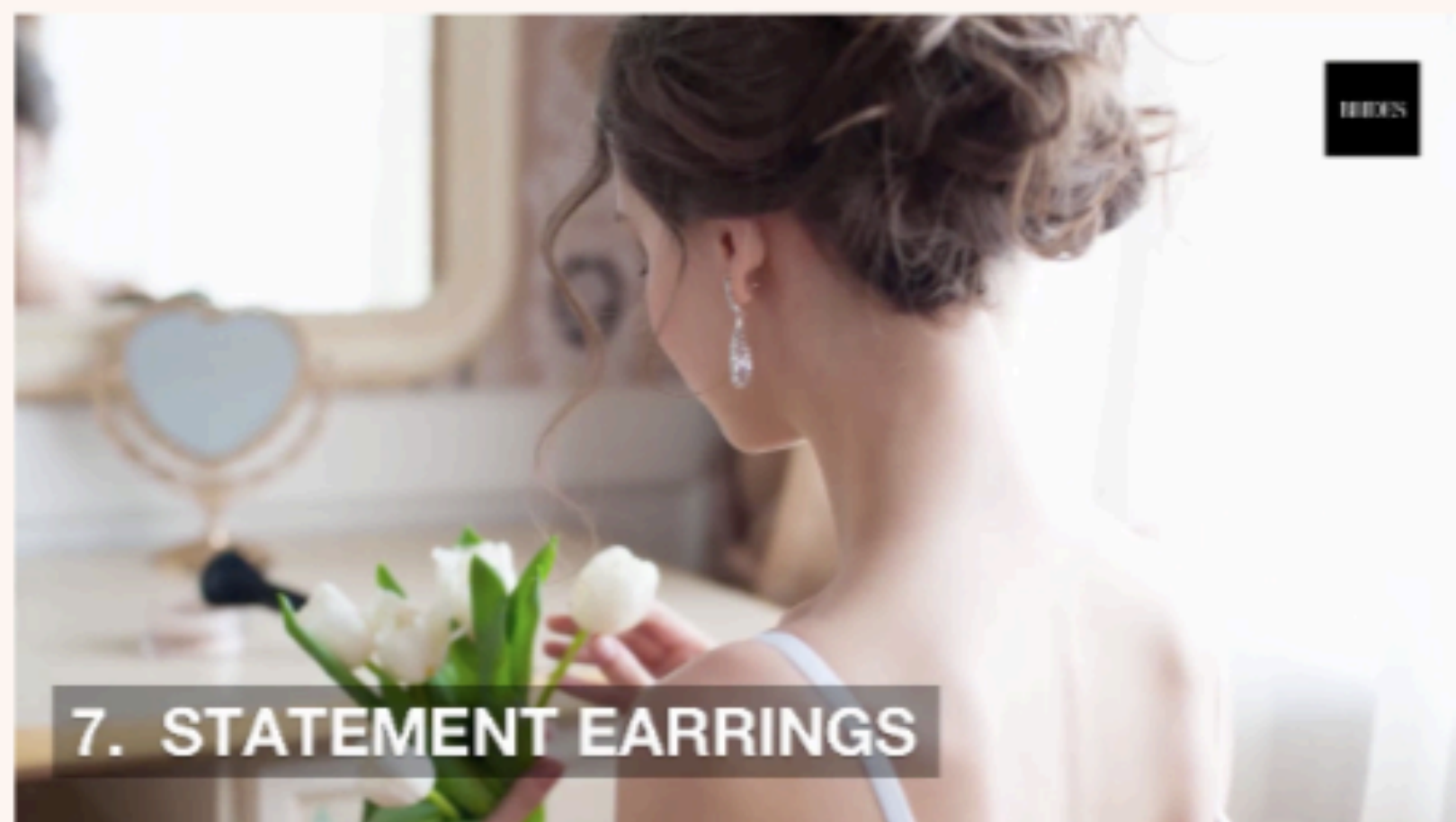
If you're looking for romance, there's no better place to kindle it than the enclave of Porto Cervo. Constructed in the 1960s by Prince Karim Aga Khan, this secluded cluster with private beaches, lagoons, and pastel-painted resorts harnesses the charms and beauty of the Mediterranean. The area's **five-star hotels**—like **Hotel Cala di Volpe**, **Hotel Romazzino**, and **Hotel Pitrizza**—all boast breathtaking views of the sea, easy access to shopping in the downtown marina, and sunbathing on the pristine beaches of Cala di Volpe. If budget isn't an issue, book the expansive \$36,000-per-night presidential suites at the Yacht Club Costa Smeralda, founded by the Aga Khan in 1967. The Penthouse Suite at Cala di Volpe touts a private solarium, a wine cellar, local Italian crafts and furnishings, a wide terrace with sweeping vistas, and even a pool just for the two of you.

## What to Eat

The island of Sardinia is known for its seafood, thanks to its location right on the Mediterranean Sea. Alghero, the small fishing town of just 44,000, is world famous for its lobster, which is often served with hunks of vegetables or alongside pasta. All throughout the island, you'll find seafood stew made with a variety of locally caught fish, like tiny squid octopus, sea robin, gurnard, eel, and more. The best bowl is found in the fishing port of Portoscuso.

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As this is an island belonging to Italy, you'd be remiss not to indulge in pasta on your honeymoon. For a taste of Sardinia that can't be found anywhere else, go in search of *su filindeu*, known as the world's rarest pasta. Only three women—all members of the Abbrini family—know the recipe, which has been passed down for nearly 300 years. The ingredients are simple enough—just durum wheat semolina, water, and salt – but the execution is what makes it so difficult. The dough is cut into 250 strands and then dried meticulously in woven sheets. The precious pasta is available to the public just twice a year at the Feast of San Francesco, which happens in May and October. If your romantic tête-à-tête doesn't fall during the festival times, you can nosh on *malloreddus*, a.k.a. *gnocchetti Sardi* (little Sardinian Gnocchi), another Sardinia-specific variety, at nearly any restaurant. For an authentic taste of *gnocchetti Sardi*, dine at the restaurant in the Hotel Cala di Volpe. Not only can you taste these pillowy perfections there, you can also learn how to make them.

Cheese and meat are also huge exports of the island. [Su Gologone hotel](#) in Oliena offers some of the island's best suckling pig, along with gorgeous views of the valleys below. For cheese and charcuterie, head to the [San Benedetto Market](#) in the capital of Cagliari. Here you can have your pick of the island's most famed cheeses and cured meats. Other meats, like rabbit and lamb, are prevalent, and the best preparations of both can be found at the Michelin-star-rated [Dal Corsaro](#) in Cagliari. Along with meat, you'll find fresh oysters by the dozens on the menu too.



## How to Get Around

Once you arrive, whether into Cagliari, Alghero, or Olbia, the best way to explore the nearly 9,000 square miles of land is via car. Although it's not the cheapest, a car can get you around the places that are impossible to reach by public [transportation](#), like Capo Ferrato on the southeast coast or the waterfalls near the small town of Villacidro. Since everything is imported, a rental car can be costly (think \$150+ per week) and reservations are a must. You can pick up a car at the airport or in the main towns. Beyond cars, public transportation is an option, especially if you plan on sticking around Cagliari. The main bus company, [Azienda Regionale Sarda Trasporti](#), or ARST, is the main regional bus company, and it can take you locally and long-distance, from Cagliari, Oristano, Sassari, Olbia, and more. Tickets can be bought at the *autostazione*, or bus stations, but also can be bought at the tobacco stands around town. You can also travel by train or ferry, especially if you plan on island hopping. The train goes from the island's main towns of Cagliari, Iglesias, Carbonia, Oristano, Sassari, Porto Torres, and Olbia, and tickets are far more affordable than a rental car and can be [bought online](#). Ferries connect the outlying islands with the main one, and fares vary on season and time (although they rarely exceed \$12 per person). The routes, times, and directions can all be [found online](#).

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## Best Beaches

Offering sugar-sand beaches and bright blue water, Sardinia is known the world over for having some of the [best beaches](#) in Italy. Arutas beach on the Sinis peninsula is a tourist favorite, along with Spiaggia di Piscinas, which sits on Costa Verde. Home to the island's most exclusive hotels, Costa Smeralda offers the most beautiful beaches as well, like Spiaggia del Principe, which wraps around the blue-green lagoon. Spiaggia Rena Bianca, which is a part of the resort Santa Teresa di Gallura, sits on the northeast coast of the island and offers some of Sardinia's softest sand and clearest, shallowest waters. The beach offers views of the mint-hued Strait of Bonifacio, and you can even spot the neighboring isle of Corsica. For a more active beach day, Cala Goloritze is flanked by craggy limestone cliffs, and the climb up offers views of the shimmering blue water and collection of rugged rock formations.

## Mysterious History

Sardinia offers a little bit of everything, including beaches (see above), shopping, yachting, wine-tasting, and even prehistoric archaeology. The ruins of Arzachena, located in Costa Smeralda, date back as early as 1,000 BC. With over 7,000 towers, burial sites, and ancient artifacts, these sites—or *nuraghi*—are well worth the visit. With a UNESCO heritage accolation, these nuraghi—which are completely unique to the island—can be found throughout Sardinia. Another collection, near the postcard perfect town of Alghero, is Santu Antine-Torralba. One of the most famous sites, this one boasts hidden passageways, massive boulders, and even spiral staircases that date back to the early 16th century BC.

## Where to Play

For a taste of big-city life in an otherwise sleepy island, visit the capital of [Cagliari](#). You'll be welcomed with the familiar buzz of Vespas as they zoom past you and the constant roar of locals enjoying a leisurely lunch. The Castello, the medieval walled quarter perched high above town, offers some of the beach city views, and Poetto beach gives you a taste of local life and a view of the thousands of flamingos who call it home.

For shoppers, Via Roma and Via Giuseppe Manno in Cagliari offer a mix of both affordable and high-end shopping. In exclusive Porto Cervo, shopping is a religion, and you'll find dozens of boutiques and stores selling expensive **beachwear** and accessories in the town's main *piazzetta*, or main square. Olbia, which is also home to the airport, has a more granola vibe, with budget-friendly shops with a more earthy look and feel. Stop into the markets on Tuesdays and Sundays on Corso Umberto for a look (and a taste) of the area's unique goods.

If history or shopping isn't your thing, tour the many hidden caves and swimming holes that were created throughout Sardinia, thanks to the island's complex and mesmerizing geology. Grotte del Blue Marino, a five-kilometer stretch of water, is perfect for photography, with its vast array of stalagmites and Neolithic wall carvings. The most famous cave is Grotta di Neptune, home to a large lake and impressive collection of pillar-like formations. There's also Rio Pitrisconi, a wild stream and ravine in the northeast of the island, that doubles as the ultimate selfie spot and romantic, natural infinity pool. The national parks are also worth a visit, especially for couples eager for some more rugged hiking and horseback riding. Gola Su Gorropu, a.k.a. the "Grand Canyon of Sardinia," is a 10.5-kilometer trail that weaves through canyons, 400-meter limestone walls, and moon-like geography.

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